

From the Close of the General Conference of 1812 to the Death of Bishop Asbury, in 1816

by Nathan Bangs

The sermon discusses the impact of the war with Great Britain on the Methodist Episcopal Church, the criticisms of the American Board of Commissioners, and the legacy of Bishop Asbury.

Scripture: Psalm 46:1, Psalm 85:8, Isaiah 26:3, John 14:27, Philippians 4:6

Topics: "Church History", "Post War Revival"

Description

Bishop Asbury, in his final years, expressed concern over the effects of the war between the United States and Great Britain, foreseeing unhappy collisions among Methodists in different countries. The war led to uneasiness in Canada and hindered the growth of true religion in some areas. Despite the restoration of peace, the spirit of piety struggled to recover its vigor, with no significant revivals reported. Bishop Asbury's declining health limited his active involvement, leaving the superintendency duties to Bishop McKendree, who navigated the challenges of post-war society. The year saw a small increase in Church numbers, with no special revivals noted.

Transcript

Soon after the adjournment of the conference, namely, on the 18th of June, the United States declared war against Great Britain. Though this event had been expected for some time, yet it created a great sensation throughout the country, and particularly among those who regarded religion as breathing naught but peace and good will to man. The note of preparation, however, was soon sounded through all our borders; and as it was expected that the war would rage principally along our western and northwestern frontiers, where the inhabitants of the United States and of the Canadas approximated each other, it was foreseen that the Methodists in these two countries must necessarily come into unhappy collisions with each other, and perhaps be obliged, however reluctantly, to spill each other's blood.¹

Only one preacher, therefore, Thomas Burch, who volunteered for Canada from the United States, arrived there; the other, Nathan Bangs, who was appointed presiding elder in the lower province, but was to have charge also of Montreal, by the consent of the bishops, relinquished his journey, after removing from New York as far as Lansingburgh, and remained in the United States.

In consequence of this state of things the brethren in Upper Canada were prevented from attending the Genesee conference, to which they were now attached; and as all friendly intercourse between the two

countries was suspended, they were necessarily left to take care of themselves in the best way they could. This laid the foundation of that uneasiness in the Canadas which eventuated in the separation of the work in those provinces from the Methodist Episcopal Church, and led to their connection finally with the Wesleyan Methodist Conference.²

The great success which accompanied the labors of the Methodist itinerants in the western states and territories, and the growing importance in a national point of view, of those parts of the federal union, began to attract the attention and to call forth the energies of other denominations. Hitherto these had, on many occasions, affected to treat the Methodists with silent contempt, as unworthy of notice. But their growing prosperity in almost every direction, seemed at length to awaken others to activity in striving to imitate them but their zealous efforts to extend the gospel by means of missionary labors in the new countries and elsewhere.

In 1810 the American Board of Commissioners commenced its operations, and not long after, with a view to furnish them with suitable agents, who might be willing to endure the fatigues and privations incident to a missionary life in the new countries, "The Charitable Society for the Education of Pious Young Men for the Ministry of the Gospel" was instituted. And in order to ascertain the true state of things in the western country, a commission was sent about this time on an exploring expedition through the new states and territories, and Schermerhorn and Mills were intrusted with its execution. The report of their travels was published; and as they animadverted quite freely upon the economy of the Methodist Church, upon the conduct of its ministers, and general plan of operations, it roused the indignation of many, and more especially of those who had spent their life and sacrificed their all of mere earthly enjoyments to plant the standard of the cross in those new countries.

One thing seemed to astonish these gentlemen very much, and shows their want of information in regard to the economy of our Church, and that was in almost every settlement they visited they found not only Methodists and Methodist preachers, but also Methodist books, and the query was, whence they came when, lo and behold! they were informed that these were sold, and the proceeds forwarded to New York to furnish means to print and circulate more! And thus the imagination of those gentlemen and their honest readers was filled with the alarming apprehension that the country was in danger of being flooded with Methodist publications.

Another danger to be apprehended was the pernicious consequences resulting to the population of the west from the prevalence of Methodist doctrine and usages; and, in order to give effect to the note of alarm, and the danger to be apprehended from the rapid increase of the societies, they told their readers that persons were received into the Church with only the "expression of desire," thus mutilating the language of the "General Rules of the United Societies," for the purpose, as it would seem, of lowering the character of Methodism in the public estimation; for the readers of this report would not know whether the condition of membership was a "desire" for riches, for honor, or a desire merely to become Methodists -- whereas the "rules" specify. The character of the desire, and likewise state the evidence of its real existence -- "a desire to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins," affirming that evidence of such a desire is manifested "by avoiding evil of every kind, and doing good of every possible sort, according to their power and opportunity."

Those who read this pamphlet, and who were acquainted with the state of things in the west, were somewhat surprised that while the people there were growing up into settlements, towns, and villages, destitute of the ordinances of religion, those who sustained the present commission manifested no

concern at all for their spiritual welfare; but that now, since the towns were built, the "wilderness turned into a fruitful field," and Methodist circuits, societies, districts, and even annual conferences established there, they should all at once awake as from a profound sleep, and casting a hasty glance over the land, should discover that the people were going fast to destruction, and that Methodism was poisoning the fountains of knowledge and religion with its pestiferous breath!

These things are mentioned because they form, in some respects, a new era in the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, particularly in the west, and led to a new sort of warfare which we have been called upon to sustain in order to rescue our institutions from reproach, and to preserve our plans of procedure from being frustrated by new modes of attack. The sequel of our history will develop all these things, and place them in a true point of light.

Bishop Asbury, though he continued his annual tour of the continent, and attended the conferences in company with his colleague, Bishop McKendree, began to totter under the infirmities of age, and frequent attacks of disease. He was in New England when the proclamation of the president of the United States announced to the people that war was declared against Great Britain. He who had passed unscathed through a bloody contest of seven years' duration, suffering numerous hardships in striving to preserve a pure conscience while propagating a religion of peace and good-will, could not behold the approach of another struggle of a similar character, without feelings of anxiety and alarm. These he expressed in a very emphatic manner to the writer of these pages, remarking, in reference to our intercourse with our Canadian brethren, "there is no mercy in war, and hence we must expect much suffering on our frontier settlements," and concluded by saying, that "doubtless our sins as a nation had provoked the divine indignation against us, and therefore we must expect to suffer."

He, however, kept on his way, exclaiming with pious resignation, "I live in God from moment to moment." Beholding the demoralizing tendency of strong drink, in a certain neighborhood, he observes, "They are decent in their behavior, and would be more so, were it not for vile whiskey. This is the prime curse of the United States, and will be, I fear much, the ruin of all that is excellent in morals and government in them. Lord, interpose thine arm!" How would his soul have expanded with gratitude and delight to have beheld the temperance reformation which began its salutary operations since his day! And would he not have deprecated any effort to weaken its force, especially by those who claim to be his sons in the gospel?

After traversing various parts of the country, often trembling under the infirmities of a sickly body, crossing the Allegheny mountains, and descending into the valley of the Ohio, attending several camp-meetings in his route, he says, "I shall have traveled six thousand miles in eight months, met in nine conferences, and have been present in ten camp-meetings." But then he adds soon after, in reference to his labors and physical sufferings, for such was his debility that his friends sometimes had to lift him into his carriage, "O let us not complain, when we think of the suffering, wounded, and dying of the hostile armies! If we suffer, what shall comfort us? Let us see -- Ohio will give us six thousand for her increase of members in our new district." This indeed was his reward; all he asked or sought of his labors and sufferings. And it shows also, that notwithstanding hostile armies were already measuring swords, the God of Israel was still at work for the salvation of the people.

It appears, indeed, that in the midst of the agitations occasioned by the war which began to rage on the frontier, and in some places upon the sea-board, God wrought in a powerful manner in various parts of the country, particularly on the James River district, where not less than six hundred were brought into the Church, chiefly through the agency of camp-meetings. In the New London district also there was a

gracious work of God, including some towns in Rhode Island, in which upward of one hundred souls were brought into gospel fellowship, some of whom connected themselves with other denominations.

Forty-eight were located this year, ten returned supernumerary, eighteen superannuated, one was expelled, and six had died. These last were Samuel Mills, Nathan Weedon, Jesse Pinnell, Lansford Whiting, Samuel Thomas, and Greenleaf N. Norris. Some of these had labored long and faithfully, and they all died witnessing a good confession, and are, no doubt, gathered to their fathers in a better world.

Numbers in the Church: Whites This Year: 156,852; Last Year: 148,835; Increase: 8,017 -- Colored This Year: 38,505; Last Year: 35,732; Increase: 2,773 -- Total This Year: 195,357; Last Year: 184,567 -- Increase: 10,790 -- Preachers This Year: 678; Last Year: 668; Increase: 10.

1813

There were nine annual conferences this year, the Mississippi Conference which was authorized to be formed, if the bishops saw it needful, not having been established.

These times were distressing along the lines between the United States and the Canadas, as those places were the principal scenes of the war which was now raging with increasing violence between the two countries. This not only broke off all friendly intercourse with each other, but kept the inhabitants in a continual state of alarm and irritation, quite unfriendly to the progress of pure religion. But notwithstanding this state of things, there were very extensive revivals of religion in other places, so that the increase of members was considerably more than it had been for several years previously, as may be seen below. Probably many were led to pray more fervently and to labor more faithfully in consequence of the afflictions which were felt in the country, while others were induced to think more seriously on their latter end.

Among those who located in the New England Conference this year, was Pliny Brett, whose admission into the conference had been deferred for one year at the time he was eligible to be received into full connection. Soon after his location he withdrew from the Church, put himself at the head of a party under the denomination of "Reformed Methodists." He lured from the Church several local preachers, and a considerable number of members, almost entirely breaking up some small societies, and thereby occasioned much uneasiness where he commenced his operations, which was in Cape Cod, in Massachusetts. From thence his influence extended into Vermont, where he was seconded in his endeavors to draw away disciples after him by a local preacher by the name of Baily. They succeeded in raising a considerable party, which, for a short season, made some inroads upon our Church; and though Mr. Baily succeeded in establishing some congregations, and still lives to enjoy the fruit of his labors, yet the influence of the party is very limited, and furnishes another evidence that it requires a union of deep piety and much talent to found a distinct denomination of sufficient magnitude to command public confidence, and to exert an extensive influence on the community.

While these things were testing the faith and patience of some, and "garments rolled in blood" were frightening others with fearful apprehensions for the stability of our political institutions, the faithful servants of God, keeping aloof as much as possible from the strife of party and the war of words, steadily pursued their way in search of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It is due to truth, however, to remark, that while ministers of the gospel, biased perhaps too much by some influential members of their congregations, refused even to pray for their rulers and country,³ Bishop Asbury, who had long since adopted this country as his own, and most cordially loved its institutions, declared most plainly and

pointedly, on the floor of an annual conference, that he who refused, at this time especially, to pray for his country, deserved not the name of a Christian or a Christian minister, inasmuch as it was specifically enjoined on all such, not only to honor magistrates, but to pray for all that are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty."

It was very manifest to all who saw him, that Bishop Asbury was sinking under the infirmities of a sickly body, weakened from time to time by exposures to inclement seasons, continual labors, and oppressed with a multitude of cares, known only to those who feel the weight of such a responsible station. Nevertheless, although his friends sometimes remonstrated against it, he still performed his annual tour of the continent, shunning no danger, deferring no duty which might be performed today, from a fear that he should not have strength for the morrow, but both publicly and privately admonishing all who came in his way of the danger of sin, and encouraging the good to persevere in their work. To aid him in scattering the good seed of the kingdom, he furnished himself with religious tracts, sometimes getting them printed at his own expense -- for as yet we had no tract society -- Bibles, and Testaments, which he distributed among the poor; and to assist in extending the work in the poorer settlements, he handed his "mite subscription" to all whom he considered able to give, allowing no individual to subscribe over one dollar, though, if they chose, each member of the family might become a donor.

Apprehensive, as it seems from notices in his journals, that he had not many years to live, he dictated a valedictory address to his colleague, Bishop McKendree, on the order and institutions of the primitive Church; and on Friday, October 29th, he says: -- "On the peaceful banks of the Saluda I wrote my valedictory address to the presiding elders." In another place he speaks of having made his will, in which he says that, through the benevolence of some kind friends who had died childless, about two thousand dollars had been bequeathed to him, which he should leave to the Book Concern. "Let it return," he remarks, and continue to aid the cause of piety."

In the labors of the conferences he often speaks in terms of eulogy upon the help afforded him by Bishop McKendree, who, if he did not always travel by his side, generally met him at the annual conferences, and discharged most of the active duties of president, and assisted in the ordinations and other services of the sanctuary. He needed not indeed any other stimulant to active exertions than his own burning zeal for God, and the example constantly set him by his senior in office. Mutual affection and respect bound them together, and made them "true yoke-fellows" in the laborious exercise of their joint superintendency. By this means they threw around the general itinerancy, and the entire work, a weight of influence not easily resisted, but it was felt from the center to the circumference of the connection.

Thus by the example of their superintendents, whose joint labors produced a most happy effect, the presiding elders upon their districts, the elders, deacons, and preachers upon their several circuits and stations, were stimulated to active diligence, and the members of the Church generally participated in the spirit which actuated their leaders. By this united and harmonious action, as before said, notwithstanding the noise of battle was heard along the frontiers, heightened as it sometimes was by the war-whoop of hostile Indians who were invading some of the defenseless settlements, the Church was generally prosperous, sinners were converted, and saints "built up on their most holy faith."

Yet sixty-three preachers were located! eleven became supernumerary, twenty superannuated, three were expelled, and one; William B. Lacy, withdrew, and afterward connected himself with the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Thomas Branch, John Crane, Jacob Rumph, Jesse Brown, William Young, Lasley Matthews, John Smith, Robert Hebard, John Russell, and Ebenezer White, having fulfilled their ministry with fidelity, had taken their departure to another world during the past year.

Numbers in the Church: Whites This Year: 171,448; Last Year: 156,852; Increase: 14,596 -- Colored This Year: 42,859; Last Year: 38,505; Increase: 4,354 -- Total This Year: 214,307; Last Year: 195,357 -- Increase: 18,950 -- Preachers This Year: 700; Last Year: 716; Decrease: 16.4

1814

The more than usual increase during the past year, in the midst of the agitation of war and its attendant evils, shows that religion had a strong hold upon the affections of the people, and that while the clarion of war sounded along our frontiers and echoed over the waters of the lakes, as well as upon the waves of the ocean, men were not unmindful of their duty to God and to one another. Indeed, those who viewed war among the sorest of God's judgments, and whose hearts were panting for the return of peace, were led to humble themselves by fasting and prayer, that the God of peace and love might visit his heritage more plentifully with the showers of his grace. And how much these faithful prayers might have contributed to hasten a termination of the bloody conflict, and to bring about the blessings of peace, who but the Omniscient can tell? If in answer to the prayer of faith in his Son, "He lets his lifted thunder drop" -- if "God's hands or bound or open are, as Moses or Elijah prays" -- and if God would spare the devoted "cities of the plain". For the sake of ten righteous persons may we not believe that he might have inclined the hearts of the rulers of Great Britain and America to pacific measures in answer to the prayers of his people on both sides of the Atlantic? That there were many such we know. That they deprecated this war as unnatural, and as tending to desolate the earth in vain, is equally certain. And hence the united prayers of many went up before the throne, that the olive-branch of peace might supplant the bloody flag of war.

But the time was not yet. The war still raged this year with more violence than ever. And perhaps party politics, particularly in the eastern section of our country, never ran higher than they did about this time. Indeed, many feared that a severance of our happy union would result from this feverish excitement. Yet the God of our fathers would not have it so. Just as this storm was ready to burst upon our heads, He who "rides upon the stormy sky, and calms the roaring seas," appeared to hush the contending elements, and to bid the hostile forces cease their bloody strife.

In the mean time, the disastrous effects of these things began to be more sensibly felt on the interests of true religion. Although those who were deeply devoted to God held on their way, and poured out their desires to God for the return of peace and the prosperity of the cause of Christ, yet many, lured by the glare of military glory, or seized with a spirit of revenge for the merciless warfare waged by the hostile Indians on defenseless women and children, or fired with a zeal to vindicate their country's rights against the invasions of their foes, in many instances, having lost the fervor of their piety, entered into the war with renewed ardor. The enemy indeed pushed more closely upon us now on every side. The burning of Washington, the attack upon Baltimore, and the threatening attitude assumed toward the cities of New York, Boston, and other places, and the invasions on our frontiers, roused a warlike feeling throughout the nation, and excited such a general spirit of resistance to these aggressions, that for a season the spirit of religion seemed to be absorbed in the feeling of patriotism, and the war-whoop took the place of thanksgiving and prayer to God. Add to this the domestic disputes arising from various opinions respecting the policy of the war, which pervaded all ranks of society, from the halls of legislature to the circles around the fireside, and we shall see reasons enough why religion did not prosper in the hearts of the people as it

had done heretofore.

In the midst of these "shakings and tremblings," on the earth, while some were rejoicing over victories won by our fleets upon the ocean and the lakes, or boasting of the prowess exhibited by our armies upon the land, and others affecting to lament the superior skill and bravery of our enemies, there were not wanting those who sighed in secret and in public for "the abominations which make desolate," and who exerted their energies for the "salvation of Israel." These, keeping aloof as much as possible from political strife, were still crying aloud to sinners to "repent and give glory to God," and exhorting His people to steadfastness in the faith. And though they did not always find the "Son of peace" in every house into which they entered, yet the peace of God rested upon them, as the reward of their endeavors to promote "peace on earth and good will to men."

A heavy affliction this year came upon Bishop Asbury, and for some time his life was held in suspense. Though suffering under great bodily weakness, by the kind and unremitting attention of his traveling companion, John Wesley Bond, of whom the Bishop speaks in terms of the warmest affection and approbation, he was enabled to perform his usual tour from one annual conference to another, until he arrived, in the latter part of April, at Bethel, in the state of New Jersey. Here he was seized with an inflammatory fever, with which he suffered severely, and for some time his valuable life was despaired of by his physicians and friends. Dr. T. F. Sargent, of Philadelphia, attended him as his medical friend, with unremitting attention; and the New York Conference, then in session in the city, dispatched a special messenger, the Rev. Daniel Hitt, to present to him their affectionate respects, and to inquire after his health; they were rejoiced to hear on his return, that the bishop was likely to recover. Referring to this event in his journal, he says: --

"We should have failed in our march through New Jersey, but we have received great kindness and attentions, and have had great accommodations. I return to my journal after an interval of twelve weeks. I have been ill indeed, but medicine, nursing, and kindness, under God, have been so far effectual, that I have recovered strength enough to sit in my little covered wagon, in which they left me." -- "I would not be loved to death, and so came down from my sick room, and took to the road, weak enough. Attentions constant, and kindness unceasing, have pursued me to this place. I look back upon a martyr's life of toil, and privation and pain; and I am ready for a martyr's death. 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. My friends in Philadelphia gave me a light, four-wheeled carriage; but God and the Baltimore Conference made me a richer present -- they gave me John Wesley Bond as a traveling companion. Has he his equal on earth for excellence of every kind as an aid? I groan one minute with pain, and shout glory the next!"

And where would the reader expect to find this sick, limping, skeleton of a man next? Under the hands of a nurse, beneath the roof of some hospitable mansion, surrounded by kind-hearted and sympathizing friends? He will be disappointed. For although after he so far recovered as to be lifted into his "light, four-wheeled carriage," the gift of his Philadelphia friends, he appeared more like a walking skeleton than a living man; yet on the 23d of July, four days only after penning the above paragraph, we find him in Pittsburgh, west of the Allegheny mountains, "bending his way," to use his own words, "down the west side of the Ohio to Swickley," where he was detained two days; and thence, in company with his faithful companion, John Wesley Bond, he urged his way through rough roads, swamps, and dismal causeways, to Steubenville, where he remarks: -- "My health is better:" -- "I live in patience, in purity, and the perfect love of God." And thus he performed his western tour, sometimes preaching, though unable to preside in

the conferences, and finally returned to the Atlantic states, somewhat improved in health, borne up by the conscious smiles of his heavenly Father, the sympathy and affectionate attentions of his numerous friends.

But Bishop Asbury never after recovered his wonted vigor. His countenance was fallen and pale -- his limbs trembled, and his whole frame bore marks of decay. Indeed, there was a something in his appearance which, while it indicated a "soul full of glory and of God," struck the beholder with an awe which may be better felt than described. Not being able to stand while he addressed an assembly, he sat upon a seat prepared for that purpose, and while thus sitting -- his whitened locks speaking the honors of age, his pallid countenance testifying his general debility, his head involuntarily dropping forward until the chin apparently rested upon his breast -- no sooner did he begin to speak than his deep sonorous voice, uttering words in the name of his God, would arouse the attention of the auditory to such thoughts of eternity as overwhelmed them with breathless awe and silent astonishment. Though I can remember, I cannot describe, his appearance on those occasions. Something, indeed, more than merely human seemed to lighten up his countenance when his subject inspired him with those "thoughts which breathe" and "words which burn;" and he appeared to soar above the infirmities that pressed him down on ordinary occasions; at the same time an unearthly appearance, full of dignity, majesty, and yet softened with the graces of meekness and patience, sat upon his visage and played through the wrinkles of his cheeks.

Yet in the midst of all these weaknesses he journeyed from place to place, saying, "God is with me in all my feebleness" -- "My spiritual consolations flow from God in great abundance -- my soul rejoices exceedingly in God." Happy he who can thus testify to the goodness of God to him personally, while trembling under the infirmities of age, disease, care, and labor.

Among those who had taken their departure to another world this year, was the Rev. Philip V. Otterbein, the German minister who had assisted in the consecration of Mr. Asbury to the office of a bishop, and with whom he ever after held an intimate, Christian, and ministerial fellowship. Though not formally attached to the Methodists, yet as he always favored their cause, invited them to his pulpit, and reciprocated with them in acts of brotherly love, it seems proper that some notice should be taken of him in this place.

The following, though it includes an account of several others besides Mr. Otterbein, yet as it contains interesting information, and would suffer from an abridgment, is given as I find it in the Methodist Magazine, vol. vi., pp. 210, 249. It was furnished at the special request of Bishop Asbury, some time before his death, by his friend, F. Hollingsworth, who transcribed the bishop's journal, and prepared it for the press. It is as follows: --

"Jacob Boehm, the great grandfather of one of the distinguished subjects of the following notices, was of a respectable family in Switzerland; and, as is presumed, a member of the German Presbyterian Church. His son Jacob was put to a trade; and after faithfully serving out his time, he, according to the custom of his country, set out upon his three years' travels. In his wanderings through Germany he fell in with the Pietists; a people in their faith, discipline, and worship, resembling, in a good degree, the Methodists, but more closely the societies and congregations formed by William Otterbein and Martin Boehm. Upon our traveler's return to the parental roof he talked in a style that neither his father nor the parson could comprehend; they were natural men, and understood not the things of God. His evangelical conversation mingled, most probably, with reproof of the vices and Pharisaism of the day, brought, by necessary consequence, persecution upon him; and he was sent, guarded by an elder brother, to prison. He escaped, however, from his confinement, and sought a refuge in Germany, where he remained, having

settled near the Rhine. He shortly after attached himself to the Menonists, became an honored elder in that church, and, we trust, died in the Lord. His son Jacob, the third, was also a member in the Menonist church. He gave an example of sobriety, temperance, and industry to his children and neighborhood before and after his emigration to Pennsylvania, in 1716 or '17; and was honored in both countries. As a professor of religion he lived up to the light he had; but it was under the ministry of his better instructed son, Martin Boehm, that he was blest with superior illumination. He died in peace at the family plantation on Pecaway, Conestoga town ship, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, aged eighty-seven years. The son of Jacob Boehm the third, Martin Boehm, of whom we desire to speak more particularly, was born in November, 1725. The labors and experience of his life, as a professor of religion and minister of Christ, may be pretty justly estimated by what we learn from himself, communicated in answers to certain questions propounded to him by his son Jacob, which we here transcribe: --

'Question Father, when were you put into the ministry?'

'Answer My ministerial labors began about the year 1756. Three years afterward, by nomination of the lot, I received full pastoral orders.'

'Question What had been your religious experience at that time?'

'Answer I was sincere and strict in the religious duties of prayer in my family, in the congregation, and in the closet. I lived and preached according to the light had. I was a servant, and not a son; nor did I know any one at that time who could claim the birthright by adoption but Nancy Keagy, my mother's sister; she was a woman of great piety and singular devotion to God.'

'Question By what means did you discover the nature and necessity of a real change of heart?'

'Answer By deep meditation upon the doctrines which I myself preached of the fall of man, his sinful state, and utter helplessness, I discovered and felt the want of Christ within. About the year 1761, hearing of a great work of God in New Virginia among the New Lights, as they were called, I resolved to find the truth more fully. I accordingly visited those parts, and saw many gracious souls who could give a rational and Scriptural account of their experience and acceptance with God; these assurances roused me to greater efforts to obtain the blessing. On my return, very large congregations assembled to hear the word, not only on the Sabbaths, but on week-days also. My zeal displeased some of my brethren in the ministry; but my heart was enlarged, and I had an earnest travail of soul to extend the knowledge of salvation to Jew and Gentile. I enlarged the sphere of my labors as much as my situation in life would permit.'

'Question Were your labors owned of the Lord in the awakening and conversion of souls?'

'Answer Yes many were brought to the knowledge of the truth. But it was a strange work; and some of the Menonist meeting-houses were closed against me. Nevertheless, I was received in other places. I now preached the gospel spiritually and powerfully. Some years afterward I was excommunicated from the Menonist Church on a charge, truly enough advanced, of holding fellowship with other societies of a different language. I had invited the Menonites to my house, and they soon formed the society in the neighborhood which exists to this day: my beloved wife Eve, my children, and my cousin Keagy's family, were among the first of its members. For myself, I felt my heart more greatly enlarged toward all religious persons and to all denominations of Christians. Upward of thirty years ago I became acquainted with my greatly beloved brother, William Otterbein, and several other ministers, who about this time had been ejected from their churches, as I had been from mine, because of their zeal, which was looked upon as an

irregularity. We held many and large meetings in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Virginia, which generally lasted three days: at these meetings hundreds were made the subjects of penitence and pardon. Being convinced of the necessity of order and discipline in the church of God, and having no wish to be at the head of a separate body, I advised serious persons to join the Methodists, whose doctrine, discipline, and zeal suited, as I thought, an unlearned, sincere, and simple hearted people. Several of the ministers with whom I labored, continued to meet in a conference of the German United Brethren; but we felt the difficulties arising from the want of that which the Methodists possessed. Age having overtaken me, with some of its accompanying infirmities, I could not travel as I had formerly done. In 1802 I enrolled my name on a Methodist class-book, and I have found great comfort in meeting with my brethren. I can truly say my last days are my best days. My beloved Eve is traveling with me the same road Zionward my children, and most of my grandchildren, are made the happy partakers of the same grace. I am, this 12th of April, 1811, in my eighty-sixth year. Through the boundless goodness of my God, I am still able to visit the sick, and occasionally, to preach in the neighborhood: to his name be all the glory in Christ Jesus!

Martin Boehm died on the 23d of March, 1812. His death was thought to have been hastened by an imprudent change of dress. Bishop Asbury, in a sermon preached upon the occasion of the death of his long-known and long-loved friend, improved the opportunity by mentioning some further particulars of him, of his friends, and of the work of God in which he and they had labored. His observations are, with the alteration and substitution of a few sentences and words, as follow: -- 'Martin Boehm had frequent and severe conflicts in his own mind, produced by the necessity he felt himself under of offending his Menonist brethren by the zeal and doctrines of his ministry: some he gained; but most of them opposed him.

He had difficulties also with his United Brethren. It was late in life that he joined the Methodists, to whom, long before, his wife and children had attached themselves: the head of the house had two societies to pass through to arrive at the Methodists, and his meek and quiet spirit kept him back. Honest and unsuspecting, he had not a strange face for strange people. He did not make the gospel a charge to any one; his reward was souls and glory. His conversation was in heaven.

Plain in dress and manners, when age had stamped its impress of reverence upon him, he filled the mind with the noble idea of a patriarch. At the head of a family, a father, a neighbor, a friend, a companion, there was one prominent feature of his character which distinguished him from most men; -- it was goodness; you felt that he was good. His mind was strong and well stored with the learning necessary for one whose aim is to preach Christ with apostolic zeal and simplicity.

The virtue of hospitality was practiced by his family as a matter of course; and in following the impulse of their own generous natures, the members of his household obeyed the oft-repeated charge of their head to open his doors to the houseless, that the weary might be solaced and the hungry fed. And what a family was here presented to an observant visitor! Here was order, quiet, occupation. The father, if not absent on a journey of five hundred miles in cold, hunger, privations, and labor, proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to his dispersed German brethren, might, by his conduct under his own roof, explain to a careful looker-on the secret of a parent's success in rearing a family to the duties of piety, to the diligent and useful occupation of time, and to the uninterrupted exhibition of reflected and reciprocated love, esteem, and kindness in word and deed.

If it is true, as is generally believed, that the mother does much toward forming the character of their children, it will be readily allowed that Martin Boehm had an able help-mate in his pious wife. The offspring of this noble pair have done them honor -- the son Jacob, immediately upon his marriage, took on himself

the management of the farm, that his excellent father might, 'without carefulness,' extend his labors more far and wide. A younger son, Henry, is a useful minister in the Methodist connection, having the advantage of being able to preach in English and German.

We are willing to hope that the children of Martin Boehm, and his children's children to the third and fourth and latest generations, will have cause to thank God that his house, for fifty years, has been a house for the welcome reception of gospel ministers, and one in which the worship of God has been uninterruptedly preserved and practiced! O ye children and grandchildren! O, rising generation, who have so often heard the prayers of this man of God in the houses of your fathers! O, ye Germans, to whom he has long preached the word of truth, Martin Boehm being dead yet speaketh! -- O hear his voice from the grave, exhorting you to repent, to believe, and to obey.'

"But our beloved brother, who has gone to his high reward, was not the only laborer in the vineyard. Will it be hazarding too much to say that in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, there were one hundred preachers and twenty thousand people in the communion of the United Brethren? Many of these faithful men have gone to glory; and many are yet alive to preach to congregated thousands. Pre-eminent among these is William Otterbein, who assisted in the ordination which set apart your speaker to the superintendency of the Methodist Episcopal Church. William Otterbein was regularly ordained to the ministry in the German Presbyterian Church. He is one of the best scholars and the greatest divines in America. Why then is he not where he began? He was irregular. Alas, for us; the zealous are necessarily so to those whose cry has been, put me into the priests' office, that I may eat a morsel of bread. Ostervald has observed, 'Hell is paved with the skulls of unfaithful ministers.' Such was not Boehm. Such is not Otterbein; and now, his sun of life is setting in brightness: behold the saint of God leaning upon his staff, waiting for the chariots of Israel!

"I pause here to indulge in reflections upon the past. Why was the German reformation in the middle states, that sprang up with Boehm, Otterbein, and their helpers, not more perfect? Was money, was labor made a consideration with these primitive men? No; they wanted not the one, and heeded not the other. They all had had church membership, as Presbyterians, Lutherans, Moravians, Dunkers, Menonists. The spiritual men of these societies generally united with the reformers; but they brought along with them the formalities, superstitions, and peculiar opinions of religious education.

There was no master-spirit to rise up and organize and lead them. Some of the ministers located, and only added to their charge partial traveling labors; and all were independent. It remains to be proved whether a reformation, in any country, or under any circumstances, can be perpetuated without a well-directed itinerancy. But those faithful men of God were not the less zealous in declaring the truth because they failed to erect a church government. This was wished for by many; and among the first, perhaps, to discover the necessity of discipline and order, was Benedict Swoape of Pipe-creek, Frederick county: he became Otterbein's prompter as early as 1772, and called upon him to translate the general rules of the Methodists, and explain to their German brethren, wandering as sheep without a shepherd, their nature, design, and efficacy.

Otterbein, one of the wisest and best of men, could only approve: when urged to put himself forward as a leader, his great modesty and diffidence of himself forbade his acceptance of so high a trust. His journeys, nevertheless, were long, his visits frequent, and his labors constant; so that, after he came to Baltimore, he might be called a traveling preacher, until age and infirmities compelled him to be still. Surely I should not forget his helpers. I may mention once more Benedict Swoape: he removed to Kentucky, and

preached until near his death at eighty years of age.

There was the brother-in-law of Otterbein, and his great friend, Doctor Hendel, a man of talents, lettered and pious, and a great preacher. Hendel was first stationed, as a German Presbyterian minister, in Tulpahocking and Lancaster, and his last labors were in Philadelphia, where, late in life, he fell a victim the yellow fever of 1798. Wagner, a pupil of Otterbein's, was stationed in Little York, Pennsylvania, and permanently, thereafter, in Fredericktown, Maryland: he was, we have reason to hope, a good and useful servant of his Lord.

Henry Widener, first a great sinner, and afterward a great saint, was a native of Switzerland; as is usual with his educated countrymen, he spoke in German and French with equal fluency. His preaching was acceptable and useful; he had for the companion of his itinerant labors, John Hagerty; and the gospel of our Lord was preached by these men in German and English to thousands between the north and south branches of the Potomac. Widener died in peace near Baltimore; Hagerty is still with us.

George Adam Gedding, a native of Germany, has been a most acceptable man in the work: he still lives near Sharpesburg, in Maryland. Christian Newcomer, near Hagerstown in Maryland, has labored and traveled many years. His heart's desire has always been to effect a union between his German brethren and the Methodists. Are there many that fear God who have passed by his house and have not heard of or witnessed the piety and hospitality of these Newcomers? Worthy people!

I will not forget Abraham Traxall, now in the west of Pennsylvania: a most acceptable preacher of method and energy. Henry and Christian Crumb, twin-brothers born, and twin-souls in zeal and experience: these were holy, good men, and members of both societies. John Hersay, formerly a Menonist; an Israelite: he is gone to rest. Abraham and Christian Hersay; occasional itinerants, good men; busy and zealous. David Snyder possessing gifts to make himself useful. Neisch Wanger, a good man and good preacher. Most of these men were natives of Pennsylvania. May I name Leonard Harburgh, once famous, gifted, laborious, useful? He is now only a great mechanic, alas! The flame of German zeal has moved westward with emigration. In Ohio we have Andrew Teller, and Benedem, men of God, intrusted with a weighty charge, subjecting them to great labors. But our German fathers have lost many of their spiritual children. Some have led away disciples after them, and established independent churches; some have returned whence they or their fathers came; and some have joined the Dutch Baptists. Our German reformers have left no journal or record, that I have seen or heard of by which we might learn the extent of their labors; but from Tennessee, where the excellent Baker labored and died, through Virginia and Maryland into Pennsylvania, as far eastward as Buck's and Berk's counties, the effects of their ministry were happily seen and felt. We feel ourselves at liberty to believe that these German heralds of grace congregated one hundred thousand souls; that they have had twenty thousand in fellowship and communion, and one hundred zealous and acceptable preachers.

"The following paper was found in the handwriting of Bishop Asbury, and, as it is believed, of the Rev. Wm. Otterbein: --

'To the Rev. William Otterbein. Sir, -- Where were you born?'

Answer In Nassau, Dillenburg, in Germany.

Question How many years had you lived in your native land?

Answer Twenty-six years.

Question How many years have you resided in America?

Answer Sixty years, come next August.

Question Where were you educated?

Answer In Herborn; in an academy.

Question What languages and sciences were you taught?

Answer Latin, Greek, Hebrew, philosophy, and divinity.

Question In what order were you set apart for the ministry?

Answer The Presbyterian form and order.

Question What ministers assisted in your ordination?

Answer Shrim and Klinghoffer.

Question Where have you had charge of congregations in America?

Answer First in Lancaster; in Tulpahocking, in Fredericktown in Maryland, in Little York in Pennsylvania, and in Baltimore.

Question In what parts of the United States have you frequently traveled through, in the prosecution of your ministerial labors?

Answer In Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

Question How many years of your life, since you came to this country, were you in a great measure an itinerant?

Answer The chief of the time since my coming to this continent, but more largely since coming to Baltimore.

Question By what means were you brought to the gospel knowledge of God and our Saviour?

Answer By degrees was I brought to the knowledge of the truth while in Lancaster.

Question Have you an unshaken confidence in God through Christ of your justification, sanctification, and sure hope of glorification?

Answer The Lord has been good to me; and no doubt remains in my mind but he will be good; and I can now praise him for the hope of a better life.

Question Have you ever kept any account of the seals to your ministry?

Answer None.

Question Have you ever taken an account of the members in the societies of the United German Brethren?

Answer Only what are in Baltimore.

Question Have you taken any account of the brethren introduced into the ministry immediately by yourself, and sent out by you? Can you give the names of the living and the dead?

Answer Henry Widener, Henry Becker, Simon Herre, in Virginia; these are gone to their reward. Newcomer can give the names of the living.

Question What ministerial brethren who have been your helpers, can you speak of with pleasure, and whose names are precious?

Answer Guedick, Widener, Herre, Newcomer, and others.

Question What is your mind concerning John Wesley, and the order of Methodists in America?

Answer I think highly of John Wesley. I think well of the Methodists in America.

Question What are your views of the present state of the church of Christ in Europe and America, and of prophecy?

Answer In continental Europe the church has lost, in a great degree, the light of truth. In England and America the light still shines. Prophecy is hastening to its accomplishment.

Question Will you give any commandment concerning your bones, and the memoirs of your life? your children in Christ will not suffer you to die unnoticed.'

No answer to this last question."

In his journal the bishop makes the following remarks respecting Mr. Otterbein: --

By request I discoursed on the character of the angel of the Church of Philadelphia, in allusion to P. W. Otterbein -- the holy, the great Otterbein -- whose funeral discourse it was intended to be. Solemnity marked the silent meeting in the German Church, where were assembled the members of our conference and many of the clergy of the city. Forty years have I known the retiring modesty of this man of God -- towering majestic above his fellows in learning, wisdom, and grace, yet seeking to be known only of God and the people of God. He had been sixty years a minister, fifty years a converted one."

This year also, the Church, in both hemispheres, was called to mourn over the death of Dr. Coke. Having been released in 1808, from his obligations to the American conference, he devoted himself thenceforward to the cause of God in Europe, with his accustomed zeal and fervor, but more especially to the cause of missions. While engaged in this work his attention was directed to the deplorable state of things in British India. The researches of Buchanan, and the accounts of others who had traveled in that country, had awakened a zeal in the hearts of British Christians for the salvation of the idolaters of Asa, which now burned with intense ardor in the breast of Dr. Coke, and he determined, if Providence favored his design, to establish a mission for their benefit. Having made the necessary preparations, in company with seven others whom he had selected to accompany him as assistant missionaries, on the 30th of December, 1813, he took an affectionate leave of his friends at Portsmouth, and on the 1st of January,

1814, they all proceeded down the English Channel, and slowly entered upon that voyage which for ever separated Dr. Coke from the land of his nativity and the scene of his active labors.

On the morning of the 3d day of May, 1814, in latitude two degrees twenty minutes south, and longitude fifty-nine twenty-nine minutes east from London, when the servant went, according to his orders, to call Dr. Coke from his slumbers, on opening the door of his cabin, he found, to his utter amazement, the body of the doctor stretched lifeless upon the floor! The intelligence of this mournful event being communicated first to the captain of the ship, and then, at his request, to the missionaries, produced, as might be expected, a sensation of sorrow not easily described. It was supposed by the medical gentlemen who, at the request of the missionaries, made a post mortem examination, that he died of a fit of apoplexy. As his body was stiff and cold when it was discovered, at about half past five o'clock in the morning, and was found stretched upon the floor, it was concluded that, feeling unwell in the night, he had arisen from his bed to obtain some medicine, when he fell at about midnight to rise no more until the resurrection of the just and unjust.

Finding it impracticable to preserve the corpse in that hot climate to be brought back to England, according to his request in his will, to be deposited by the side of his two wives whom he had buried in Brecon, his native town in Wales, at about half past five o'clock, P. M., of the same day, the dead body was committed to the deep with suitable religious ceremonies, the performance of which, under these solemn circumstances, produced very serious impressions on all present.

Thus ended the life and labors of Thomas Coke, LL.D., and first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the sixty-seventh year of his age. And while we record his death, we cannot well forget the many obligations we, as a Church, are under to him for his most zealous and disinterested labors among us in the infancy of our Church, and the consequent feebleness in which we were when he first visited our Zion.

It is not, however, my intention to attempt a portraiture of his character, nor to enumerate the instances of his labors and sacrifices. This has been amply and ably done by his biographer, to whom the reader is referred for a full account of the life, education, conversion, and ministerial labors, both as a preacher and writer, of Dr. Coke. And the proceeding pages will show the high estimation in which he was held on both sides of the Atlantic, the relation he sustained to us, the labors he performed and the lively interest he manifested in the welfare of American Methodism. It is due, nevertheless, to him and to the cause he contributed so maternally to and in this country, to say, that he crossed the Atlantic no less than eighteen times, at his own expense, to serve his American brethren -- that while here he exerted a powerful and salutary influence in favor of pure religion, by his preaching and the weight of his character -- and that, though he might, on one or two occasions, have incautiously committed himself and his brethren to those who watched his movements not with the most friendly eye, yet he deserves and receives the thankful and affectionate remembrance of those who have been benefited by his labors, and know how to appreciate his excellences.

And if at any time he was not treated, in his intercourse with his American brethren, with that respectful attention which was due to his character -- as was doubtless the case -- he manifested the spirit of his Master and Saviour, in throwing over all such instances of human frailty the mantle of forgiveness and oblivion, neither abating the ardor of his love nor slackening the speed of his diligence to do them good, by serving them so long as his services were required. And if his spirit, disenthralled from its cumbersome house of clay, is now permitted to look from its mansion above, over the wide space covered by the

ministry and Church he helped to organize and set in motion, he no doubt derives one source of his joy from the recollection of what he suffered and did in maturing and executing the plan which have resulted in the redemption and salvation of so many souls, and looking up to the holy throne, he unites with all the redeemed from among men, in ascribing the honor of all this to God and the Lamb.

At the session of the New York conference in 1815, which assembled that year in the city of Albany on the 12th day of May, the melancholy news of Dr. Coke's sudden death had just reached our shores through the public papers, and, at the request of the conference, Bishop Asbury preached his funeral discourse. In this discourse the bishop bore ample testimony to the exalted character, the Christian and ministerial virtues, of his deceased friend and colleague. The following are some of his remarks, as I find them recorded in his journal: --

"He was of the third branch of the Oxonian Methodists -- of blessed mind and soul -- a gentleman, a scholar, and a bishop to us -- as a minister of Christ, in zeal, in labors, and in services, the greatest man of the last century."

Locations still continued to weaken the ranks of the itinerancy by forcing us to supply the circuits with young and inexperienced men, who, though they were zealous and active, were necessarily deficient in that sound practical wisdom which is desirable in the ministry, more especially for the judicious administration of discipline. No less than sixty-five were located this year, namely, in the Ohio conference nine, The Tennessee five, the South Carolina twelve, the Virginia fifteen, the Baltimore five, the Philadelphia seven, New York one,⁵ New England eight, and Genesee three. There were twenty returned on the supernumerary list, and twenty-two on the superannuated, and one was expelled. Ralph Lotspeich, Leroy Merritt, William Mills, Peter Moriarty, Francis Ward, Abner Clark, and Anning Owen, having fulfilled their ministry with fidelity, had taken their departure from the field of labor to the land of rest.

Numbers in the Church: Whites This Year: 168,698; Last Year: 171,448; Decrease: 2,750 -- Colored This Year: 42,431; Last Year: 42,859; Decrease: 428 -- Total This Year: 211,129; Last Year: 214,307 -- Decrease: 3,178 -- Preachers This Year: 687; Last Year: 678; Increase: 9.

This unusual decrease shows that the effects of the war, as has been remarked above, had been unfriendly to the interests of religion.

1815

At this the time principal labor of the superintendency devolved on Bishop McKendree, the wisdom of whose administration was generally appreciated by both the ministry and membership; for Bishop Asbury, though still moving around among the churches, was too feeble to render much assistance in the active business of the conferences. He, however, met his colleague at the conferences, fixed the stations of the preachers, preached occasionally, and for a short season at a time took his seat in the conferences. Here he was uniformly greeted with a hearty welcome, and venerated as the patriarch of the American Methodist Episcopal Church.

After recording the incidents of his travels through the several states, preaching often, distributing Testaments to the poor, visiting families and praying with them, as well as soliciting pecuniary aid for the poorer preachers by presenting to his friends his "mite subscription," he gives the following account of his interview with Bishop McKendree: --

"We had a long and earnest talk about the affairs of our Church, and my future prospects. I told him my opinion was, that the western part of the empire would be the glory of America for the poor and the pious -- that it ought to be marked out for five conferences, to wit, Ohio, Kentucky, Holston, Mississippi, and Missouri -- in doing which, as well as I was able, I traced outlines and boundaries. I told my colleague, that having passed the first allotted period, (seventy years,) and being, as he knew, out of health, it could not be expected that I could visit the extremities every year, sitting in eight, it might be twelve conferences, and traveling six thousand miles in eight months. If I was able still to keep up with the conferences, I could not be expected preside in more than every other one. As to the stations, I should never exhibit a plan unfinished, but still get all the information in my power, so as to enable me to make it perfect, like the painter who touches and retouches until all parts of the picture are pleasing. The plan I might be laboring on would always be submitted to such eyes as ought to see it; and the measure I meted to others I should expect to receive."

How fallacious often is hope! This conversation, though it exhibits a mind ever intent on the best interests of the Church, in thus maturing plans for its future prosperity, was like the flickering light of an expiring lamp, which, before it is entirely extinguished, flares up suddenly and then goes out for ever. Such indeed was the general debility of Bishop Asbury that he had to be lifted in and out of his carriage, and if he visited the conference room at all, it was only to astonish his friends with the sudden coruscations of light which beamed from a mind pent up in a body trembling under the ravages of disease and the infirmities of age. But he had been so long accustomed to constant traveling and preaching, that this habitual exercise seemed essential to life and comfort, and no doubt contributed to lengthen his days, which were now nevertheless speedily drawing to their close.

The war, which had now raged with various degrees of violence and success, for about three years, was near its termination. Though the battle of New Orleans was fought on the 8th of January, 1815, and several naval victories were won upon the ocean after that event, yet the articles of peace were signed by the British and American commissioners at Ghent on the 24th of December, by which an end was soon put to this bloody struggle, greatly to the joy of the friends of human happiness on both sides of the Atlantic, and much more to those along the lines of Canada and the United States, where so much human suffering had been realized.

But though such places had severely felt the deleterious effects of this scourge of humanity, especially on the interests of true religion, yet in places not so much exposed to the ravages of war the work of God had prospered during the past year. Since, however, the commencement of hostilities, there had been a check put upon the extension of the work among the people on the frontiers, as well as upon the advancement of the settlements themselves. The Indian tribes had been generally enlisted on one side or the other of the belligerents, had invaded each other's territories, and thus kept the exterior settlements in a continual state of fear and alarm, of excitement and irritation -- a state of things exceedingly unfriendly to religious enjoyment and effort. It will therefore be seen that, after deducting for withdrawals, extensions, and deaths, which is always done in taking the number of Church members, the increase this year was very small, and hence it may be presumed that the spirit of piety was rather low throughout our borders generally.

Sixty-seven were located, thirteen were returned supernumerary, twenty-two superannuated, one expelled, and four had died. Two of the last, namely, John McClaskey and Michael Coate, had been long and favorably known to the Church, highly distinguished for their deep piety, indefatigable and useful labors; and in their death they gave a lively testimony to the power of religion to sustain them in their

passage to immortality and eternal life. Though the race of the others, Lewis Hobbs and William S. Fisher, was comparatively short, yet it was brilliant, and ended as it began, in the grace of God, and in the hope of an eternal reward.

Numbers in the Church: Whites This Year: 167,978; Last Year: 168,698; Decrease: 720 -- Colored This Year: 43,187; Last Year: 42,431; Increase: 756 -- Total This Year: 211,165; Last Year: 211,129 -- Increase: 36 -- Preachers This Year: 704; Last Year: 687; Increase: 17.

1816

Peace being restored to the country, business began to resume its usual channel, and the people to attend to their concerns with their wonted cheerfulness and diligence, and we find this year Upper and Lower Canada, which had been insulated [we would now say, "isolated" -- DVM] during the war, was included among the districts of the Genesee conference, though Quebec was supplied, at the request of the people in that place, by the mission committee in London. But though this calm appeared in the civil atmosphere, the effects of the late storms of war and bloodshed were still visible along the highways and fields in which God's servants were called to labor. The southwestern frontiers were in some places disturbed by Indian depredations, and in other parts of the country the exasperations of spirit which had been excited by conflicting opinions respecting the policy of the late war, and the manner in which it was waged, were not yet wholly allayed, and hence the spirit of piety had not yet recovered its wonted healthy tone and vigorous action; and the manner in which the rejoicings and thanksgivings for the return of peace were held, in many instances, served rather to feed than to extinguish the flame of political strife and animosity, as well as to call forth and strengthen the warlike propensities of the human heart. In some places, however, a spirit of devout gratitude to the Author of all good was cherished in the sanctuary, where the people of God prostrated themselves before His throne, and after lifting their hearts to Him in fervent acknowledgments of praise and thanksgiving for the restoration of peace and its attendant blessings, were entertained from the pulpit with a rehearsal of his loving-kindness to the nation and to the Church. These were seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and tended to enlarge the soul with enlightened views of the divine character and goodness, to revive and nourish the spirit of piety, and to unite the feeling of true patriotism with a sense of pious gratitude.

But, though the superintendents, as far as they were able, attended to their duties in the general work, and the preachers watched over their respective flocks with their wonted diligence and zeal, there were no special revivals of the work of God, and hence the increase of numbers was small, notwithstanding the members in Canada were this year included in the enumeration.

We have already seen that Bishop Asbury's declining health prevented him from performing much active service, and that consequently the duties of the superintendency devolved chiefly on Bis

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