



“You will know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16

ASBURY WAS RIGHT – METHODISM WENT WRONG

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INTRODUCTION

This publication is my own creation, and the basic propositions and assertions that are set forth herein are also mine. However, I have inserted quotations from the works of James Edward Armstrong, Nathan Bangs, James B. Finley, Randolph Sinks Foster, Maxwell Pierson Gaddis, Robert Paine, Abel Stevens, and Ezra Squier Tipple. All of the works from which I have quoted are already in the HDM Library except that of R. S. Foster, and it is my intention to add the Foster publication into the our Library within the next few days.

There are indeed two sides in the matter of following a Church Leader. There are times when doing so, contrary to personal persuasions, is wrong. There are other times when doing so, in spite of our personal views, is the wise and right thing to do.

In this work, I set forth 4 things about which “Asbury Was Right” and in which “Methodism Went Wrong” -- things in which if Methodism had followed Asbury's divinely inspired direction they could have avoided the rapid onset of M. E. apostasy after his death. -- DVM



1. ASBURY WAS RIGHT IN THE DIRECTION HE TOOK METHODISM

Hosea 12:13 “By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.”

“By the prophet” Moses, Israel was brought out of Egypt formed into a great nation, and preserved under his wise leadership, and in like manner by Francis Asbury the great M. E. Church in America was brought out of sin, formed into the mighty movement for God that it became, and preserved under his divinely inspired leadership. Yes, like Moses, he had many assistants, but also like Moses, under God, Asbury became the primary former and preserver of the people God used him to raise up and lead forth. Until the time of his arrival on the American scene, Methodism had done little to expand beyond the cities along the east coast. Its expansion and development into a mighty movement for God on this continent awaited his arrival.

Francis Asbury was born in England, August 20, 1745. He entered the ministry at the age of seventeen, came a missionary to America in 1771, was ordained bishop December 27, 1784 and his American ministry spanned some 45 years – from 1771 until his death on March 31, 1816.

A study of his life reveals that he was a strong-willed leader, and one who felt that God had shown him the keys to success for Methodism in this nation and the pitfalls which it should avoid. For that reason, he was unwilling to see the reins of M. E. leadership fall into the hands of those who would deviate from the course he perceived as the right one. His unrelaxed grip on the reins of Methodist leadership in America did not sit well with some, and even John Wesley suspected for a while that he was overly-ambitious for authority, and sent Asbury a written rebuke that suggested he was aspiring to become an M. E. Archbishop. Later, Wesley apparently saw that his assessment had been mistaken.

Some who followed Asbury's leadership for a time, later, like James O'Kelly, accused Asbury of being dictatorial and autocratic for selfish reasons, but such accusations were both unfair and untrue. He did not covet the position and power of M. E. Bishop as a means of obtaining prestige, wealth, or ease. This “Prophet of the Long Road,” as Ezra S. Tipple called him, had the best interests of God's Kingdom at heart, and he literally traveled himself to death for God and for Methodism in America. He wanted to see Methodism on the go for God, and moving in the right direction – that was his motive for holding on so tightly to the reins of M. E. leadership. And, as long as American Methodism followed his lead they were both spiritually prosperous and spiritually preserved.

Almost immediately after his arrival in America, Asbury saw that the Methodist preachers and emissaries from Wesley were content to minister in the cities without moving out into the highways and hedges of the great American wilderness. He perceived that by so doing Methodism would stagnate. It needed to move out in all directions among the many scattered people dwelling outside of these cities. The entry in his Journal for November 22, 1771 clearly shows two things: *(1) By way of personal example, he was determined to get American Methodism on the move far and wide with horseback, itinerant evangelism; and (2) He was determined to make things happen for God, without fearing man or holding back part of the price.*

“November 22, 1771 – At present I am dissatisfied. I judge we are to be shut up in the cities this winter. My brethren seem unwilling to leave the cities, but I think I shall show them the way... I have nothing to seek but the glory of God; nothing to fear but his

displeasure. I am come over with an upright intention, and through the grace of God I will make it appear; and I am determined that no man shall bias me with soft words and fair speeches; nor will I ever fear, the Lord helping me, the face of man, or know any man after the flesh, if I beg my bread from door to door; but whomsoever I please or displease, I will be faithful to God, to the people, and to my own soul.”

Asbury promptly set out traveling for God – on foot, on horseback, and by cart – on “The Long Road” and persevered in doing so for nearly 45 years. A “perpetual motion” worker, he was constantly on the move in his endless pursuits to spread Scriptural Holiness and Methodism over these lands, seldom stopping long in any place unless compelled to do so by circumstances or sickness, and sometimes he pushed on in spite of both.

Traveling “The Long Road” in America was very costly to Francis Asbury in terms of personal sacrifices and sufferings: Marriage was sacrificed to his itinerant ministry, as well as the comforts of a home – he had none, even though he came to be welcome in cabins, houses, and mansions across the nation of his day. Staying on that 45-year-long road also meant that he would never see either of his beloved parents again in this world. It meant that he would stay in America when others of his fellow missionaries returned to England, leaving him alone as the only Methodist missionary in our land. It meant exposure to all sorts of extreme weather and hazards in sickness as well as in health. It meant “roughing it” in rude cabins, sleeping on hard surfaces with little or no padding, camping out in the open, eating coarse food, and sometimes eating nothing at all.

The demands of “The Long Road” sometimes required him to squeeze into tight quarters in tiny cabins, fighting off fleas and inhaling foul air. For food and shelter he had to spend nights with the rude and crude as well as with the gracious and mannerly. To reach destinations sometimes demanded that he travel where there were no roads, cross streams or raging torrents where there were no bridges, and traverse miles where hostile Indians were marauding. Suffering the privations and hazards of one such long journey over the mountains, across the rivers, and through the American wilds of that day was no doubt more than many were willing to endure, but Francis Asbury sacrificed himself on that altar for more than 4 decades! And he knew if he persevered on “The Long Road” that one day it would mean his death – as finally it did.

Asbury's self-sacrificing devotion as God's servant might well be worded like that of another who when starting out for Christ wrote in the fly-leaf of his Bible: “No Reserves” -- and who when he started for a distant mission field inscribed there two more words: “No Retreat” -- and who when he was dying inscribed there two more words: “No Regrets”! Francis Asbury's concept of his duties as M. E. Bishop were not those of a self-indulgent tyrant sitting back in ease while sending his servants out to do all of the hard work, suffering, and sacrificing. He was perhaps the most willing of all early American itinerants to spend and be spent for God in the spread of Scriptural Holiness over these lands.

On July 19, 1814, less than two years before his death, Francis Asbury wrote in his Journal: “I LOOK BACK UPON A MARTYR'S LIFE of toil and privation and pain, and I AM READY FOR A MARTYR'S DEATH.” Yet, he neither boasted nor trusted in his long and tireless labors for God. In that same Journal entry he goes on to say: *“The purity of my intentions, my diligence in the labors to which God has been pleased to call me, the unknown sufferings I have endured – what are all these? The merit, atonement, and righteousness of Christ alone make my plea.”* And, *God blessed Francis Asbury in the midst of his sacrificial sufferings. He concludes with these words: “I groan one minute with pain, and shout glory the next!”*

When “The Long Road” of Francis Asbury ended on March 31, 1816, the last groan of the worn-out old Methodist prophet was exchanged for the endless glory of Heaven, where he will hear his Master proclaim: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant... Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mt. 25:21) By him, thousands of Americans had been brought out of sin, into Christ's fold, formed into the great and powerful Methodist Episcopal Church and preserved from apostasy. He was right in the direction that he took Methodism.

Whether people in a movement totally agree, or understand, sometimes the safest and best way for a religious group to be preserved from apostasy is to follow the path laid out by their God-ordained “prophet” or leader. Proverbs 2:20-22 says: “That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. 21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. 22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.”

While God does lead individuals within God-formed religious bodies, it has often been so that the peculiar signals needed to steer a people in God's ordained path have been given through their God-ordained leader. Such directions, I believe, were given to Francis Asbury, and had most within the M. E. Church held to the course he laid out for them, the fast-spreading apostasy that began to sweep through Methodism shortly after his death might have been avoided or repulsed for much longer than it was.



2. ASBURY WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE DANGER OF WORLDLINESS

Perhaps the “Achilles Heel” of Methodism was the admittance into their Societies of those who were not yet saved, but who professed to be earnestly seeking salvation. Early Methodists intended that this taking into their fellowship of salvation-seekers be a means of helping the seekers on into the grace for which they sought. In perhaps many cases, used as intended, this admittance of the unsaved into their ranks did accomplish the desired goal – the salvation of seekers already made part of the Society. However, I suspect that Satan used this “door” into Methodism to plant within her ranks more and more who professed an earnest concern for salvation, but who never, ever really experienced the new birth. Their professed concern had qualified them for Methodist “membership” and thereafter their professed but pseudo-salvation kept them there – all without any real repentance or genuine regeneration.

Satan saw to it that many of the early Circuit Riders and their converts were all too conscious of how poor and ignorant they were – when in fact they were rich and wise unto salvation. Many people from all ranks of society, including some eminent people of means and repute, were genuinely saved under the anointed preaching of these “ignorant

and unlearned fishermen.” Then, as Methodist revivals and camps brought greater and greater numbers into their Church, it became less odious to worldly people to be among them. After all, they were now numerically a big Church with some very influential members. The stigma of being a Methodist being lessened, more and more eminent, but unregenerate, worldlings joined M. E. Societies via the “professed concern without real conversion” route, and soon these bogus converts were taking an active part in Methodist business, both secular and spiritual, and wielding an apostatizing influence within the M. E. Church.

Early-on some wealthy and prestigious people had been genuinely saved before joining the Methodists. But the bar was lowered, perhaps in many cases by spiritual, but unwary Methodist leaders. With no stigma from the world about joining the M. E. Church, and no standard in the Church requiring salvation before admittance into a Methodist Society, it became all too easy for people to become Methodists who had no intention of ever being anything more than nominal Christians and unregenerate, church-goers. And with these flooded into Methodist pews and boards, it was not long before those hostile to both works of grace were dictating policies and setting trends toward the world and away from the old-fashioned Methodist standards of dress and behavior.

For 45 years, American Methodism was preserved as a power for God by her “Prophet” -- Francis Asbury, and while his leadership prevailed that great movement, for the most part, veered neither to the right nor to the left into apostasy. It is true, however, that even before his demise, there were already some Methodists who were adverse to his standards who were waiting for the day when he would be off of the scene so they could push ahead with things he had always opposed.

In July of 1814, Asbury penned the “I AM READY FOR A MARTYR'S DEATH” statement into his Journal. And, judging the best I can from James B. Finley's autobiography (hdm0683), it may have been just two months later, in September of 1814 that the following incident took place – an incident that shows how even before his death, with sadness, Asbury perceived the signs of impending apostasy in Methodism:

“We wound up our circuit labors, made the necessary preparation, and started for conference, which was to be held in Cincinnati, [Ohio] September 8, 1814... On Sabbath the bishop [Asbury] preached; and the vast concourse had an opportunity of judging for themselves in regard to the ability of the Methodist prelate.

“That day the gospel was preached in demonstration of the Spirit and power of God. During the meeting many were converted and joined the church. At the close of the meeting I started, with the bishop, for Springfield, [Ohio] where we arrived Tuesday afternoon. We stopped with a Methodist family. As we passed through the parlors we saw the daughter and some other young ladies dressed very gaily. The daughter was playing on the piano, and as we moved through the room we doubtless elicited from those fashionable young ladies some remarks about the rusticity of our appearance; and the wonder was doubtless excited, where on earth could these old country codgers have come from?

“The bishop took his seat, and presently in came the father and mother of the young lady. They spoke to the bishop, and then followed the grandfather and grandmother. When the old lady took the bishop by the hand he held it, and looking her in the face, while the tear dropped from his eye, he said,

“I was looking to see if I could trace in the lineaments of your face, the likeness of your sainted mother. She belonged to the first generation of Methodists. She lived a holy life and died a most happy and triumphant death. You,' said the bishop, 'and your husband belong to the second generation of Methodists. Your son and his wife are the third, and

that young girl, your granddaughter, represents the fourth. She has learned to dress and play on the piano, and is versed in all the arts of fashionable life, and I presume, at this rate of progress, the fifth generation of Methodists will be sent to dancing-school.'"

"This was a solemn reproof, and it had a powerful effect upon the grandparents. The first Methodists were a peculiar people in their personal appearance and manners, and could be distinguished from the world at a single glance. Their self-denial led them to the abandonment of all the lusts of the flesh. They were simple-hearted, single-eyed, humble, and devoted followers of the Savior. They loved God devotedly and one another with pure hearts fervently; and though scoffed at by the world, hated and persecuted by the devil, they witnessed a good profession of godliness and faith." -- James B. Finley

At the same time that Asbury was "ready for a martyr's death," he perceived that some in Methodism were "ready for a fling with the world" -- and, it brought tears to his eyes -- not because he himself would soon die physically, but because the Church for which he had labored more than 40 years to form and guide *was even then showing signs of invading and impending spiritual death -- a death that would render it to be nothing more than a huge ecclesiastical-social organization, totally unfit and unable to do the work for which God had raised it up: to "Spread Scriptural Holiness Over These Lands."* Did Asbury feel that somewhere he had failed Methodism? No, I don't think so, but he wept to see "the apple of his eye" pierced by the worm-hole of worldly intrusion -- a tell-tale sign that her sanctity had been breached, that a foreign invader was eating at the core of the M. E. Church, and that the decay of worldly apostasy would soon spread through virtually all of the organization.



3. ASBURY WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE DANGER OF OSTENTATION

The Oxford Dictionary defines "ostentation" as "a pretentious and vulgar display, especially of wealth and luxury..." Asbury felt that Methodism should retain her simple and plain outward appearance, both in regard to personal adornment and *in regard to the appearance of Methodist places of worship. He did not want to see Methodists bedecked with paint, jewelry, and ostentatious finery, nor their church buildings displaying ornate architecture with high steeples and loud bells -- catching both the eye and ear of the proud for miles around, but making the poor and humble feel that they did not belong in a Methodist Temple and were out of place among the wealthy and pompous Methodist Church members.*

(I too feel revulsion when I look at the appearance and behavior of young people in Church today.)

Probably many Methodists thought that Asbury's disdain for ostentation went too far. He

did not even want to see “bells” and belfries on Methodist church buildings, to say nothing of majestic steeples and spires! His disdain for all such outward trappings is easily seen in the following two entries from his Journal:

“November 16, 1806 -- (Augusta, Georgia). I wrote to Daniel Hitt on things sacred. I am grieved to have to do with boys. Hugh Porter had written to this town about a station, and added to the mischief he had formerly done. I shall take care of these youngsters. And behold here is a bell over the gallery, and cracked, too. May it break! It is the first I ever saw in a house of ours in America; I hope it will be the last.”

“June 13, 1813 – We rose at four o'clock, to gain twelve miles for Somerset quarter meeting. I lectured on the Lord's Prayer... I am told there is a revival of the work of God here, and at Warren, and at Bristol. I have difficulties to encounter, but I must be silent. My mind is in God. In New England we sing, we build houses, we eat, and stand at prayer. Here preachers locate, and people support them, and have traveling preachers also. Were I to labor forty-two years more, I suppose I should not succeed in getting things right. Preachers have been sent away from Newport by an apostate; so we go. O rare steeple-houses, bells! (organs by and by?) -- these things are against me, and contrary to the simplicity of Christ. We have made a stand in the New England Conference against steeples and pews; and shall possibly give up the houses... we will be flattered no longer.

Asbury hated showy cathedrals, ornate finery, high steeples, loud bells, formal worship, and everything that he considered to be foreign to the simplicity that is in Christ and the humble, unobtrusive appearances of the first Methodists among whom he worshipped in England. He wanted nothing to do with that which was *stiff and overly formal in worship*. “Standing at prayer” when they should be *humbly kneeling in God's presence*, he could not abide. With the organization of the M. E. Church in 1784, Wesley had directed that the Methodist clergy wear robes – a rule that Asbury soon ignored, and I suspect that he also quickly ignored the reading of various prayers that Wesley had sent for use in their services.

John Wesley's roots were tied to his formalistic upbringing in the Church of England, but Asbury's religious roots were twined with the simple and humble Methodists he had known as a youth following his conversion – a crowd who dressed modestly and plainly, who shunned the showy, who sometimes prayed in barns, and who worshipped in houses and cottages – no steeples, no bells, no massive and ornate cathedrals, no robed choirs, and no proud pipe-organs. Thus, while the Father of Methodism imbibed into his concepts of true worship much of the Anglican formality, Asbury had drunk from the simple, but sweet fountains of early Methodist worship whose appearances and practices were largely devoid of the Anglican trappings. (that originated in Catholicism)

Even the organization of the M. E. Church, some 13 years after Asbury came to America, seems to reflect his concept of what a Methodist place of worship should be. Writing in his “History of the Old Baltimore Conference,” (hdm0805) James Edward Armstrong commented on the characteristics of Lovely Lane Chapel, the site where the M. E. Church was born:

“It was meet that the new church should be born, as was her Divine Head eighteen centuries before, in humblest place. A rude structure with no adornment, and with simplest furniture, some of the benches with backs supplied only a few days previous by kind friends, served the purpose of organization, and provision for the most aggressive and successful body of Christians on this continent.”

Before Asbury's death Methodism had evolved from a tiny, despised sect into the largest denomination numerically on this continent, and probably the most wealthy as well. Its

prodigious and spectacular growth was, to a great extent, due to the apostolic labors of Francis Asbury. But along with the genuine, the humble, and the poor, the M. E. membership included all too many of the wealthy and proud unregenerates who could hardly wait until Asbury and his “crack-pot notions” no longer hindered the display of their jewelry and finery and the construction of massive cathedrals with eye-catching spires and loud-peeling bells. *These bogus converts wanted the M. E. Church to appear to the whole world as the huge, prestigious, and greatest Church on earth! Their inward thought was: “Once we were despised and persecuted; once we were tiny and disdained – but JUST LOOK AT US NOW!”*

Ostentation took over the skyline. Local Methodist churches vied with other denominations and even their cross-town fellow-Methodists to see who could put up the most ornate cathedral with the highest steeple and the most ear-catching bell. Show, show, show! Became the craze and pompous ambition of a fallen Methodism, risen to the very pinnacle of her respectability in the world.

This was one of the very things Asbury decried and sought to keep out of Methodism. He died in 1816, and in 1843, just 27 years after Asbury's death, Maxwell Pierson Gaddis recorded the following in his “Foot-Prints of An Itinerant.” As you read this, please bear in mind that although Gaddis was an advocate of entire sanctification, and had obtained the mighty Baptism of the Holy Ghost, he was also very much a Methodist, and was no doubt somewhat taken up with Methodist edifices, for he had at one time been employed as a supervisor in the building of Methodist structures. Again – note that Gaddis' comments were written only 27 years after the death of Asbury:

“January 8 [1843]. -- This has been my first Sabbath in New Orleans. I am now left alone to reflect upon its pleasing and afflicting scenes. The morning was bright, billowed by a lovely, smiling day, peculiar to this southern clime. It was favorable for the devout and pious portion of the community to repair to the temples of the God of Jacob, “whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.”

“In company with brother Curtis and Rev. W. Nicholson, pastor, I repaired to the Poydrass Street Church. This is a most splendid edifice, of the Grecian and Doric order, the details of which are copied from the temple of Theseus, at Athens. The height of the steeple is one hundred and seventy feet. The entire building combines a beauty and novel grandeur to be seen in no other church edifice about the city.”

Sadly, this sanctified Methodist preacher and strong holiness advocate seems to have imbibed more of the spirit of Methodist Ostentation than he should have. Perhaps not, but regardless, his description is indicative of the mad-Methodist-rush then spreading throughout the land to put up massive, costly, and fashionable cathedrals. No longer did the membership of Methodism consist of the rude and backwoods “born-again” who worshipped with their circuit-rider in small, one-room cabins and rough “Log Meeting-Places” like that of Robert Strawbridge. No longer were Methodists a poor lot and a despised sect, -- and they wanted their buildings to reflect that change.

Money that could have been, and *should have been, used to support the spread of Holiness around the globe was spent instead to flatter their own pride* and attract more of their own kind into Methodist membership. It is true that during this time Methodism still had its sacrificial heroes and humble, sanctified followers. It is also true that Methodism began and funded many commendable missionary works while all of this temple-building was going on. *But the rage and passion for building impressive cathedrals spoke of a spreading apostasy in Methodism all too identical with that backsliding in Israel described by Hosea 8:14 -- “For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth*

temples...”

Matthew Simpson's 1882 edition of the Cyclopeda of Methodism is literally loaded with pictures of the proud Methodist temples across the nation near the close of that century. I confess that it was so repugnant to me that I omitted including even one such picture among the graphics included with our digital version of that Cyclopeda. To me such displays of finery and indulgence, while they are of a religious nature, are a repulsive fulfillment of the same philosophy advocated by vulgar Americans today who say: “If you've got it, FLAUNT IT.” By 1882, when it came to wealth and finery, Methodism certainly “had it,” and they were obviously very anxious to “flaunt it” as well.

In 1766, when the first Methodist group in America congregated with Philip Embury, Barbara Heck, Captain Webb, and a few others, they worshiped in an old sail-loft. Describing Methodism in 1884, R. S. Foster wrote: “There are nearly thirty thousand of them, [Methodist Church Buildings] many of them rich and costly, and not a few magnificent, on principal avenues in the great cities, where the fashionable and wealthy congregate; for the sons and daughters of the humble worshipers of the sail-loft have become rich and refined.” Telling of their Methodist Educational structures in 1884, Foster goes on to say: “Then come the educational piles, some of them ornate and vast, in stone and brick, built to endure through generations and centuries, and all set in beautiful grounds, the fit homes for study and refining culture – a quarter of a thousand of them.”

Just how much Bishop Foster approved of what Methodism had become in 1884 compared with its humble American origin in 1766, I leave up to the readers of his “Centenary Thoughts” to decide for themselves. In fairness to this revered holiness advocate and writer I think it should be stated that, to some extent at least, he may have been merely stating how things were, and not how he thought they should be. Regardless of his personal feelings in the matter, I think that his descriptions indicate an affluence and pride in Methodism quite foreign both to the Spirit of Christ and very different from the humble spirit of the earliest Methodists in both England and America – nearly all of which rushed onto the scene during less than 70 years following the death of Francis Asbury. Until his demise, he had stemmed this onrushing tide, preserving Methodism from a *materialistic apostasy* that flooded the M. E. Church when his protest was removed. (note: this wealth should have been used to woo the needy to the Cross instead of flattering the wealthy)

In his 1884 “Centenary Thoughts” Foster goes on to say:

“Some things greatly needed at first are not among our wants now. Time and the blessing of God have furnished these. We do not want riches; once we did. They are very necessary to the work of a Church. There are things which nothing but money can provide. But this is not our pressing need just now. Once our Church was poor, her hands were hard, her garments coarse and plain, her face soiled with the sweat of manual, but honest, toil; her children came from the lanes and highways, from the field and workshop. Now she is rich, the cot is changed for the palace, the homespun for purple, the rigging-loft for marble churches. When she was poor she was mighty, despite her scanty means. Her wealth puts a new power in her hand. She can do now what once she could not...”

Ah! but Bishop Foster, while you could say in 1884 that “She can do now what once she could not,” it was probably also very true that “What she could once do, that she could no longer do!” Once, like Peter, Methodism's humble circuit-riders preaching in backwoods cabins had to say, “Silver and gold have I none,” but at the same time they could impart life and strength to the spiritually fallen and crippled with the words, “Such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6) While

proudly displaying their high steeples and basking in the comforts and finery of marble cathedrals, no doubt many Methodist ministers in 1884 could not do THAT.

Following the above quotation, Foster does make this appropriate observation about the state of affluent Methodism in 1884: “One of her great wants is the right use of her riches. They may hurt or help, which will depend on the manner in which they affect her spirit and the use she makes of them.”

He continues in the next paragraph:

“She wants not now social rank and position; once she did. Now she has them. She sits among the rulers of the land, she lives at court, she is in honor. Her colliers and cobblers have come to be merchant princes; and her rustic converts have grown up families of refinement and culture. With all sensible people she is sufficiently respected.”

But it should be asked, “BY WHOM was she then SUFFICIENTLY RESPECTED? -- by the world, or by God?”

R. S. Foster further comments in “Centenary Thoughts”: “She does not want to court the world, to let down her standard to meet the popular taste, to set her sails for the wealthy and the great; nor does she want to reject or repel them. Her mission is to the rich and the poor; the refined and the uncultured; to one class just as much as another, and to all alike. They all crowd her communion, and are all in that great world for whose salvation she is to labor. She is to know no distinction among them. At her altars, whether in the humble chapel or magnificent churchly edifice, they are to stand side by side as children of one Father, and brothers equally beloved.”

Being a Methodist Bishop, it is not surprising that this able holiness writer may have been less inclined to identify Methodism's taste for finery with an onsetting apostasy. But while wanting to see his church retain its pristine purity and power he seems too inclined to accept as legitimate its ostentation. He says that the rich and poor standing side-by-side at a Methodist altar in a magnificent cathedral must be “equally beloved,” but how likely was it that very many poor people felt at home in those ostentatious cathedrals? -- and how likely is it that the proud Methodist members of those religious show-places treated the down-and-outers who did come into their midst as “equally beloved” with the other high-browed snobs in their congregation?

Also, there seems to be something significant in the posture that Foster pictures: he has them “standing” together, and not “kneeling” together, at the Methodist altar. Elsewhere in “Centenary Thoughts” Foster observed: “The mourner's bench may have become obsolete, because no longer useful, but the demand for penitence will never cease.” Why would he write such a thing if kneeling at an old-fashioned “mourner's bench” was still in vogue among the new breed of affluent Methodists in 1884? It would appear from his remarks that “standing” at the altar and verbally “receiving Christ” and receiving Methodist membership had supplanted the “mourner's bench” in many ornate Methodist temples. It also appears that the term “penitence” had replaced rugged, old-fashioned, Bible “repentance” in their terminology.

My readers should read the whole of Foster's “Centenary Thoughts” before drawing their conclusions about Randolph Sinks Foster's state of mind and heart when he penned that publication. Further into the book, -- beyond all of the quotations I have taken from it -- he begins to make what I believe are much more sound and valid spiritual observations. So, please do not jump to hasty or prejudiced conclusions about what the man was before reading all of “Centenary Thoughts.” I plan to add that publication into our HDM Library following this publication. (Duane Maxey)

Regardless of all considerations and judgments about R. S. Foster, his book “Centenary

Thoughts” reveals much within Methodism that would have made Francis Asbury weep, instead of revel, had he been present at their Centennial Celebration! Asbury was right about the need for Methodists to humbly abstain from showy and worldly ostentation in their attire and in their meeting places. He was right in this, and Methodism went wrong by abandoning his leadership in the matter.



4. ASBURY WAS RIGHT ABOUT NOT BUILDING COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES

Perhaps the area where the most thinking Methodist leaders disagreed with Asbury's leadership was in the matter of building Methodist colleges and seminaries. They might pass off his views on other matters as merely somewhat extreme, but when he refrained from taking the M. E. Church into the business of raising up colleges, universities, and seats of so-called “higher learning,” some thought that he had really “missed the mark”!

But beyond his previous inward misgivings about building Methodist colleges, two dramatic events in particular spoke to Asbury – like “the handwriting on the wall” -- that God did not want Methodism to get involved in the “higher education” business.

Following the 1884 Christmas Conference, Thomas Coke, a lettered man, was much in favor of founding a Methodist College. Recording this part of M. E. History, Nathan Bangs wrote:

“In mentioning the college [Cokesbury], I am reminded of the necessity of giving an account of this institution, as it belongs most properly to this period of our history. Soon after the arrival of Dr. Coke in 1784, he and Mr. Asbury entered into a consultation respecting the expediency of establishing a literary institution for the education of the sons of our preachers and others who might wish to share in its benefits. Bishop Asbury tells us that he desired a school, but as Dr. Coke pleaded for a college, the conference, when the subject was submitted to them, decided in favor of Dr. Coke's plan, and measures were adopted to carry it into effect.”

Thus Thomas Coke and others overrode Asbury's misgivings, and pushed ahead with the building of a Methodist college, naming it “Cokesbury” in honor of both Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury. But what honor can come to anyone from the building of a thing that God did not want built? Bangs records the rosy prospects of its beginning and its destruction by fire about 10 years later:

“The site selected for the college buildings, which was on a rising ground in the town of Abingdon, about twenty-five miles from Baltimore, is thus described by Dr. Coke:--

“The situation delights me more than ever. There is not, I believe, a point of it, from whence the eye has not a view of at least twenty miles; and in some parts the prospect

extends even to fifty miles in length. The water part forms one of the most beautiful views in the United States; the Chesapeake Bay in all its grandeur, with a fine navigable river, the Susquehanna, which empties itself into it, lying exposed to view through a great extent of country.'

“It was on this spot that a noble brick building was erected, one hundred and eight feet in length, and forty in breadth; and the house was conveniently divided for lodging the students, and for recitation rooms, &c.... nearly five thousand dollars had been secured by subscriptions and donations, when they commenced building; and before the rooms were entirely finished a school was opened with a few scholars. On the 8th, 9th, and 10th days of December, 1787, the college was opened with religious exercises, and Bishop Asbury preached a sermon on each day, the dedication sermon being delivered on Sabbath, from 2 Kings 4:40, “O, thou man of God, there is death in the pot.” Whether the selection of this text was ominous or not of the fate of the institution, after being in successful operation for about ten years, it was consumed by fire. Bishop Asbury makes the following remarks on being notified of the destruction of the buildings:--

“We have now a second and confirmed account that Cokesbury College is consumed to ashes, a sacrifice of ten thousand pounds in about ten years! The foundation was laid 1785, and it was born December 7, 1795. Its enemies may rejoice, and its friends need not mourn. Would any man give me ten thousand pounds a year to do and suffer again what I have done for that house, I would not do it.”

Nathan Bangs was another godly, holiness man who felt that Methodism should raise up colleges and seminaries. He comments on Asbury's interpretation of this destruction of Cokesbury:

“It seems to have been the opinion of Bishop Asbury, that this destruction of the college buildings was an indication of divine Providence that it was no part of the duty of the Methodist Episcopal Church to engage in founding and raising up colleges.” He thought Asbury was wrong in his interpretation. I think he was right!

Still bent on overriding Asbury's persuasion, Cokesbury was rebuilt. Bangs describes both its rebuilding and its second destruction by fire:

“But although Bishop Asbury was dispirited in respect to building colleges, Dr. Coke, encouraged by the generosity of a number of wealthy friends in the vicinity of Abingdon, who sympathized with the sufferers, and also felt a deep interest in the cause of education, determined to make another effort. To aid him in his design, a number of friends in the city of Baltimore, after consulting together, immediately subscribed about four thousand five hundred dollars toward erecting a new building on the same premises. Ascertaining, however, that there was a large building in Baltimore which would answer the purpose, they purchased the premises for the sum of about twenty two thousand dollars. The ground and building thus purchased being more than was needed for the college, the brethren in Baltimore determined to erect a new church on a part of the premises. This was accordingly done, and the church and college were fitted up for use, and the college was opened with a fair prospect of success, even more promising than what had appeared in Cokesbury College; but unhappily a similar fate awaited it.

“Through the imprudence of a few boys who had been making a bonfire with some shavings in an adjoining house, the flames were communicated to the house in which they were assembled, and thence to the church and college, which were, after ineffectual attempts to extinguish the flames, entirely consumed. Thus were the hopes of the friends of education again blasted by the sudden destruction of these buildings, by which the Methodists lost not less than forty-four thousand dollars, and the cause of learning was abandoned in despair by the Methodist Episcopal Church for a number of years.”

Sadly, some good and holy Methodist leaders like Bangs simply could not see what was very plain to Asbury: GOD DID NOT WANT METHODISM TO RAISE UP COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES. The explanation of those destructions of Cokesbury can be seen in God's explanation of things to Israel through Haggai: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little ... he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes... Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. WHY? Saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house." Haggai 1:6, 9

Things were draining away all of the profit from Israel's laborious efforts, and God wanted them to know WHY! Through Haggai, God told them WHY. Through Asbury, God also told Methodism WHY Cokesbury had been twice destroyed, but they disbelieved the God-sent explanation. *God saw that the raising up of costly institutions of higher learning would both sap away Methodist funds that he wanted devoted to spreading the gospel and would also divert Methodism's attention, time, and energy away from their God-appointed mission: Spreading Scriptural Holiness Over These Lands.* The Education Tree had fruit to make one wise, *but not wise unto salvation* – instead wise unto that knowledge which was a mixture of good and evil – *good in some ways, but poisoned with the hellish unbelief of Satan!*

But Methodism took the bait, and Nathan Bangs helped spearhead the drive into the Methodist Education business shortly after Asbury's death. He summarizes thus about what he perceived to be Asbury's unwillingness to venture again into building Methodist Colleges after the double-destruction of Cokesbury:

"I will venture to mention two things in which I think, with great deference indeed, he [Asbury] erred in his administration. In the first place, he and Dr. Coke having been baffled in their earlier attempts to establish seminaries of learning, I think Bishop Asbury, becoming discouraged from these failures, was at length too indifferent to this subject, especially in the ministry.

"Probably having beheld the deleterious effects upon the Church by trusting to *learning alone as a qualification for the ministry*, and also seeing the disgusting pedantry (being overly concerned with details and whose tone is condescending. High minded) of some who had a smattering knowledge of the sciences, he might have imbibed an undue prejudice against learning and a learned ministry, fearing that learning and deep piety were not easily associated in the same man. He had also long been a witness to the deadening effects of a lifeless, though learned ministry, upon the interests of true religion on the one hand, and the enlivening effects of a spiritual though unlearned ministry on the other; and he doubtless persuaded himself that it was extremely difficult to pursue the one without sacrificing the other. And as to general education, he thought that the Methodists were not called to devote their energies to the promotion of this, but to preach the gospel, not considering probably that this might be done without leaving the other undone."

In the preceding Bangs presented what I believe was reason enough for himself and others to follow Asbury's lead and not enter into the education business until or unless God definitely directed them otherwise. Instead, Bangs discounts Asbury's persuasion:

"But whatever consideration might have influenced him, it is certain that after the destruction of Cokesbury College, and the failure of the district schools, he did not sufficiently encourage the pursuit of literature and science, and that some preachers who, in despite of every obstruction thrown in their way, manifested a determination to acquire all the knowledge within their reach, were sometimes checked in their progress from a fear of incurring the suspicion of being more ambitious to shine in the galaxy of literature than to be useful as ministers of the sanctuary. And it is highly probable that some who

gave evidence of the existence of this weakness, by drawing forth the rebukes of the bishop, may have given birth to the suspicion. He knew perfectly well that “knowledge” without charity “puffeth up” the soul with vanity; and that while it is possible to be “spoiled with philosophy and vain conceit,” it is equally possible for the minister of Christ, though destitute of the embellishments of human literature and science, to be useful to his fellow-men.

“But though these considerations are offered as an apology for the indifference manifested by Bishop Asbury on the subject of education, they are not intended as a justifiable excuse for its general neglect for so many years by the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was a fault which will require years of bitter repentance and assiduous amendment to atone for, as it has thrown us behind the age in scientific and mental improvement, with whatever care and diligence we may now redeem the time. It is, however, cause of gratitude that a redeeming spirit has gone abroad, which augurs well for the future prosperity and rising glory of the Church.

“But whatever indifference he might have manifested toward the cause of education in general, he by no means neglected the improvement of his own mind. Though his constant traveling and the other indispensable duties of his office, prevented him from any regular and systematic pursuit of knowledge, yet he was, as far as his circumstances would permit, a hard student, a man of general information, much addicted to reading and study, and a close observer of passing events, of men, manners, and things. He was, indeed, in the habit of reading the sacred Scriptures in the languages in which they were first written, though his modesty in this respect prevented him from making any ostentatious show of learning. It is manifest, however, from his journal, though they were all erased in the revision which was made under his own inspection up to the year 1807, and was well known to his friends, that he was in the habit of referring for the illustration of difficult texts, to the original Scriptures, and to the critical interpretation of certain passages. Such, indeed, was the rich store of his knowledge, that he could bring 'from his treasury things new and old,' and he applied it all for the promotion of experimental and practical godliness.”

It was not “learning” that Asbury felt checked about: it was the turning aside from Methodism's primary mission as a preachers of spiritual knowledge *into becoming being teachers of earthly knowledge which is often corrupted with satanic lies and deceit.*

But there was a reason that Nathan Bangs in particular became such an ardent advocate of so-called Higher Education. He had imbibed these notions from his father, Lemuel Bangs – a man who was so prejudiced against the supposed ignorance of Methodist circuit-riders that when Jesse Lee entered their area he kept his family at home, refusing to give him an ear. Abel Stevens, in his “Life and Times of Nathan Bangs” (hdm0189) describes it thus:

“Lemuel Bangs was not an illiberal man, for he had broken away from the Puritan Church, but he was given to books, and held to the New England traditional reverence for education. He resisted the temptation of his curiosity to hear this wonderful itinerant, because Lee was not educated. Lee came to the town, induced the schoolmaster to send word by the children to their families, that he would preach in the court-house that evening, and he did preach there with good effect; but the blacksmith's [Lemuel Bangs'] family [including his son Nathan] were kept in close quarters at home... Nathan became a robust youth, of athletic habits and active mind. He had succeeded well in the studies of the village school, and his father fondly hoped to be able to afford him a liberal education.”

One can easily see that strong prejudices for education and against ignorance were

instilled into the mind of Nathan Bangs long before he left his father's house, and I think these prejudices are what led him to ignore God's leadership for Methodism through Asbury and to push hard for Methodist Colleges, Universities, and Seminaries after Asbury's death. *After Nathan Bangs' conversion and sanctification in Canada, he returned to preach the Methodist gospel in his father's house*, but even then his father so equated Methodism with ignorance that he at first declined to sit in the same room where his son was preaching. Later, Lemuel Bangs was also saved, but I have read nothing in Bangs biography that leads me to believe that either his father, or himself, ever moderated their strong bias in favor of Higher Education.

Indeed, one of Nathan's brothers thus described the lingering prejudice of their father, Lemuel, long after his conversion:

“The education of my father was above the mediocrity of his times. He was a great reader during his whole life, and his memory was so tenacious that he retained what he read. One instance I give you. He sat once, in his old age, hearing his son Nathan preach. In his ardor or haste Nathan made an incorrect quotation from an English author. My father noticed it at once, and spoke right out to him, before the congregation, making the necessary correction.”

Though, like Asbury, Nathan Bangs became a self-educated man, learning in the saddle as it were during his itinerant ministry, he retained that strong prejudice for Higher Education. Asbury died in 1816, and at the very next Conference in 1820 Bangs was pushing hard for Methodism to enter this field. His following account also reveals that others had been pushing for the same as early as 1 year after Asbury left the scene:

“We have before remarked that the cause of education had been abandoned by our Church since the destruction of Cokesbury College the second time by fire, and that the consequences of this long neglect of so important a cause began to bear injuriously upon the character and prosperity of the Church. This had been painfully felt and feelingly expressed by some of the most enlightened members of our Church, both ministers and people, and some incipient steps had been taken by the New England and New York conferences to remedy the evil. In 1817 an academy had been established in Newmarket, N.H., under the patronage of the New England conference, and another in the city of New York in 1819, under the patronage of the New York conference. Wishing to secure also the patronage of the General Conference, as far as might be consistent, and likewise to awaken a spirit favorable to the cause of education generally, the friends of these institutions presented to this General Conference [of 1820] their respective constitutions and plans of procedure...

“That opposition should be manifested to these efforts to raise the standard of education, by any of the disciples of the illustrious Wesley, whose profound learning added so much splendor to his character as an evangelical minister, may seem strange to some. This, however, was the fact; and their unreasonable opposition, exemplified in a variety of ways, tended not a little to paralyze, for a season, the efforts of those who had enlisted in this cause; while the apathy of others retarded its progress, and made its final success somewhat uncertain. And it has not been without much labor and persevering industry that this opposition has been measurably overcome, and the dormant energies of the Church awakened and excited to action in favor of this noble enterprise. Its onward march, however, has been hailed with no less delight by its friends than deprecated by its enemies, while its success thus far has added greatly to the character which Methodism was acquiring in the public estimation. All we now want, to place our literary institutions on a permanent foundation, and make them eminently useful, is the simultaneous and general effort of the members and friends of the Church to contribute liberally for their support and endowment.”

Finally, the opposition of those who sided with Asbury's views on the matter was swept aside. At Conference after Conference, Bangs avidly pushed for Methodist Higher Education across a number of years – *and, like heedless Eve, Methodism fell for the Higher Education and Knowledge bait and lunged full speed ahead after that delectable fruit!* One or two institutions of higher learning were of course, not enough, and soon Methodism was awash with more Colleges and Seminaries than they had money to maintain. The high-minded graduates soon fancied themselves to “have more understanding than all [their] teachers!” (Psalms 119:99) Agnostic and Atheistic notions filled their elated heads; their uneducated Methodist preachers were scorned as knowing nothing, the Bible was scrutinized with unbelieving minds; *long-held Methodist beliefs were cast down under their unworthy feet and trodden in the dust of their hostility to real salvation. Don't tell me it didn't happen! It did!!! And through the door of “Higher Education” that flood-tide of apostasy swept into the Methodist Church, drowning it as a vital force for the promotion of Holiness, or any other phase of true salvation!*

ASBURY WAS RIGHT!!! BANGS AND ALL OTHER WELL-MEANING METHODISTS WHO TOOK SATAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION BAIT WERE WRONG!!! DEAD WRONG!!

There came a time when Nathan Bangs had his advocacy of Higher Learning come back and slap him in the face. Stevens writes, in His “Life and Times of Nathan Bangs”:

“On the 20th of January, 1841, he [Nathan Bangs] was elected President of the Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, an appointment which he always afterward regretted, and by which he made the greatest self-sacrifice of his life... He doubted his qualification for a collegiate chair; for though he had been an assiduous student, and was somewhat acquainted with the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French languages, and competent to teach the Moral and Intellectual Sciences, he possessed no knowledge of collegiate discipline, and was too far advanced in life for any successful preparation for his new office. But his predecessor, Dr. Olin, had failed in health, and had nominated him for the place. The Faculty of the University visited New York, and urged upon him the importance, the necessity of his acceptance. He appealed to his ministerial brethren of the city, but they voted that it was his duty to yield; and at last, by a denial of his best predilections, he did so, in deference to the general command of the Church... Its friends did not expect of him any important services as an instructor, but it was supposed that his high denominational reputation and his paternal superintendence of the government of the University would command public confidence, while a competent faculty would maintain its rank for scholarship.”

But Bangs was in for a rude rebuff from some of the young college upstarts who fancied themselves wiser than Solomon:

“There was discontent, however, among the students; their president was himself not a graduate; they discussed among themselves the significance of his name on their diplomas; their dissatisfaction reached him in a painful manner, and he resigned his office. The Faculty and some of the students remonstrated against this act, but he persisted. The “Joint Board” adopted resolutions expressing their regret at his resignation, and tendering him thanks for his services. The Faculty addressed him a letter of affectionate farewell. The Alumni, at their annual meeting for 1842, sent him a letter expressing “their sincere regret that circumstances have induced him to resign the Presidency of their Alma Mater!” and a number of students united in a protest against the alleged unjustifiable form of the opposition of the malcontents.

“Bangs retired from the University immediately after the commencement of 1842. He had suffered much in his health and spirits while at Middletown, “and now,” he writes, “I

was thrown out of employment and had no means of support.”

Nathan Bangs was no doubt deeply hurt by the cruel rebuff from those haughty young Methodist students. For more than 20 years he had pushed the founding and funding of Methodist Colleges and Universities, and now... because he himself had no college degree, they did not want his name on their diplomas, as one unworthy of authenticating their high-minded scholastic achievements!

Bangs survived the blow, went on with life, and died in holy triumph... BUT HE WAS WRONG, SADLY WRONG to have pushed so long and so hard for the introduction of institutions into Methodism that were eventually a “slap in the face” -- not only to himself, but to many other godly Methodists, to the vital doctrines of the Wesleyan Gospel, and worst of all... a slap in the face to God Himself! Like Asbury, Nathan Bangs was a great man – but Job 32:9 tells us that “Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.” It was he, not Asbury who failed to “understand [divine] judgment” in the matter. ASBURY WAS RIGHT – METHODISM WENT WRONG!



APPENDIX

I present below the entire text of Francis Asbury's “Valedictory Address” to his successor William McKendree. It is taken from Robert Paine's “Life and Times of William McKendree” (hdm0563). It contains material by Asbury pertinent to the subjects of this publication, along with other information that may be of interest to students of Asbury's life and students of Methodism.

From “The Life and Times of William McKendree” by Robert Paine

The following is the “Address to the Bishop,” referred to in Bishop Asbury's dying words. As Paul in prison addresses Timothy, so the senior addresses his junior in this epistle. It is the result of his mature reflection after much study and long observation. Some things, especially toward the beginning, which refer merely to the mode of carrying out his plan, he might have modified had he foreseen the future, but as a whole it needs neither apology nor explanation. It was evidently designed for the press, and after having been most carefully and in a most scholarly manner prepared was subscribed by his own hand. It is given verbatim et literatim:

A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS TO WILLIAM MCKENDREE, BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY FRANCIS ASBURY

“Speaking to the Genesee Annual Conference in your presence on the subject of apostolical, missionary, Methodist Episcopal Church government, I was desired to commit my thoughts to writing. I feel the more disposed to do this, that I may leave a

written testimony which may be seen, read, and known when your friend and father is taken from the evil to come.

Sir: My advice is that there be only three effective bishops, as from the beginning, traveling through the whole continent, each one to preside alternately in all the Annual Conferences, one to preside during the sitting of the same Conference, the other two to have charge of and plan the stations and perform ordinations, assisted by the elders in both branches. The plan of stations should be submitted to the President of the Conferences, in triune order, to give a final decision before it is read out. I wish to warn you against the growing evil of locality in bishops, elders, preachers, or Conferences. Locality is essential to cities and towns, but traveling is as essential to the country. Were I to name cities, such as Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome, with all the great cities, both ancient and modern, what havoc have these made in the Churches! Alas for us! Out of seven hundred traveling preachers, we have about one hundred located in towns and cities and small rich circuits. Guard particularly against two orders of preachers: the one for the country, the other for the cities; the latter generally settle themselves to purchase ministers, and too often men of gifts and learning intend to set themselves to sale.

I am bold to say that the apostolic order of things was lost in the first century, when Church governments were adulterated and had much corruption attached to them. At the Reformation, the reformers only beat off a part of the rubbish, which put a stop to the rapid increase of absurdities at that time; but how they have increased since! Recollect the state of the different Churches, as it respects government and discipline, in the seventeenth century when the Lord raised up that great and good man, John Wesley, who formed an evangelical society in England. In 1784, an apostolical form of Church government was formed in the United States of America at the first General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland.

You know, my brother, that the present ministerial cant is that we cannot now, as in former apostolical days, have such doctrines, such discipline, such convictions, such conversions, such witnesses of sanctification, and such holy men. But I say that we can; I say we must; yea, I say we have. And can men claim the rights and privileges of apostles if they are impostors and not true ministers of the holy sanctuary? Instead of "going" to preach, they "stay" to preach. Hence it is that schools, colleges, and universities undertake to make men ministers that the Lord Jesus Christ never commanded to be made. The present Episcopal Churches are greatly independent of each other. All the numerous orders of Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists are also local. If we wish to see pure and unadulterated Church history, let us go to the Acts of the Apostles and mark the characters of those ministers in the time of persecution – such as Paul, Timothy, Titus, Tychicus, Archippus, Trophimus, Artemas, Luke, Epaphroditus, etc. -- men who did honor to themselves as ministers of Christ. But there are too many the opposite of these, whom we can view in no other light, at present, than *as men going into the ministry by their learning, sent by their parents or moved by pride, the love of ease, money, or honor. Are not such moved by Satan more than by the Holy Ghost to assume the sacred office of the holy ministry?* Mark well what a situation the apostles were in. If unfaithful in the discharge of their duty, God would condemn and punish them the most severely. On the other hand, the people were ready to starve, stone, or beat them to death. Modern priests will please the people, that they may not be starved or beaten; but will not God condemn such teachers to everlasting destruction? We lay no claim to the Latin, Greek, English, Lutheran, Swedish, or Protestant Episcopal Church order. It will be seen that we are so unlike them that we could not stand as related to them. Would their bishops ride five or six thousand miles in nine months for eighty dollars a year, with their traveling expense less or more, preach daily when opportunity serves, meet a number of camp meetings in

the year, make arrangements for stationing seven hundred preachers, ordain a hundred more annually, ride through all kinds of weather, and along roads in the worst state, at our time of life – the one sixty-nine, the other in his fifty-sixth year?

When the Methodist preachers came first to this country, one-half of the continent was overspread with different names and orders of Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, English, French, German, Holland, Scotch, and Irish, with many Quakers. In the Southern part were Episcopalians. They had but few Churches and no bishops. At this time the Methodists were, among others, not organized and had not the ordinances among us. As some in pleasantry said: “We were a Church, and no Church.” In some places we communed with the Episcopalians. In 1779, some of our brethren in Virginia attempted to organize themselves into a Church; but in 1780, the writer of this address visited them, when they agreed to suspend their administration, and with united voice call upon Mr. Wesley to make some provision for them. Accordingly, in 1784, our faithful father, Mr. Wesley, ordained Thomas Coke, bishop, or general superintendent, and Francis Asbury was elected by the General Conference held in Baltimore, Md., December, 1784, general superintendent; was first ordained deacon and elder; on December 27, bishop, or general superintendent; Richard Whatcoat in May, 1800; and William McKendree in May, 1808. Dr. Coke was ordained deacon and elder by two scriptural English bishops, and so was John Wesley. Do any ancient or modern Churches stand any better ground than we do with respect to ordination, with John Wesley's apostolic right? Probably Paul was ordained with Barnabas. (Acts 13:1-3.)

Should any ask why we did not seek ordination from other Churches, we answer them by asking if we should go to local men to be ordained traveling bishops. Should we go to Presbyterians to be ordained Episcopal Methodists? Or to Episcopalians, who at that time had no bishop or power of ordination in the United States till application was made to the British Parliament, and that legislative body passed a law for the express purpose authorizing their bishops to consecrate and ordain bishops for the thirteen States of America, in 1785? Here let it be observed, that the Methodist was the first Church organized after the establishment of peace in 1783, and that the Protestant Episcopalians were not organized as a Church until after there was a law passed by the British Parliament. Or could we subscribe to Calvinian articles? Surely, no. Or could we submit to locality? By no means. Let local men ordain local men, baptize or rebaptize local men; we must shape our course otherwise and prepare to meet the different Annual Conferences from Maine to Georgia and the Mississippi, and to retain all the ancient essential branches of Methodism in all its parts and try sacredly to maintain our traveling plan and support a true missionary, apostolic Church. And suppose this excellent constitution and order of things should be broken, what shall the present or future bishops do? Let them do as your noble countryman did – resign and retire to private life.

It is a serious thing for a bishop to be stripped of any constitutional rights chartered to him at his ordination, without which he could not and would not have entered into that sacred office, he being conscious at the same time he had never violated those sacred rights. Comparing human Church history with the Acts of the Apostles, it will manifestly appear that the apostolic order of things ended in about fifty years. With the preachers and people of that day, the golden order was lost. But we must restore and retain primitive order; we must, we will, have the same doctrine, the same spirituality, the same power in ordinances, in ordination, and in spirit.

Joseph Pilmoor had been but a short time on his mission to this country before he saw that it would not be proper for the Methodists to continue an Episcopal society. He was for forming an independent Church of England. Mr. Wesley was called for near twelve or thirteen years, repeatedly, to do something for his people in America. Dr. Whitehead

reproached Mr. Wesley, in writing his “Life,” for ordaining preachers in America, unless he had the voice of preachers and people in America; yet, if my memory serves me right, the Doctor grants Mr. Wesley's right so to do if he had had their voice; and this he most assuredly had, and it had been communicated to him by word and letter; or why did every heart leap with joy and the members of society and the congregations in America embrace our Church form and order and by thousands giving up themselves to the ordinances and presenting their children for baptism for nearly thirty years last past?

You have often heard me say that Church governments changed with the Church into strange, incredible forms – as monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, and legal establishments – when scholars, lawyers, doctors, and peers became bishops and bishops became kings, temporal princes, and peers, and presbyters became assemblymen and senators; in this country they become chaplains to Congress; yes, members of Congress! It will come to this conclusion, that ours is the apostolic plan. But say you, Are all apostles? Are all that we have ordained holy men? They might have been. Were Judas, Simon Magus, and Demas faithful unto death? Ministers may fall from grace and office; and no wonder if we, on ordaining four thousand local and nearly two thousand traveling, preachers, should find some to turn out apostates.

Thus I have traced regular order and succession in John Wesley, Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, Richard Whatcoat, and William McKendree. Let any other Church trace its succession as direct and as pure, if they can. Does any one doubt the experience, piety, or labors of these men, so long tried, known, and read of all men, both friends and enemies, for so many years?

William P. Otterbein, of Baltimore, a regular Presbyterian – the German apostle to America – whose piety, labors, and learning were great, this man of God assisted T. Coke, R. Whatcoat, and T. Vasey in the ordination of Francis Asbury. You will say if our Church were as pure as the primitive Church, will it not, may it not, like other modern, decline? I answer, We live in a purer age and in a free country. If discipline be maintained, men that carry sand instead of salt for the sheep will be constrained soon to leave us, to join some more honorable, but perhaps fallen, Church where they can have more ease and greater emoluments. We have lived to see the end of such persons who left us and set up for themselves – witness Hammet and O'Kelly.

Thomas Hawe is, a moderate Episcopalian, fifty years a beneficed minister, is one of the most impartial historians on the subject of episcopacy. I shall chose this address with several quotations from his work, wherein you will see that he, without knowledge or design, has given the order of Episcopal Methodism the plume of honor above all others:

“From the morning spread upon the mountains to the meridian splendor of the Sun of righteousness, I wish to trace the progress of his gospel amidst the storms of persecution, till his glory shall be finally revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Contemptuous infidelity, proud philosophy, bigoted superstition, atheistical immorality, heretical and schismatical depravity, may unite their powers against the child Jesus and his everlasting gospel, but the gates of hell shall never prevail. His persecuted Church shall rise. I have continued to prefer an episcopal mode of Church government, unless I can find a better. I am satisfied that the Methodist mode of episcopal government is more apostolic than the Church of England ever was, will, or can be, without a radical reformation from its essential form of locality, written sermons and prayers, State laws, and human policy.” (Vol. I, p. 12, of his Introduction.)

“When I speak of episcopacy as most correspondent in my poor idea to the apostolic practice and general usage of the Church in the first and generally esteemed purer ages, let no man imagine I plead for that episcopacy which, *rising very early on the stilts of*

practical pride and worldly-mindedness, has since overspread the earth with its baneful shadow; or suppose those to be true successors of the apostles who, grasping at power and preeminence over Churches which their labors never planted nor watered, claiming dominion over districts, provinces, and kingdoms beyond all power of individual superintendency.” (P. 14.)

Here, Bishop, mark: “Planted or watered.” We have planted and watered; although our continent is three thousand miles in length, we have measured it year after year, embracing fifty-one or two districts, about six hundred circuits, and nine Annual Conferences, all which, with very few exceptions, we have visited. Then, according to our author, we are apostolic bishops; for we have both planted and watered, and do water still. As to temporal power, what have we to do with that in this country? We are not senators, congressmen, or chaplains; neither do we hold any civil offices. We neither have, nor wish to have, anything to do with the government of the States, nor, as I conceive, do the States fear us. Our kingdom is not of this world. For near half a century we have never grasped at power.

“All united in one Church fellowship [so the Methodists] under the superintendency of apostolic men at first and on their decease, the most distinguished for zeal, wisdom, sufferings, influence, or respectability of any kind, was called by the suffrage of the elders and people to be their superintendent, president, (praeses; hegoumenos,) a leader; and thus the name of bishop (kat' exochen), on account of preeminence, became very early appropriate to one who was (primus inter pares;) and, as Archbishop Usher says, differed only in degree of advantagement and not in order. These were, I apprehend, always from the apostolic days raised to their station by the voice of the people and their fellows. They preside in the deliberations of their several Churches, with the presbyters, their assessors. They were deputed to all synods which treated of ecclesiastical matters; and whilst every congregation judged its own members, they received the accusations against elders who were charged with offenses and censured or removed them. They examined the chosen candidates for the ministry, and, with the presbyter, ordained them by imposition of hands. This dangerous eminence marked them as peculiar victims in days of persecution. Far, therefore, from being an enviable or desirable situation, no man dare to aspire after or occupy it but such as counted their lives not dear unto themselves, that they 'might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received from the Lord to fulfill it,' whether as confessors or martyrs.” (P. 16.)

“The sudden ability of illiterate men of so great a number in a moment, and with perfection, to speak in all languages, to express themselves with such propriety and force as not only to be clearly understood, but impressive on the consciences of the numerous foreigners then at Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, such a phenomenon could not but strike the hearers with astonishment and afford an evidence of divine agency too incontestable to admit of a rational doubt.” (P. 28.)

Now, Bishop McKendree, I will make this remark, that to take this transaction of the Divine Spirit prophetically, it saith to every minister, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;” and that in all ages to come, unlettered men should be raised up to preach the gospel with the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. One may say, This man speaks well! -- ah, he is a college-taught man! Again it may be said, This man speaks well; he is a scholar! But you are mistaken. He has only a common education – a plowman, a tailor, a carpenter, or a shoemaker! Then he must be taught of God, if he is not taught of man. Then we may rationally conclude that learning is not an essential qualification to preach the gospel. It may be said no man but a fool will speak against learning. I have not spoken against learning. I have only said that it cannot be said to be an essential qualification to preach the gospel. It was once reported that two

impostors (Roman priests) came to England, entered themselves as porters or draymen, but said they had received the gift of tongues and were called to preach. But Dr. Doddridge, being in the city, was requested to examine them and found they were scholars; but when he examined them in Welsh, the cheat was found out. And too often the learned priests deceive the people by their learning, or professing so to be; because the first preachers were blest with the gift of tongues immediately from heaven; so that a man must spend four or seven years in learning languages before he is permitted to preach the gospel. And who is to decide the question? Their practice and that of our Lord does not strictly agree.

But to our author. "The Church at Jerusalem seems to have been under the presidency of the Apostle James. The great luminary was now rising to carry the light of the everlasting gospel into the heathen nations and to display a scene of labors and successes unequalled in the records of the Christian Church. The greater part of the Acts contain the account of his (Paul's) life and labors recorded by his faithful attendant and companion in the work, Luke the Evangelist. Paul stands allowedly in the first ranks of eminence, in nothing behind the very chief of the apostles, whilst the generality of the others were out of the lowest orders of society (agrammatotai kai tidiotai), unlettered or private and laymen (Acts 4:13), men of no literary acquirements. Paul seems to have been born in the superior rank of life." (Pp. 30, 31, 33)

Thus not many wise or rich men of the earth, in the past as well as the present age, have obeyed the call of the gospel.

"He (Paul) flew as with the wings of a seraph over the habitable globe; and the vastness of his success corresponded with the rapidity of his movements and the indefatigable labors of his ministry. From Damascus to Arabia, Judea, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and round about Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of Christ. Returning with the same unwearied diligence to visit all the Churches his ministry had planted, he received a divine intimation that he must shortly visit Italy also. And he extended his views into Spain. An eye (geographical) cast over this immense tract of country will fill us with astonishment, how one man's labor could fill so extensive a sphere, and demonstrates how much may be done when the Spirit of Jesus animates and the benedictions of the Holy Ghost accompany the Word with power and much assurance. There is one particular I may not forget and which we Gentiles are bound to acknowledge with peculiar thankfulness, that he is our apostle. A ministry of more than thirty years was terminated, it is probable, by martyrdom." (Pp. 36, 37)

"I regard Paul as the first of human beings, to whom more are indebted for salvation, under the great Head of the Church, than to any other creature. If his labors and preaching, as recorded, be taken into the account, if we consider his Epistles to the several Churches – the inestimably blessed effects of which must be felt and acknowledged in all Churches to the end of time." (P. 38.)

"It seems to have been a matter decided by the Church respecting the two itinerant apostles that Paul should go to the Gentiles and Peter to the circumcision. I suppose there was great wisdom herein displayed." (P. 40.)

"A multitude of worthies have their names recorded in the Acts of the Apostles whose itinerant labors, with those of Paul, had the most powerful tendency to spread the Christian faith." (P. 47.)

"A Church without evidence of the influence and experience of the operation of the Holy Ghost hath but a name to live and is dead, and whatever may be its forms, or however sound its confession of faith, it hath no more title to be reckoned a Christian Church than a statue or corpse to be esteemed a living man. The form in which the Church appeared in

the best, the primitive age, under the immediate inspection of the apostles and disciples of the Lord, deserves our consideration. And here, drawing around me the sacred circle, I wish to confine myself to the words of the Holy Ghost without any regard to the traditions of men. And I shall begin at Jerusalem. This was the fruitful womb from whence issued the noble army of martyrs, confessors, and evangelists, who, holding up the word of light, diffused the blessings of the glory of God the Saviour to the ends of the earth. These were the fruits of our Lord's ministry during his labors in Judea and the adjacent countries. They consisted of twelve men, first chosen, called apostles, or persons sent. To these were added seventy others, who were sent out to preach and teach. They were all endowed with miraculous powers; and on their return from their itinerancy through the nation, reported with triumph the wonders they had wrought. About five hundred brethren were summoned to behold our Lord's ascension into heaven." (P. 52)

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"Three thousand believed on the first day (Pentecost), and myriads followed them. The immensity of this number affords us two views of their Church order: First, as necessarily distributed into various congregations, no one place being capable of containing such myriads or any one bishop or elder sufficient to administer the ordinances among them. We accordingly find them breaking bread from house to house (Acts 2:46), preaching and teaching in every house (Acts 5:42), which seems to describe the Church at Jerusalem. Second, these several house Churches formed one united Church body under the presidency of James, and not Peter. (Acts 15:13.) He was at the head of the first council. To him Paul addressed himself (Acts 21:18) when all the elders or presbyters being assembled by him he reported to them the happy success of his ministry among the Gentiles. The necessity of a president where so great a number of elders resided and so many congregations were formed seems as natural for the preservation of order as it appears actually the case in this mother of all the Churches." (Pp. 54, 55)

"The care of the poor widows led to the institution of the order of deacons. This originated in a complaint of real or supposed partiality in the distribution of the alms of the faithful to the native Jewish widows, in preference to the Hellenists. (Acts 6:1) The apostles themselves being too much engaged to attend to these temporal concerns, recommended it to the Church to elect seven persons for the discharge of this office. These were accordingly chosen by general suffrage, not for each separate congregation, but for the whole body, and were set apart by the apostles after solemn prayer and imposition of hands, to this service. Though the care of the widows was immediately intrusted to them, it prevented them not from being employed in other labors of love. Philip was an evangelist and Stephen a like zealous advocate of Christ and his cause. In consequence of his boldness in the synagogue of the Libertines, the blood of this first martyr was shed by the fury of his enemies, and a great and general persecution following, all the principal disciples were dispersed except the apostles who remained at Jerusalem. (Acts 8:1) These, flying in different directions, everywhere preached the gospel and with great success through Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and some as far as Antioch, Damascus, Phenice, and Cypress. They were village preachers, highway preachers, and were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Paul (Acts 24:28), in revisiting the Churches which had been planted principally by himself, edifies, comforts, and establishes them by ordaining elders in every Church with prayers and fasting." (P. 56)

"Returning through Pisidia and Attalia, they arrived happily at Antioch, communicating the glad tidings of their success and of the Gentile Churches which they had planted. I can only observe here that I find in all these widely dispersed and numerous congregations no mention made of any appointment but that of presbyters, all cemented in one bond of union under the supervisal of the great itinerant evangelists." (P. 62)

And so it should have continued, and would have continued, if there had been a succession of a faithful seed of holy men to follow apostolic order, but as early as the second century they must have their local bishops or local apostles.

“Though James was not superior to Peter or the other apostles at Jerusalem [he may mean he was not superior as to age, gifts, or standing, but certainly he was superior, inasmuch as he had never so publicly denied his Lord], he had been evidently appointed to fill the place of president, or primus inter pares. Yet neither he nor any of his apostolic associates assumed to themselves authority to decide but by the suffrage of the whole body of the Church under immediate divine direction.” (P. 63)

Our Annual, or more particularly our General, Conference resembles this grand council at Jerusalem, where James presided and all the other apostles, elders, and brethren solemnly discussed the cause or causes before them, and James pronounced sentence according to the unanimous suffrage of the assembly, and the definitive decree was in favor of Gentile liberty.

Paul and Barnabas separated for a while (Acts 15:39); but probably God overruled this for good, and perhaps the Churches were more profited by their distinct labors than if they had traveled in company.

Dr. Haweis continues: “It is evident that Timothy was still but a youth (Ch. 4:14), and whatever office he sustained or with whatever gifts he was endued he received them by the laying on of Paul's hands and of the presbytery. (1 Tim. 4:14.) Did presbyters then ordain bishops, or were the terms synonymous?” Query, Had there not been two distinct acts in his ordination? Compare 1 Timothy 4:14, and 2 Timothy 1:6: “The laying on the hands of the presbytery, stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.” “That Timothy was left at Ephesus with superintending authority, where there were many bishops, is evident. (1 Tim. 1:3) He was enjoined to encourage and honor those who presided over the congregations well, and especially such as were more actively laborious in preaching and catechizing. (5:18) Respecting hands, he was to lay hands suddenly on no man; and, without partiality or personal respect, he was to admit none into the ministry but after proper examination and conviction of their call and qualifications. He was also cautiously to receive and weigh accusations against elders who should give offense and pronounce the sentence due to their unfaithfulness, acts strongly marking superior jurisdiction, and I hence infer that particular Churches neither ordained nor censured their own ministers, although they elected and recommended; and, if faulty, accused them by two or three witnesses before the great itinerant evangelists.” (P. 76.)

Mark well the similarity of apostolic order and government and the Methodist Episcopal form of things!

In the Second Epistle to Timothy, Paul appears to have “returned again to the house of his prison at Rome, and ready to be offered up on the altar of martyrdom. He had detached his faithful itinerant helpers to a variety of services [although a prisoner, yet clothed with the authority of Christ, he appointed men of God their work), Cresens, to Galatia; Titus, to Dalmatia; while Timothy himself had been left in Asia, from whence he was shortly to proceed to Rome with Mark, who had once departed from the work, but had now returned to the labors and dangers of itinerancy. The principal subject of the Epistle is the dying charge of the great apostle to his beloved son respecting his own teaching and conduct and worthy the attentive consideration of every bishop or presbyter upon earth.” (See p. 77)

Paul's two favored sons, Timothy and Titus, were his chief companions, and greatly employed in the regulation of the congregations which had been raised by his labors. The

postscript of his first Epistle calls Timothy the first bishop of the Church of the Ephesians; but there is no such title given him by Paul or any intimation of his being at Ephesus but as one of the great itinerant evangelists, the companion of Paul and deputed by him to assist in bringing the congregations into a regular order of worship and discipline.

“It nowhere appears that Titus was more the Bishop of Crete than of Dalmatia (2 Tim. 5:10) or of Nicopolis (Titus 3:2) or had any fixed residence or diocese, he being one of the great itinerant evangelists who went about preaching everywhere in season, out of season. And therefore as soon as he had settled the Cretan Church in the most edifying manner, he was ordered to come and winter with Paul at Nicopolis, and Artemas or Tychicus should be dispatched to fill his place in the Cretan congregations.

“A general superiority in all the Churches which they visited appears to have been exercised by these great evangelists, though none appears stationary in any one place. They ordained, censured, regulated, were the cementing bond of union to the different Churches [so should the Methodist bishops be], maintaining a unity of order and procedure through the whole. They all bore the name of apostles (2 Cor. 8:23), were everywhere received with reverence and obeyed with filial affection. [‘If any inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you; or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the Churches and the glory of Christ.’] They assumed no domain over their faith, but were helpers of the joy of the faithful wherever they went. The gifts, abilities, and zeal which they displayed, with every divine temper which adorns the Christian ministry, could not but give them weight and procure them influence by whatever name they might be distinguished, and in every Christian Church, in the very nature of things, such men must possess superiority, whatever be its constitution. Even where the most absolute parity is established, to these their fellows naturally give place. They are the presidents in all associations; heard with respect, commanding obedience; capable of swaying the decisions of their brethren; consulted in all difficult cases, and placed foremost in the hour of danger. To them is entrusted the care of eleemosynary [sic] distributions for the benefit of the body to which they belong, and in private and public all concede to them the seal of honor.” (P. 78)

If the elders that rule well are worthy of double honor, then the bishops that rule well must be worthy of triple honor, especially when they do so large a part of ruling, preaching, and presiding in Conferences.

“In the primitive Church [in speaking or writing, it was common to consolidate the first Churches into one, although they consisted of many societies, so we say the Methodist Episcopal Church], this superiority, was vested in the apostles and their companions, the great itinerant evangelists, Barnabas, Silas, Artemas, Tychicus, Trophimus, Titus, Timothy, and many others, chief men among the brethren.” (P. 79)

Notwithstanding all these were great men in the Church of God, yet, as we have seen, none of them were writers. The Epistle to Titus bears some resemblance to that to Timothy. Men placed in similar situations were called to act under the same principles and to employ the same means. If we are willing, here we may see the propriety of our superintendency, presiding elders, as in the second part of the primitive Church, which order was lost in the first and not found again until the seventeenth century, partially in Europe but more perfectly in America in the organization and establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

“I conclude, as soon as a little society was formed of Christians, a room was opened for their assembling and the most apt to teach appointed to minister to them in holy things. [Perhaps not unlike a class leader and local preacher in one.] He was a man of gravity,

generally of the more aged, approved by his fellows and willing to devote himself to their service. His appointment was signified by prayer and imposition of hands by the Apostle Paul or some of the itinerant evangelists and the presbytery, and without this I meet no ordination. Every Church [that is, every society] exercised discipline over its own members, to admit, admonish, or expel. Before these itinerating evangelists all accusations against offending Presbyters were brought. [These evangelists seem not to have been stationary, but to have gone about everywhere, chiefly under the direction of the Apostle Paul.]

“These evangelists were usually supported by the Churches [or societies] but often, like Paul, maintained themselves by their own labors. During the first ages, the ministry was not appropriated to gentlemen or scholars. No man was bred to it as a profession or went into it for a maintenance. They were pastors of a different stamp. The stationary presbyters, or bishops, during the lives of the apostle and his associate evangelists, were under their superintendency. But it will appear very early in the second century, when the first race of great itinerants departed [or were slain for the testimony of Jesus], that one among the ministers in every place began to have the name of bishop (hat' exochen) on account of preeminency, with presbyters, his coadjutors, acting with him as one body.” (Pp. 86, 87)

This leads me to conclude that there were no local bishops until the second century; that the apostles, in service, were bishops, and that those who were ordained in the second century mistook their calling when they became local and should have followed those bright examples in the apostolic age. I am not under the difficulties that some are respecting the same men who were ordained elders being called sometimes bishops, I am not sure that what was written to Timothy and Titus, that they themselves must be blameless as bishops, or overseers, excluded them from being evangelists. As to those at Ephesus who were elders in office, they were in charge and duty overseers. In some sense among us every leader of a class, every local preacher, traveling preacher, and every officer in the Church may be called an overseer. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons, seem to have been the established form in all the Asiatic Churches in the second century.

“Hitherto not a man eminent for science or letters had appeared in the Church. All those whose works have come down to us bear a stamp of simplicity divested of human attainments. Yet by these the gospel had been supported in its purity, afforded a noble army of martyrs, and been spread to the ends of the earth, from the Pillars of Hercules to the Parthians, from the savage nations of the North to the Indies and Abyssinia.” (P. 146)

“Considering the time and regarding the persons called to be saints, a learned ministry cannot be supposed in the primitive Church. The presbyters have been, in general, men simple and unlettered, though full of faith and the Holy Ghost, the qualifications which then determined the suffrage of the several flocks. And after all the fine things so elegantly written (by the heathen philosophers) about virtue and morals, their own conduct afforded a pregnant example of the impotence of the doctrines which they taught, whilst the Christian bishops not only lived what they professed to teach, but were every day ready to go to prison and to death for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (P. 126) No man counting his life dear who stood for Jesus, “bold to seal the truth with blood.”

“A learned and ingenuous age prides itself on its superiority in defense of revealed religion and apologizes for the Bible, but what hath (this mode) of arguing proved? The plain story of a plain unlettered man telling of the sufferings of Christ and the glory which hath followed with their consequences hath done more in the way of conversion to real and vital Christianity than all these great polemics put together. [The learned may smile in Saul's armor, but give me the sling and the stone, and the gigantic Goliath falls.] I see the smile on the wise academician and the contemptuous infidel, but I am not

ashamed of that gospel of Christ which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, nor of the sound though unlearned teacher who, having diligently read his Bible and then taught of God himself, is blessed with their conversation.” (P. 148)

O my son, by diligence, discipline, and faithfulness, God hath made us a blessing to hundreds and thousands of those who have died within these last thirty years! Thus our work and reward have gone before us and more work and reward are given to us daily. Let the Annual Conferences, the quarterly meeting Conferences, let the presiding elders, deacons, and preachers, all feel their dignity, do their duty, and especially guard against every danger and innovation. Alas for us, if ever our excellent constitution and order of things be changed or corrupted! (It is said that a good old bishop prayed that he might be taken away if Anus were restored, but the heretic himself was taken away.) I believe that those who would divide the body of Christ will be “divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel.” Thirty years' labor and experience have taught us something.

Be diligent to see and know how the different charitable contributions are disposed of. Sign no journals of an Annual Conference till everything is recorded, everything appears correctly and fairly. Should there be at any time failures in any department such as you cannot cure or restore, appeal to the General Conference. Be rigidly strict in all things. Examine well those who come as candidates for the ministry. It is ours to plead, protest, and oppose designing men from getting into the ministry. It is the peculiar excellence of our Church and the superintendents' glory and stronghold that the character of every minister among us must undergo a strict examination once a year. Put men into office in whom you can confide. If they betray your trust and confidence, let them do it but once. Of all wickedness, spiritual wickedness is the greatest; and of all deceptions, religious deception is the worst. Beware of men who have a constitutional cast to deception. Let every office, grade, and station among us know his place, keep his place, and do his duty; then you need not fear for the ark of God. The Lord Jesus will take care of and support his own cause.

If we have not men of great talents, we have men of good hearts. Endeavor to obtain and preserve a noble independence of soul, the willing servant of all, but the slave of none. Put full confidence in men who merit your confidence. Never be afraid to trust young men; they are able, and you will find enough willing to endure the toils and go through the greatest labors; *neither are they so likely to fail as old men are.*

“The simplicity of gospel truth ill accords with a farrago [hotch-potch, mixed fodder] of rites and ceremonies. Nothing could be more unadorned than the primitive worship. A plain man, chosen from among his fellows, in his common garb, stood up to speak, or sat down to read the Scriptures, to as many as chose to assemble in the house appointed. A back room, and that probably a mean one, or a garret, to be out of the way of observation, was their temple. Hymns sung to Christ, as their God, appeared to the heathens a prominent and striking feature of the Christian worship. The Holy Scriptures were read in portions; and the presbyter, or bishop, or two or three of the congregation who were endued with talents, spoke a word of exhortation to the people agreeably to the scripture which had been read. Prayer from the heart, without a prompter, followed, to which the people replied with a loud and audible amen. He that led the worship prayed from his heart, and out of its abundance. I have no doubt the Lord's Prayer always made a part of their public services. The Supper of the Lord closed the devotions of his day. I think it was as constant as the return of that day, and every member of the Churches as constantly participant. A friendly feast, or meal, called agape, from the love and union with which they kept it, served at one as an opportunity of ministering an act of charity to the poor, where all distinctions of rich and poor were laid aside and no man took before others his own supper, but all with humble equality acknowledged themselves members of the

living head, Christ, and of one another.” (P. 150)

“Then, also, I apprehend every man produced, according to his ability, weekly what he had laid by for charitable purposes, which formed a fund of obligations under the control of the Church, through the ministration of the bishop, presbyter, and deacon, for all the various purposes of general good such as purchasing the elements for the Lord's Supper, the provisions for the table of the 'agapae', for the necessaries for the poor, the support of evangelists, the relief of the persecuted, and for the welfare of such Churches and persons whose indigence called for the help of their richer brethren. As yet I can perceive no part of this fund appropriated to pay the salaries of any minister of the sanctuary, unless he came under the title of an itinerant evangelist, and, being incapable of providing his own maintenance and wholly occupied in the gospel work, was justly entitled, as preaching the gospel, to live by the gospel. I very much doubt if the bishop or presbyter and deacons received anything for their labors of love. I am persuaded they thought their work their best wages.

“Amid the flames of persecution kindled without and the corruptions and errors broached within the Church continued to raise her scarred head, encircled with glory, and to enlarge her borders farther and wider. After the departure of the great itinerant evangelists to their rest in glory and on the increasing extent of the Christian Church in every place the desirableness of a stationary president seems to have introduced a change in the government of several evangelical cities and Churches. The very learned Chancellor King endeavors to prove that in the largest cities there was but one Church and one bishop. I have already given my reasons for differing from him and for supposing the necessity of many house congregations where the body of Christian professors was so great, and as they sought to avoid observation and to attract as little as possible the attention of the rulers, they would not, assuredly, in such immense multitudes, have assembled in one place. That about the beginning of the second century a bishop appears at the head of a presbytery, can hardly be doubted, and the name became appropriate to one which before, all the presbyters had equally borne. Being now no longer under the superintending care of the great apostolic evangelists, who went about everywhere to establish, to preserve the unity of the Church, and be the cementing bond of the whole body, the several presbyters and Churches seem to have chosen one of their own body to supply the precedence these had before exercised. Whether the largest cities, as King argues, formed only one congregation with many presbyters, or rather, as I think, consisted of many congregations with presbyters in each of them, the whole seems now to have formed one body under a superintendent (or episcopus, overseer) chosen by themselves. Every Church exercised discipline over its own members, in which the whole assemblage of the faithful gave their suffrage. Their reverence for their pastors was great; but clerical dominion had, as yet, found no place.” (P. 126)

We have a few more thoughts to add. It is my confirmed opinion that the apostles acted both as bishops and traveling superintendents in planting and watering, ruling and ordering the whole connection; and that they did not ordain any local bishops, but that they ordained local deacons and elders. I feel satisfied we should do the same. I found my opinion on Acts 15:23: “And when they had ordained them elders in every Church, and had fasted and prayed with them, they commended them to the Lord.” “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou should set in order things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I have appointed thee.” (Titus 1:5) That is, do what Paul has left undone. Mark! It was in the second visit that Paul and Barnabas established order; and why was Timothy or Titus sent if elders could ordain elders? And why had the apostles to go or send, if it was not held as the divine right of the apostles to ordain? I shall not unChristian any Church or Churches that have the truth of the gospel and the power of God among

them, as I have already said.

The Presbyterian Churches, at the first, should have established a moderate episcopacy and apostolic form from whence they came, one from the high steeples of the Church of Rome and the other from the high steeples of the Church of England. *An elective, easy government, and a traveling and local ministry, with a judicious discipline, would have been better than steeples, bells, schools, colleges, and universities to make men ministers whom the Lord never called.* The ninth century appears to have been the time of midnight darkness. The light of the Reformation began to dawn in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The reformers were great men; but such was the state of affairs that no doubt there was yet much darkness mingled with the light; hence, it might be said: "All heads, and no heads." And I should be more afraid of a many-headed monster than of a single-headed one.

You know that for four years past I have, with pleasure, resigned to you the presidency of the nine Annual Conferences. This has removed a great burden of care from me and given me much ease. You have my letters addressed to you on the subject. It may be objected by some that our form of Church government partakes too much of the government of the nation. It does not partake of its nature; but there are some similitudes of form, but not of nature. The one is civil, the other spiritual and entirely disunited. Our government being spiritual, one election to office is sufficient during life, unless in cases of debility, a voluntary resignation of the office, corruption in principle, or immorality in practice.

The great diversity of gifts, both among our traveling and local ministry, is happily diffused abroad by our mode of circulation, to the benefit of hundreds and thousands. Many of our local ministers are men of approved abilities, with grace and gifts worthy to fill any pulpit. Many of them travel hundreds of miles in the year, are gladly received, and readily employed to preach by their traveling brethren, and feel themselves at perfect ease and completely at home on the different circuits and at camp meetings where they visit, having no fear they will be considered as intruders.

Further, it may be asked, Is it proper to have no learned men among us? Answer: Men who are well read I call learned men; and we have men of learning among us, both traveling and local. Where are our young men who are bred to the law? And some are doctors; and many others who are very studious and making great progress in Latin and Greek; and many have competent knowledge of the English language. Particularly, see in the British connection such men as Drs. Coke and Clarke; a Benson, Creighton, and others. And in many instances men who profess the least know the most.

A venerable German divine once wrote in Latin to the English doctors; but he had to complain that they answered him in English. But you may say, Would we not derive great advantages from reading the Scripture in their original tongues and judging of the correctness of the translations? Undoubtedly; but these advantages are in the margins of the best editions of the Bible. As to our translation, it is, perhaps, one of the best and most correct upon earth. To attain to a proper knowledge of the etymology of all the words used, even in the Septuagint, I know not how many languages you must know besides the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. If you suggest anything more, I will maturely consider it.

My dear Bishop, it is the traveling apostolic order and ministry that is found in our very constitution. No man among us can locate without order, or forfeit his official standing. No preacher is stationary more than two years; no presiding elder more than four years; and the constitution will remove them; and all are movable at the pleasure of the superintendent whenever he may find it necessary for the good of the cause. It is the privilege of every traveling minister with us to say: "I am not obliged to serve you another year; I will speak to the superintendent who will not impose on you a second

year.” We must conclude that all the ancient, imperial, Latin, and Greek Churches were episcopal from their foundation to this very day, though in a crooked, muddy succession; perhaps all corrupted in ordinances, and many of them in doctrines; and, in too many instances, the vilest of men have filled the most sacred offices in the Church. The Reformed English, Scotch, Danish, Swede, Episcopal Churches, have all corrupted their ways before the Lord. Let Presbyterians say and write what they may, as if episcopacy never existed, it must be granted that in the first, second, and third centuries many of the bishops were holy men, who traveled and labored in the ministry very extensively, not unlike their grand pattern, St. Paul, and the other holy apostolical men, of which we have good historical evidence, which is all the evidence that can now be given. To the people of our day we give ocular demonstration, and the generations to come may read our Church records and Conference journals, where they shall see what vast tracts of country we traveled over in visiting the nine Conferences annually. As to the doctrines of the Reformation, we have said, in a second reformation they were the real gospel. They have been well introduced and complete forms of Church government established. Presbyterians and Independents were formed too about the sixteenth century.

Finally, farewell in the Lord!

Yours, Francis Asbury

Lancaster County,
State of Pennsylvania,
August 5, 1813

This “Valedictory” needs no explanation or apology and is a proper finale to the life of its great and good author.

His remains were interred in the family graveyard of Mr. Arnold, at whose house he died, but at the request of the citizens of Baltimore and by order of the ensuing General Conference, they were disinterred, removed to that city, and deposited in a vault under the pulpit of the Eutaw Street Church, Baltimore, Very properly his honored remains, with those of Bishops Emory and Waugh, have been transferred to the beautiful Mount Olivet Cemetery near the city.