

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 114



## **Francis Asbury Pioneer of Methodism**

**America's most explosive  
church movement**



**TAKING CAREFUL NOTES** Left: Asbury carried with him everywhere a notebook in which he recorded attendance, donations, and his evaluations of Methodist preachers.

**AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL** Below: A statue of Francis Asbury stands overlooking the traffic in Washington, DC, to this day.

# Did you know?

WITHOUT FRANCIS ASBURY, THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE WOULD LOOK VERY DIFFERENT

## NO ZIP CODE NEEDED

At the height of his career, Francis Asbury (1745–1816) was so famous that one need only write on a letter “Bishop Francis Asbury, United States of America” and the letter would reach him. More than a thousand children are known to have been named after him; if you have a Frank or Francis in your family tree, you may have Asbury to thank. He was more widely recognized by the common people than anyone else from his era—including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

## DEAD CATS AND SNORTING PIGS

Asbury was born in England and began his preaching career there. Bedfordshire, the circuit on which he preached (a *circuit* was a series of towns or villages assigned to a single preacher) was very hostile to Methodists. Mobs frequently assaulted Methodist preachers. One preacher was hit on the head with a dead cat. In another house people met in a room above a pig sty to hear preaching, and a relative of one of the listeners dropped food to the pigs during preaching services, hoping that the pigs would make so much noise that the Methodists would shut up. In the end, the Methodists out-shouted the pigs and kept going.

## STARTLING STATISTICS

When Asbury first came to the American colonies as a 26-year-old Methodist missionary in 1771, there were 600 Methodist believers on the new continent. Fewer than 1 in 800 people was a Methodist. When he died in 1816, there were over 200,000 Methodists (1 of every



36 Americans), and Asbury had ordained over 2,000 Methodist preachers, nearly all of those who were preaching at the time. Despite poor health, he had ridden over 130,000 miles and preached for 45 years (an average of eight miles per day), probably delivering more than 10,000 sermons—approximately one sermon every three days.

## TRAVELING LIGHT AND WITH AN OPEN HAND

Asbury never married or owned much more than he could carry on horseback. He told Henry Boehm, one of his traveling companions, that “the equipment of a Methodist minister consisted of a horse, saddle and bridle, one suit of clothes, a watch, a pocket Bible, and a hymn book. Anything else would be an encumbrance.” George Roberts, another preacher, recorded that Asbury left New York for Boston on one trip with only three dollars in his pocket and refused to take more from anyone on the way.

## SETTING THE GOSPEL FREE

Presbyterians, Anglicans, and members of other more established churches would have been surprised by the expanded roles for women and African Americans in





**READY FOR HIS CLOSE-UP** Above: Methodists loved representing their founders in art. Here John Wesley appears on three pieces of pottery.

**MOMENTOUS SERMONS** Right: At All Saints' Church in West Bromwich, in England's West Midlands, Francis Asbury first heard Methodists preach. It changed the course of his life.



Methodist services, even in mixed gatherings. Though this support was always complicated—discrimination against “African” worshipers led both Richard Allen (see “My chains fell off,” p. 21) and James Varick to found African American branches of Methodism—there were times and places where both groups exhorted fellow believers, prayed in public, and even preached. Ironically, as Methodism’s mainline grew more sophisticated and wealthier, such times and places grew fewer. Allen, shortly before his death, mused:

I am well convinced that the Methodist has proved beneficial to thousands and ten times thousands. It is to be awfully feared that the simplicity of the Gospel that was among them fifty years ago [is fading], and that they conform more to the world and the fashions thereof. . . . The discipline is altered considerably from what it was. We would ask for the good old way, and desire to walk therein.

#### TREASURES IN SADDLEBAGS

When Asbury died, he left his books and papers to his successor, Bishop William McKendree (1757–1835). Preacher Jacob Young was assigned to carry the items across the Allegheny Mountains to McKendree, and he loaded them on Asbury’s horse.

Along the way on an isolated part of the trail, Young was accosted by men who believed that the packages he was carrying must contain silver or other valuables.

They asked him where he had come from. “Baltimore,” said Young. One of the robbers scoffed, “Is money plentiful there? You seem to have plenty of it here.” Young replied that he carried no valuables but that his horse and luggage belonged to Bishop Asbury, who was now dead. “Is Bishop Asbury dead?” asked the robber. “I have seen and heard him preach in my father’s house.” The two bandits galloped off without stealing a thing.

#### PROPHET AND BUILDER

A statue of Asbury on his horse stands to this day in Washington, DC, at the corner of Mount Pleasant and 16th Streets. (Similar statues also stand in Madison, New Jersey, and Wilmore, Kentucky.) It was dedicated in 1924 at a ceremony attended by thousands of people and presided over by President Calvin Coolidge, who remarked in his speech that Asbury “is entitled to rank as one of the builders of our nation.” Besides Asbury’s name, the statue bears these inscriptions of tribute:

His continuous journey through cities, villages, and settlements from 1771 to 1816 greatly promoted patriotism, education, morality, and religion in the American republic.

If you seek for the results of his labor you will find them in our Christian civilization.

The prophet of the long road. ☞

*Some of this material was adapted from American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists by John Wigger.*

# Editor's note

They pray the most, they preach the best.  
They labor most for endless rest;  
I hope my Lord them will increase.  
And fill the world with Methodist.  
The world, the devil, and Tom Paine  
Have tried their best but all's in vain.  
They can't prevail, the reason's this:  
The Lord defends the Methodist.

(Methodist song, c. 1813)

**I HAVE TRIED** for much of my life to understand Methodists.

My youth was spent navigating the waters of United Methodism in the 1970s. By then it resembled the average American mainline denomination: large churches, multiple seminaries, settled long-term pastors, extensive music and youth programs, and an honored place in American political life.

It was not until I attended graduate school with the purpose of studying my own tradition that I truly realized that Methodism's beginning in America was many things I had not expected: rowdy, ecstatic, sacramental, and unstoppable, spreading the Gospel in ways uniquely suited to a growing nation.

One of the major movers of that unstoppable force was Francis Asbury (1745–1816). This young Englishman, a metalworker by trade and son of a common laborer, heard the Methodist message in his teens and volunteered in his twenties to go as a Methodist missionary to the American colonies. A tireless and dedicated traveler, he became one of the most respected American Methodist preachers. When in 1784 a Methodist denomination separate from its British roots was formed in the new nation, Asbury was the obvious person to take charge. He was, after all, the only British-born Methodist preacher who had remained in the colonies during the Revolutionary War.

Encouraged by Asbury's constant travels, early Methodists set out to evangelize the continent. Forged

in small groups, encouraged by boisterous camp meetings, and singing its way across the nation to vigorous tunes, the movement spread like a sanctified brush fire.

As it grew, however, the fire was directed and controlled—perhaps even domesticated. Pastors who settled in large city churches replaced circuit-riding preachers. Outdoor worship moved inside to elegant Gothic churches with carpets, trained choirs, and pews rented to the well-to-do. Methodists gained access to powerful politicians and wealthy backers.

Still, the church maintained a reforming energy—especially through the temperance movement. Speeches, marches, writings, songs, and the labors of countless Methodists powered the fervor for total abstinence from alcohol that swept late nineteenth-century Protestantism. Even in my own childhood, Methodists clearly stood for the idea that, when faced with social problems, churches need to roll up their sleeves, wade in, and get to work.

While no longer United Methodist, I am still a historian of Methodism and have even published a book about why Methodists use grape juice in Communion. I also once worked at the United Methodist Archives Center (UMAC) in New Jersey, a cooperative venture between Drew University Library and the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church. They have cooperated generously with time and images in the preparation of this issue.

So this issue's story (and images!) are close to my heart. I hope you enjoy reading about Methodism's ecstatic beginning and its country-conquering energy. And I hope its transition from frontier conflagration to respected cultural force raises for you some of the questions it always has raised for me—about what was gained, and about what was lost. ■



Jennifer Woodruff Tait  
Managing editor, *Christian History*

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*In CH 113, Lilia MacDonald was misidentified as Lucy in "Did you know?," Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson as Kirsten on p. 3, and Highbury College as High College on p. 24. Joe Ricke, professor of English at Taylor University, should have been credited with the description of Tolkien's grave on p. 1. CH regrets the errors.*



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THREE EARLY METHODIST LEADERS, CHARLES WESLEY, JOHN WESLEY, AND FRANCIS ASBURY, PORTRAYED IN STAINED GLASS AT THE MEMORIAL CHAPEL, LAKE JUNALUSKA, NORTH CAROLINA—WIKIMEDIA

# The unexpected leader

HOW A RURAL ENGLISH METALWORKER TRANSFORMED AMERICAN RELIGION

*John Wigger*

**FRANCIS ASBURY (1745–1816)** grew up in a rough neighborhood. A traveler passing through his hometown of Great Barr, England, in 1741 noted a number of metalworking shops in which he saw “one or more females, stript of their upper garments [topless], and not overcharged with their lower, wielding the hammer with all the grace of the sex.” Taken aback, he asked if these women “with smutty faces, thundering at the anvil” shod horses, but was told that they were all “nailers” (i.e., they made nails).

Asbury would have seen all this (he probably made nails himself) as well as the constant traffic of drovers (whose job was to move large herds of sheep and cattle on foot) passing by his home or stopping at the pub across the street for drinks and gambling. His own father probably did the same. Yet despite his unremarkable beginnings, the younger Asbury lived one of the

most remarkable lives in American history—a life that many admired but few envied. Perhaps no religious leader in American history left a more enduring legacy than Francis Asbury, though many have forgotten his contributions today. The lower-middle-class son of a forgettable father would one day be elected a bishop at the founding conference of America’s most explosive church movement, Methodism.

## AMERICA’S MOST FAMOUS MAN

Under Asbury’s leadership American Methodism grew at a remarkable rate, rising from a few hundred members in 1771 to more than 200,000 in 1816, the year of his death. During his 45 years in America, Asbury traveled at least 130,000 miles by horse and crossed the Allegheny Mountains some 60 times. For many years he visited nearly every state once a year and traveled

**NEW WORLD, NEW FOUNDER** *Left:* After Charles and John Wesley founded Methodism in England, Asbury (*far right*) made it a huge success in the colonies.

**FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS** *Right:* In this humble brewer's cottage in Great Barr, England, was born a man who would spark a religious movement.

more extensively across the American landscape than anyone else of his day.

Landlords and tavern keepers knew him by sight in every region. People called out his name as he passed by on the road. Asbury was not born in America, but he came to understand ordinary Americans as well as any of his contemporaries.

Asbury's childhood gave few hints of what he would later accomplish. Growing up in the West Midlands of England, he had no expectations of a life beyond practicing a trade in his small village. His father, Joseph, was a gardener and agricultural laborer.

Joseph also exhibited some kind of moral failing—something that everyone acknowledged, but no records identify. Sometime around 1796, American preacher Jeremiah Minter posed the following question to Asbury: “Mr. Asbury, I have often heard you mention your mother, but never heard you mention your father—is he living or is he dead?” Although Asbury's father, Joseph, was still alive, Asbury did not reply. Another preacher answered for him: “It may be that he has no father.” At least not one that he cared to discuss.

The Asburys lived in a small cottage in the village of Great Barr, about four miles outside Birmingham. Methodism came to the area through the preaching of John and Charles Wesley in 1742 and 1743; their success in gaining converts also garnered opposition, including, in October 1743, the mob that attacked John and nearly tore his hair out. In the following months, local Methodists suffered almost £500 in damage done by rioters.

A brewery owned the Asburys' cottage—indicating that Joseph Asbury worked at the brewery and suggesting that his problem may have been drinking too much. Though Joseph was generally good-natured, he was also known to squander money, so perhaps he also gambled, a common component of cockfighting and other popular recreations of the day.

Asbury's mother, Elizabeth, faced her own demons. She sank into a deep depression following the death of six-year-old Sarah, her only other child, when Frank (as the family called him) was just three. For years Elizabeth dwelled “in a very dark, dark,



dark day and place,” Francis later remembered. This may explain why she became possessive of her son and had a hard time letting go.

Asbury's parents provided for his education as best they could. By age six his mother had taught him to read the Bible, and he went to a free school at Sneal's Green, about a quarter mile from their cottage. Unfortunately the school's master was “a great churl, and used to beat me cruelly,” Asbury later recalled. His severity “filled me with such horrible dread, that with me anything was preferable to going to school.”

Young Francis quit school at about age 12. A year later he entered an apprenticeship to a local metalworker. The six and a half years he spent in this trade left an indelible mark on him. Birmingham was a center of the early Industrial Revolution, and West Midland manufacturers had a keen eye for what would sell. Asbury later applied this same market sense to the American religious landscape. Having seen a consumer revolution in material goods up close, he was prepared to appreciate a consumer revolution in spiritual ideas, which is exactly what he would encounter in the new land.

## SEARCHING FOR SALVATION

The death of Asbury's sister, Sarah, drove his mother to search for deeper spiritual meaning in life. Elizabeth soon gained a reputation for seeking out almost anyone with evangelical inclinations, including local Methodists. Asbury's religious convictions grew along with his mother's. She directed the boy to Methodist meetings in nearby West Bromwich and Wednesbury, where Asbury was impressed by the zeal of the preachers and their audiences.

After an intense search for an assurance of salvation, he experienced conversion at about age 15 and

sanctification, or something close to it, a year or so later. (For early Methodists, sanctification was becoming so thoroughly changed by God's grace that one lived out of perfect love to God and neighbor, an act they felt could occur in an instant, though the ramifications lasted a lifetime.)

Asbury conversion not only brought him to Christ, it dramatically expanded his world. As a metalworker he probably would have lived out his life within a few miles of Birmingham. As the Methodist preacher he soon became, his horizons were boundless.

Asbury next joined a class meeting. These were small groups created by John Wesley to nurture spiritual formation and community (see "Dwelling in the suburbs of heaven," pp. 12–15). At about 17 he began to

exhort and then preach in public. (Exhorters spoke general words of spiritual encouragement, while preachers expounded a biblical text more closely.) At 21 he took the place of the traveling preacher assigned to the Staffordshire circuit.

For the next four years, Wesley assigned Asbury to mostly rural circuits in the south of England, none of which was particularly easy. Asbury stuck with it, showing a resiliency that would characterize his entire career. At the Bristol Annual Conference in August 1771, at age 26, he answered Wesley's call for volunteers to go to America. No one, including John Wesley, expected him to do anything extraordinary there.

How wrong they were.

### "HIS PREACHING WAS NOT EDIFYING"

As a metalworker's apprentice and the son of a common laborer, Asbury understood the lives of working people. Once he arrived in America in 1771, he established a close bond with Methodists already there. Methodists had begun immigrating to America in the 1760s, and the vast majority of them came from the lower and middling ranks of society (see "Preachers, fighters, and crusaders," pp. 35–38).

While America's first and most respected Protestant leaders, the Anglicans, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, had been drawn from the ranks of the educated and successful, American Methodism's earliest preachers started as farmers, schoolteachers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, and artisans of other kinds before turning to preaching. Asbury was not a highly educated Anglican priest like Wesley. He was one of the common people.

Religious leaders are often lumped into three broad categories: intellectuals, charismatic communicators, and autocrats. Asbury was none of these. Though he read voraciously, he was not educated beyond the sixth grade and, unlike the movement's Oxford-educated founders, could never pass as an intellectual. He wrote thousands of letters and kept a journal throughout his career, but he never wrote a book. Nor was he an autocratic leader in Wesley's mold, imposing his will on others.

Asbury was also a surprisingly bad preacher. He was well known for disjointed sermons that were nearly impossible to follow, and he seldom spoke at the annual and general conferences where the preachers met to do the business of the church. Writing on the occasion of Asbury's death, Nicholas Snethen admitted that people generally did not find Asbury's preaching "edifying."

This was more or less what everyone said. Nathan Bangs (see "From John Wesley to *Ben-Hur*," pp. 28–30) heard Asbury for the first time at the New York Annual Conference in June 1804: "His preaching was quite discursive, if not disconnected, a fact attributed to his many cares and unintermitted travel,



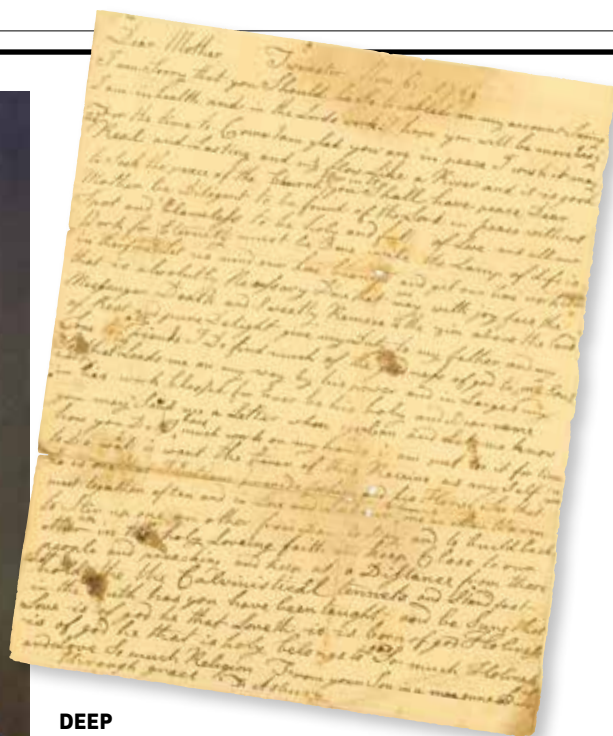
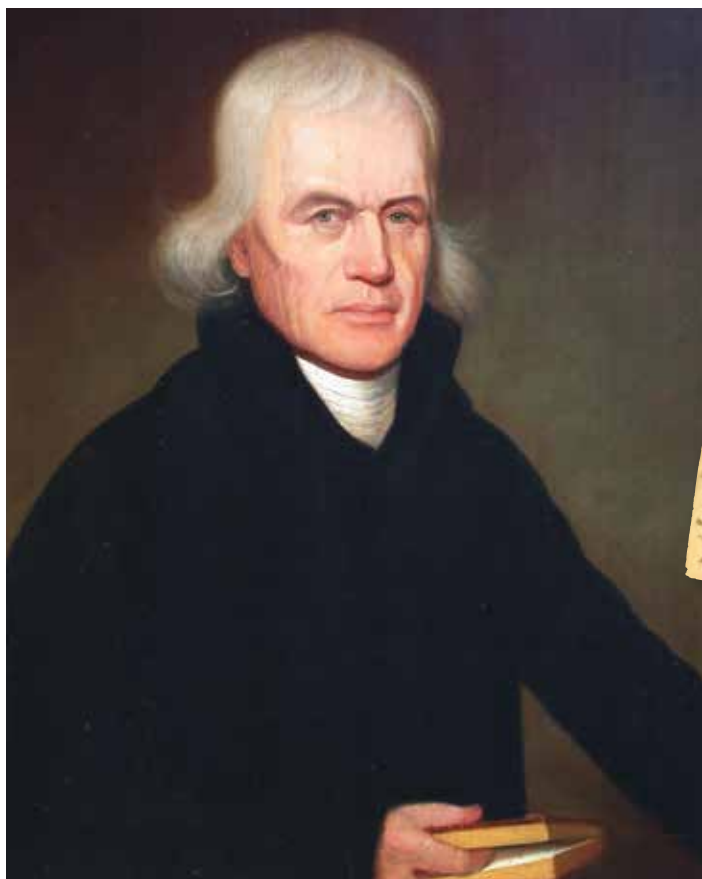
## One noisy mouse

Part of Asbury's legendary ability to connect with people consisted of the humor he used to defuse tense situations. In the summer of 1776, Thomas Rankin, whom Wesley had appointed as head of American Methodism, toured Virginia. There he was dismayed by the raucous emotionalism of southerners' meetings for worship. At a conference of the preachers soon afterward, Rankin launched into a tirade against "the spirit of the Americans," criticizing the preachers for allowing "noise" and "wild enthusiasm" in their meetings and for becoming "infected with it" themselves.

As the tension in the room mounted, Asbury "became alarmed, and deemed it absolutely necessary that a stop should be put to the debate," according to a preacher who witnessed the event. Jumping up, Asbury pointed across the room and said, "I thought—I thought—I thought," to which Rankin replied, "Pray . . . what did you thought [*sic*]?"

"I thought I saw a mouse!" exclaimed Asbury. This "electrified" the preachers, and in the ensuing noisy laughter, Rankin realized that he had misjudged his audience. Asbury clearly knew the American preachers (and their enthusiasm) better than Rankin. His timing must have been perfect because otherwise the joke isn't that funny. —*John Wigger*





#### DEEP

**THOUGHTS** *Left:* This famous portrait of Asbury captures him with book in hand (he read widely despite his lack of formal education).

**"YOU SHALL HAVE PEACE"** *Above:* Asbury wrote this letter of spiritual counsel to his mother in 1769.

which admitted of [i.e., made time for] little or no study. . . . He slid from one subject to another without system. He abounded in illustrations and anecdotes." His reticence in public was rooted in a fear of rejection that he never entirely overcame.

In short, Asbury had none of the prerequisites to become what we usually think of as a great American leader; yet that is what he did. If he was not a scholar, could not preach, and did not rule others with his will, what made Asbury such a brilliant leader?

The democratization of American culture in the wake of the American Revolution required a leader who could inspire, persuade, and build consensus—exactly where Asbury excelled. He communicated his vision for Methodism in four enduring ways that came to define much of evangelical culture in America for decades to come.

#### RIDING, PRAYING, AND VISITING

The first way can be seen in his *legendary piety and perseverance*. Throughout his daily life of traveling, preaching, talking, and writing, Asbury essentially lived as a houseguest in thousands of people's homes across the nation. During his 45 years in America, he rarely spent more than a few days in any one location.

This manner of life "exposed him, continually, to public or private observation and inspection, and sub-

jected him to a constant and critical review . . . from day to day, and from year to year," wrote Ezekiel Cooper, who knew Asbury for more than 30 years. Asbury had no privacy. If his devotion had been half-hearted, it would have been difficult to hide from the tens of thousands who saw him up close. On the contrary, the closer people got to Asbury, the more they tended to like and respect him.

What *did* Asbury's personal piety look like up close? He usually rose between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. to spend an hour in prayer in the morning stillness. He ate sparingly—in part because of frequent illnesses brought on by exposure to weather, questionable food, and poor housing, but also as an expression of spiritual discipline.

At its core Methodism meant holding to a pattern, a method, so as to live a more holy life. This included practicing voluntary poverty. Though Asbury spent his life on the road, he insisted on riding unexceptional horses (which he nevertheless named and doted on) and using cheap saddles and riding gear. His clothes were generally presentable but also plain, inexpensive, and limited to what he could carry (see "Did you know?," inside front cover).

Asbury gave away almost all the money that came his way, often to people he met on the road. Once, in Ohio, he came across a widow whose only cow was



about to be sold for debt. Declaring, "it must not be," he gave her what he had and solicited enough from bystanders, including some who had probably come to bid on the cow, to pay the woman's bills.

Even those who had not known Asbury long testified to his piety. John Wesley sent Anglican priest Thomas Coke to the United States in 1784 to ordain Asbury and to assist him as a bishop in the new denomination. Wesley preferred the term "general superintendent," disliking the historical implications of "bishop," but the Americans ignored him. In fact, they even named their new church "Methodist Episcopal Church" because it had bishops.

The first time Coke met Asbury, he wrote in his journal: "I exceedingly reverence Mr. Asbury: he has so much simplicity, like a child; so much wisdom and consideration; so much meekness and love; and under all this, though hardly to be perceived, so much command and authority; he is exactly qualified for a primitive bishop [i.e., one from the early church.]" Coke returned to England several times and eventually became a missionary in the West Indies.

From 1793 on Asbury suffered from steadily worsening congestive heart failure, probably brought on by strep throat and rheumatic fever that damaged his heart valves. This led to swelling in his feet, made worse by the long hours on horseback when his dangling feet became too swollen to fit in the stirrups.

At times he experimented with using sulkies (small, two-wheeled vehicles) and other small carriages. But he disliked limiting himself to roads suitable for a wagon: "The advantages of being on horseback are: that I can better turn aside to visit the poor; I can get along more

**HANDS ON** In this famous Methodist painting, Thomas Coke and other ministers (including Asbury's friend Philip Otterbein; see p. 17–20) ordain Asbury a bishop in 1784.

difficult and intricate roads; I shall save money to give away to the needy; and, lastly, I can be more tender to my poor, faithful beast," Asbury wrote in 1810, when he was 65 and still traveling up to 5,000 miles a year.

### LAUGHING "MOST HEARTILY"

The second way Asbury communicated his vision was through his ability to *connect with ordinary people*. He was legendary for the way he could draw people to him in close conversation late at night or while riding a solitary road. Asbury often chided himself for excessive "levity," particularly at night, and considered his love of talking in these settings a drain on his piety. In reality it was one of his greatest assets, allowing him to build connections across the Methodist movement and feel closely the pulse of the church and the nation.

Henry Boehm, who traveled some 25,000 miles with Asbury from 1808 to 1813, recalled, "In private circles he would unbend, and relate amusing incidents and laugh most heartily." People loved having him in their homes. "He was full of interesting anecdotes, and could entertain people for hours," remembered Boehm. Early Methodists did not associate laughing or even talking very much with the spiritual life, so it is remarkable that this is what people remembered about Asbury.

### CULTURAL INNOVATOR

The third conduit of Asbury's vision was the way he *understood and used popular culture*. Asbury did not



come to America until age 26, yet he came to understand American culture as well as anyone of his generation. Like John Wesley, Asbury was deeply committed to making the Gospel relevant in his time and place. His annual tours regularly took him from Charleston, South Carolina, to New England to the western frontier and everywhere in between.

Asbury used those extensive travels and his ability to connect with people to develop a deep understanding of American culture in its various settings. He talked with an endless array of people—which, given the communication technology of the time, was an effective way to keep up with current trends. He appreciated the vitality of raucous southern worship in the early 1770s when Wesley's other missionaries from Great Britain found it distasteful, and he immediately grasped the potential of camp meetings in the early nineteenth century.

Soon after attending his first camp meeting in 1802, Asbury began urging his preachers to hold them whenever possible. "They have never been tried without success . . . this is fishing with a large net," he wrote to the presiding elder of the Pittsburgh District in December 1802 (see "Camp meetings: a Methodist invention?" p. 16). Asbury was usually quick to pick up on these kinds of innovations and to promote them across the church, even when they did not appeal to him personally (he was rarely among the shouters at camp meetings).

At the same time, cultural adaptation sometimes undercut his leadership, as it did over the issue of slavery. During the mid-1770s (shortly after he first visited the South), Asbury came to believe that slavery was a moral evil: "I have lately been impressed with a deep concern, for bringing about the freedom of slaves, in America, and feel resolved to do what little I can to promote it. . . . I am strongly persuaded, that if the Methodists will not yield in this point, and emancipate their slaves, God will depart from them," he wrote in February 1779.

As a result of these convictions, during the 1780s Asbury backed a drive to exclude slaveholders from the church, one that was ultimately unsuccessful. By the turn of the century, the weight of southern inflexibility had pushed him to accept that the church could not remain in the South without accommodating slavery. It was a bitter disappointment that haunted Asbury for the rest of his life.

#### SUPERIOR TALENT TO LEAD

The fourth way that Asbury communicated his message was through his *organizational abilities*. He inherited a complex and systematic Methodist structure

## Methodists and their stuff

Methodists are their history—they start in have produced and ments

known for keeping track of and of themselves. Since the eighteenth century, they collected thousands of documents and objects, published records of annual meetings, and preserved artifacts personally attached to their founders and other well-known Methodists. Why do people save things? The act of collecting objects and showcasing pieces from the past allows contemporary viewers to peer into days gone by, to gaze at historic locations, and to connect with the ways our forebears taught, preached, and played.

For example, Bishop Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (see "My chains fell off," p. 21) served as the minister of "Mother Bethel" AME Church in Philadelphia. Mother Bethel houses a museum spotlighting artifacts historically connected to Allen including a well-worn leather Bible and a wooden pulpit. Visitors can also linger in the presence of the actual bodies of Richard and Sarah Allen, entombed in a room of the museum since the early twentieth century.

The United Methodist Archives Center in New Jersey has an original Bible used by early revivalist George Whitefield and keeps a bone fragment supposedly of his thumb on display. The thumb, at the center since 1982, is one of the things people who visit the building most often request to see.

Several items intimately tied to Francis Asbury also reside at St. George's United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, the World Methodist Museum in North Carolina, and at the Methodist Center in New Jersey: a personal hair comb, several pairs of eyeglasses, a pocket watch, a pen knife for shaving quills, a trunk, saddlebags, a communion chalice, and a powder horn inscribed with Asbury's name.

Methodists even preserved a peg from a church wall where Asbury once hung his coat and a piece of rock on which Asbury apparently sat one day.

These artifacts help Methodists create shared identity and denominational memory, document the movement's authenticity, and provide opportunities to reflect upon and remember the past.

They become literal pieces of history, housed, viewed, and venerated by contemporary Methodists across the United States. —Christopher J. Anderson, head of Special Collections and University Archives and Methodist Librarian at the United Methodist Archives and History Center in Madison, New Jersey.





from the Wesleys, but it suited him well: he was a brilliant administrator and a keen judge of human motivations. He had a “superior talent to read men,” as itinerant preacher Peter Cartwright (see “Preachers, fighters, and crusaders,” pp. 35–38) put it. He was not quick on his feet, but had a tenacious memory and a great deal of patience.

As Asbury crisscrossed the nation year in and year out, he attended to countless details of doctrine, finance, discipline, and staffing. Yet he never lost sight of the people involved. It did not trouble him that many of his preachers were better speakers than he was. Indeed he hoped that they would be. His constant traveling and careful notes made it possible to keep tabs on thousands of preachers and lay leaders. Most were young, in their teens or twenties. Of the 334 circuit preachers in 1809, only one-third had more than five years’ experience. By 1812 Asbury was supervising nearly 500 itinerant preachers and many more lay leaders (see “Did you know?,” inside front cover).

#### **A CONSTANTLY MOVING CIRCUIT**

At the center of the system was the itinerant connection. Itinerant Methodist preachers, called “circuit riders,” did not serve a single congregation but rather ministered to a number of congregations spread out along circuits that they continually rode on horseback.

**“THE MOUNTAINS WILL BREAK FORTH INTO SHOUTS OF JOY”** Asbury rode through many landscapes like this, preaching to Methodists wherever they gathered and visiting them in their homes.

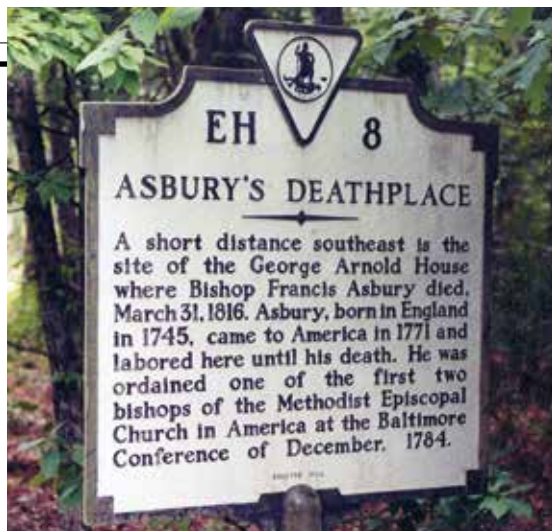
Under Asbury the typical itinerant rode a predominantly rural circuit, 200 to 600 miles in circumference, typically with 25 to 30 preaching appointments per round. A common circuit of 400 miles took four weeks to complete. This meant that circuit riders had to travel and preach nearly every day.

Asbury understood what it would take to keep up with America’s postrevolutionary population growth—and he hammered Methodist structure into a system designed to do just that. In 1795, 95 percent of Americans lived in places with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants.

The itinerant system was perfectly balanced to keep pace with a rapidly expanding frontier where growth was more extensive than intensive. If Methodist leaders had stayed in the cities on the East Coast, they would have missed this opportunity. “We must draw resources from the center to the circumference,” Asbury wrote in 1797.

Asbury’s vision for Methodism as pious, connected, culturally responsive, and effectively organized worked its way deep into the fabric of American religious life. Many other groups copied the Methodist example—





**AT THE END OF THE LONG ROAD** Above: Asbury died here near Spotsylvania, Virginia.

**TALKING ABOUT SALVATION** Below: Francis Asbury preached his first sermon on American shores at St. George's in Philadelphia, where Methodists had been meeting since 1769.

so many that a commitment to those values as norms for church life exists in thousands of churches today that may never have heard Asbury's name.

Asbury's legacy can also be seen in the thousands of preachers whose careers he shaped one conversation at a time and in the tens of thousands who saw him up close and were inspired by his example. There was no blueprint for what he did: building a large organization led by ordinary people, many unpaid, in a pluralistic society where religions competed in the marketplace. Asbury did more than maintain the Wesleyan message in America. He adapted the Wesleys' practice to fit a new social and cultural setting. The result shaped religion in America and around the world.

Saints are tough acts to follow. None of Asbury's successors rose to his stature, but it is a testament to his leadership that the church did not need them to. By 1876 there were more than 4,000,000 Methodists in the United States, and Methodism continued to grow faster than the American population up until the end of the 1950s. While mainline Methodists are declining in numbers today, other groups derived from the Wesleyan heritage, including Pentecostalism, are thriving—as is much of evangelical culture in general. No one did more to push all of this along than Francis Asbury. ■

*John Wigger is professor of history at the University of Missouri and author of American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists.*

## Asbury's simple message

Francis Asbury began to read the Bible when he was six years old. At the age of fourteen, he began to study the message of the Wesleys, which he “cherished with the warmest affection.”

Asbury never aspired to become a professional theologian or a polished academic. He wanted only to pass on to his generation the faith “once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 1:3). Ezekiel Cooper, delivering Asbury's funeral sermon, said that Asbury had found his doctrines in the Bible, the Methodist articles of religion, and the Apostles' Creed. Asbury's message emphasized four essentials:

**All can be saved.** All groups that follow the theology of the Wesleys champion the belief that God wants no one to perish, but all to come to repentance, trust in Christ, and enter God's kingdom: Christ's atonement is not for some, but for all. A prominent Methodist saying is, “Free salvation for all people, and full salvation from all sin.”

**The Holy Spirit witnesses assurance to the believer.** Asbury preached that the presence of the Holy Spirit gives Christ's followers assurance of eternal life. The objective nature of that assurance rests on biblical promises that God will save all who turn to him. The subjective aspect comes from the Holy Spirit's inner witness to human spirits (Rom. 8:16).

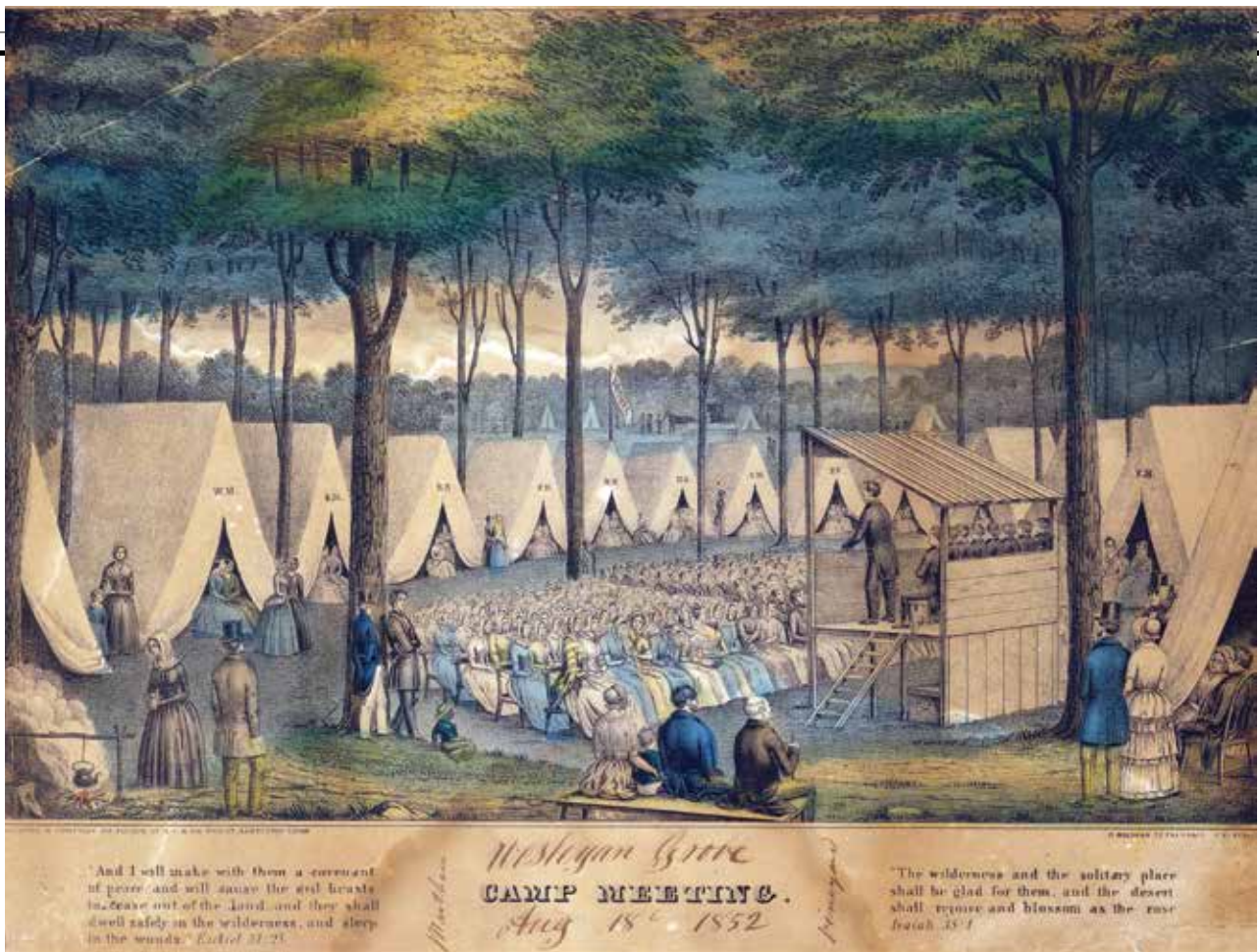
**Christians can be free from sin's guilt and grip.** Asbury insisted that God both forgives the presence of sin and frees from the power of sin, noting, “the testimony of the ministry [is] holiness of life.” He wrote in his journal on January 9, 1814, “I am divinely impressed with a charge to preach sanctification in every sermon.”

**We move from inward change to outward service.** Asbury preached that God summons all Christians to minister to the souls, minds, and bodies of others.

He helped establish academies to educate young people, supported the publication of “suitable literature,” urged the end of slavery, opposed the manufacture and sale of “spirituous liquors,” fostered Christian cooperation, and provided relief for the destitute. But he believed that the greatest social benefit that Christianity offers is new life in Christ.

Asbury had neither the time nor the inclination to delve into complicated theological issues. But his personal example and institutional leadership inspired Methodists “to reform the continent, and spread scriptural holiness over these lands.” His message helped countless souls experience the transforming grace of God. —Kenneth C. Kinghorn, emeritus professor of church history, Asbury Theological Seminary





# The “Church of the Horse”

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE AN AMERICAN METHODIST WHEN FRANCIS ASBURY WAS ALIVE?

**Lester Ruth**

IT WASN'T ILLICIT SEX that did Jeremiah Minter in, or financial misconduct, or any of the other sins that cause the downfall of leaders today. And it wasn't over-the-top emotional intensity or extravagant piety, as early Methodists typically accepted and even encouraged these things. But in 1791 Jeremiah Minter crossed a line that even the Methodists could not accept.

What was the offense that cost Minter not only his position of leadership but also his Methodist membership? Minter had been voluntarily castrated in an attempt to obey the words of Jesus found in Matthew 19:12—“live like a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom.” His expulsion from the church was not the end of the saga.

Upset with Methodist bishops Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke because of his expulsion, Minter published an exposé claiming the two bishops were actu-

ally sorcerers. Minter even swore that he personally had seen these pious leaders of the church practice magic.

Still, Minter was not some madman at the far fringes of early American Methodism. He had been an active itinerant preacher and continued to preach independently even after being cast out. He went on to publish his own hymnal with selections similar to those in hymnals compiled by preachers who stayed within the Methodist movement. And he remained close friends with famous early Methodist Sarah Anderson Jones, a married woman in southern Virginia known widely for her intense piety and popular hymns with a mystical tone.

Jones, despite these fervent hymns, was no outlier, either, but a woman so respected that Asbury preached her memorial service. Jeremiah Minter may have been a little too intense, but the Methodism surrounding him was not exactly quiet and sedate.



**TAG TEAM** *Left:* On the platform of this 1850s camp meeting, preachers await their turns to deliver sermons.

**TICKET, PLEASE** *Right:* Early Methodists needed tickets for admission to many special services. Bad behavior could result in losing the privilege of attending.

## BOTH ECSTATIC AND SOLEMN

What was it like to be an early Methodist? It was a highly *disciplined* way of being a Christian. Indeed, members lived in some ways according to a monastic discipline even while marrying and living in regular households rather than in monasteries.

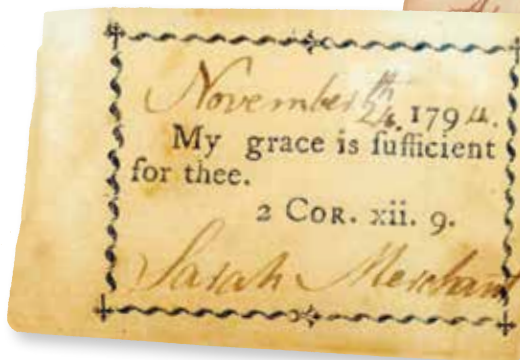
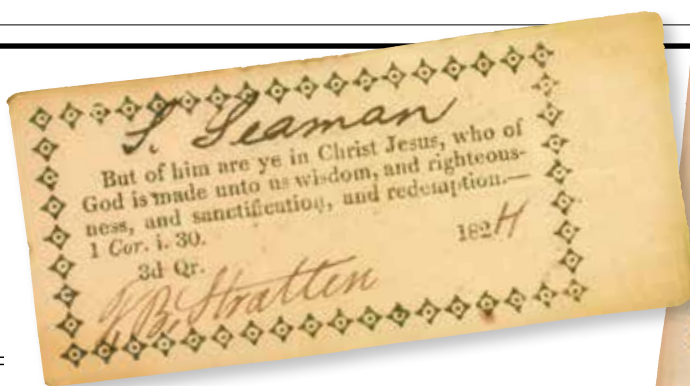
Methodist organization encouraged this. Methodists in a given locale were organized into groups called *societies*, not into traditional congregations or parishes. Many societies would then be grouped together into a *charge*. Traveling preachers were assigned to a given charge by the bishop. A charge based in a city was known as a *station*, while one that expanded into the countryside was called a *circuit*.

Whether in the city or the country, all societies lived by clear rules of life called the *General Rules of the United Societies*, which provided the framework of expectations. In addition widespread standards for behavior grew out of the concise statements of the *General Rules* and could go beyond them. Chief among these widely accepted standards were commitments to keep Sunday as a strict Sabbath, dress simply, and avoid secular entertainments—drinking, dancing, and other pursuits commonly engaged in by the culture of upper-class gentility.

Methodists did not allow their fellow members to pursue this way of life individually. They possessed multiple mechanisms for accountability. New members underwent an initial six-month probation. If received into full membership after that time, a new Methodist was given a membership ticket that needed to be renewed quarterly.

The chief traveling preacher of a society conducted individual interviews to assess faithfulness and growth in grace. Members needed a current ticket to be admitted to certain in-house worship services like the love feast (a sharing of bread, water, and testimonies). This heavy hammer of accountability was a trial to many rank-and-file members—as well as to some preachers, as in the case of Jeremiah Minter.

Beyond these denomination-wide standards for behavior, Methodists enforced even more behavioral standards in local contexts. Quarterly Meeting Conferences were the four-times-a-year administrative meetings for Methodists organized into a charge. There they did their best to discipline errant members.



Sometimes these conferences passed local legislation; one quarterly meeting prohibited letting horses out for stud on the Sabbath.

Other conferences dealt with helping members with their finances so their debts would not bring shame on the whole. One Maryland circuit required member Robert Shanklin to turn over part of his wages to help him figure out a way to pay his debts. Perhaps the most poignant examples—mainly found in the mid-Atlantic states—were decisions by conferences on how long a Methodist could own a newly purchased slave before emancipating him or her.

All these disciplinary measures had an ethical goal (to become a holy and distinctive people) and an ethical tone (being committed to Jesus). William Spencer expressed this core Methodist aspiration in 1790:

Solemnity is the very life of religion. O, Lord Jesus, make me more and more solemn every day. Death is solemn. Judgment is solemn. God is solemn. Christ is solemn. Angels are solemn. O! how can I be trifling? May God Almighty make me solemn and deeply pious and faithful for the Lord Jesus' sake.

## BEING A HOLY PEOPLE

In its *organization*, Methodism was also unique among American denominations. Early Methodists would not have known or expected a pastor in residence overseeing a single congregation. That was what *other* churches did.

No, instead of preaching in a parish church, watching over a local flock, Methodist ministers rode daily from one stop to the next, preaching their circuits, an itinerant that usually took four weeks. These itinerant



## Camp meetings: a Methodist invention?

When telling the story of how the Second Great Awakening caught fire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, people often emphasize Presbyterian-affiliated camp meetings held in Kentucky, especially at Cane Ridge in 1801 (see CH 106, *A Church to End All Churches?*). Supposedly these meetings were novel in their size, length, methods, and types of exuberant behavior, spurred on by harsh frontier conditions, as people experienced the grace of God.

While revival took off in a big way in 1801, there is much more to the story. Camp meetings shared features with Presbyterian “sacramental seasons” reaching back over a century and across an ocean. And first-hand Methodist accounts make it clear that revival elements people saw and experienced in 1801 had also been part and parcel of Methodist life for several decades.

*Outward exuberant behavior associated with worship and conversion?* Common since the 1770s, and as much due to the nature of Methodism itself as to the frontier. *Altar calls and mourners’ benches?* Methodists had started to use these techniques in the 1790s, finding it easier to call people forward for prayer than to try to reach them in packed worship spaces. *Multiday meetings combining worship, sacraments, evangelism, and revival?* Methodists had been there and done that ever since a revival had broken out at a Virginia Quarterly Meeting in 1776.

Asbury gushed in 1802: “I have a variety of letters, conveying the pleasing intelligence of the work of God in every State, district, and in most of the circuits in the Union.” He had begun to receive such letters in 1799. Other churches may have been claiming the credit, but Methodists were just as likely to be getting the results.  
—Lester Ruth

**PRAISING AND PRAYING** This engraving of an African American camp meeting illustrates the kind of worship early Methodists of all races became famous for.

preachers traveled the same route month after month, year in and year out, staying with members of their charge along the route.

One day they might preach in a barn, the next in a house, and the next at a crossroads. They could even use the same sermon until they looped back around to begin again. If you live in a section of the country where there seems to be an old Methodist church every 5 to 10 miles, you might be seeing the vestiges of one of these circuits. And think about it: a lazy preacher 200 years ago only needed about a dozen sermons a year, one for each month around the circuit. (But Methodist preachers typically were not lazy!)

Usually two itinerants, spaced two weeks apart, traveled around the circuit, preaching nearly every day for four weeks. That meant that Methodists in any one locale might have their preaching service, the mainstay of Methodist worship, once every other week on possibly any day of the week. The itinerants considered it critical to make it to these appointments to preach. To this day Methodist preachers are still “appointed” to a particular church or churches by their overseeing bishop.

### ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND

Supplementing the work of the itinerants, Methodism employed men called *local preachers*. These men did not travel, were not paid to preach, usually did not preach as well as the itinerants, and could not administer the sacraments. There seem to have been about three local preachers for every itinerant on a circuit. They preached on many days and occasions when the itinerant could not be in attendance.

In addition to local preachers, licensed exhorters spoke after the sermon, exhorting the congregation to respond appropriately in both their emotions and their actions. (Women, though they could not be preachers, sometimes served in the exhorter’s role.) A Methodist preaching service could be a very crowded affair if multiple preachers and exhorters were present: usually everyone was given a chance to speak, one after another, in rapid succession.

Preachers in cities also circulated among various congregations, preaching three services each Sunday (morning, afternoon, and evening). This meant that a Methodist city worshiper heard a different preacher at every service. The rotation and frequency of services were possible because all the city preachers lived relatively close by. But even then, everything kept rotating, rotating, rotating.

That sense of constant traveling even applied to the ministers who had supervisory roles. Put several circuits or stations together and one had a *district*,



supervised by a presiding elder who constantly traveled across it.

Several districts joined together formed a *conference*, which met annually and was supervised by a bishop, like Asbury, who made it a point to regularly visit the many circuits under his supervision (and take notes on all the preachers). These bishops, too, seemed to be perpetually in the saddle. Perhaps Methodism should have been called the “Church of the Horse.”

Every quarter the presiding elder met with the itinerant and local preachers and with other leaders within a circuit or station. The administrative details took only a little time; Methodists dedicated most of these quarterly meetings to worship and evangelizing. Not surprisingly, Methodists and non-Methodists, leaders and people alike, would gather from across the circuit to attend. In essence, each local group of Methodists typically lived in self-imposed ecclesiastical separation from the other Methodists on their circuit, except for the four times each year when they all gathered together.

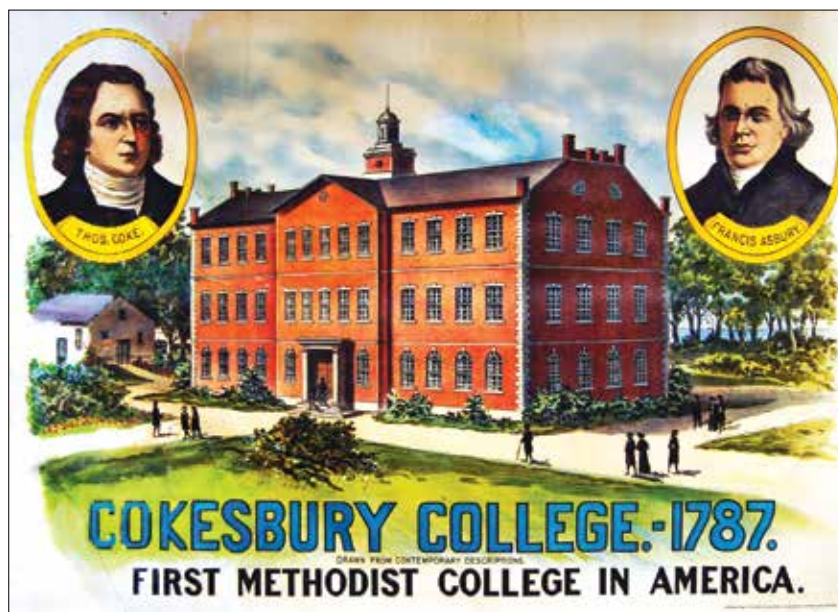
In the era of the American Revolution, these quarterly meetings became the scene for revivals. Soon someone somewhere suggested that the participants should all bring their own food and provisions for sleeping instead of being assigned to the houses of Methodists who lived in the area. Voila: camp meetings were born.

### CHALLENGED BY CLASSMATES

But Methodist spiritual oversight did not depend entirely on preachers. Indeed, rank-and-file Methodists did not receive most of their pastoral care from preachers. Joining the Methodists meant one was also joining a *class* that met together each week under the direction of a *class leader*. These weekly meetings were the backbone of the movement.

In these smaller groups, members practiced an intimate, direct, and specific discipleship—the accountability that was at the heart of the Methodist movement. Here those who lived nearby and knew them challenged, encouraged, and comforted them. Among early Methodists, it was your class leader who really knew you.

Methodism also thrived on a combination of individual devotion and corporate worship. Methodist families were expected to conduct daily family prayer. Like almost all Methodist praying, these domestic prayer services were done extemporaneously. Corporately, Methodists conducted not only their mainstay preaching services, which were open for anyone to attend, but also occasional private services like love feasts and the Lord’s Supper.



**BEFORE ITS TIME** Above: Founded in tribute to Asbury and his fellow bishop Thomas Coke, this college burned down within 10 years, and it would be decades until another Methodist college was founded.

**TENTING TONIGHT** Below: Camp meetings occurred for many years, though by the late 1800s, worshipers were not rowdy and did not shout.



The private services were open to Methodists with current membership tickets and others who had been granted permission to attend. Even though they occurred only quarterly, they were the highlight of Methodist worship. Methodists fell over themselves to find the words to express their experiences of God and Christian fellowship on these occasions. Perhaps the loveliest description came from one Methodist who estimated that he and his fellow believers had been dwelling in the “suburbs of heaven.”

The strict discipline and meticulous organization of the Methodists stood in stark contrast to their worship style, which can only be called *messy*. Some



of that messiness was literal: chewing tobacco was so common that pray-ers might kneel in black juice if there were no spittoons. But the ecstatic, enthusiastic quality of early Methodism lent it a spiritually messy nature in its worship as well. The pinnacle of Methodist worship, simultaneously solemn and ecstatic, was when “a shout of a king in the camp” occurred, an image drawing on Numbers 23:21 and 1 Samuel 4:5–6.

Bishop Thomas Coke described such a scene during a service in 1790 Baltimore:

Out of a congregation of two thousand people, I supposed two or three hundred were engaged at the same time in praising God, praying for the conviction and conversion of sinners, or exhorting those there with the utmost vehemence. And hundreds more were engaged in wrestling prayer either for their own conversion or sanctification.

Early Methodists desired to be swept up into such a strong sense of God’s presence, goodness, and grace that they could hardly stand it, whether praying alone or worshiping in a congregation. Methodists loved to shout during such times. While a few American Methodists avoided shouting, most—whether white or African American—let loose when moved. In fact, so intrinsic was shouting that special hymns were written to celebrate it.

A century later, Methodist Fanny Crosby captured this phenomenon:

**NEITHER SNOW NOR RAIN....** Circuit riders were just as famous as the US Postal Service later became for riding everywhere in adverse weather conditions to keep their appointments.

There’s a shout in the camp for the Lord is here.  
Hallelujah! praise His Name.  
To the feast of His love we again draw near.  
Praise, oh, praise His Name.

### WILD AND MESSY


Get Methodist worship going and it could be wild. During such times official licenses and offices mattered little. Racial, gender, and age divides all fell because any Methodist was granted liberty to speak. Thus women and children often were heard exhorting those around them to seek after God.

A variety of exuberant physical demonstrations occurred. People wept, wailed, and flailed as they grappled with the God of the Gospel. Falling and lying in a stupor seemed especially common. Accompanying such vocal and physical messiness was the pulling aside of the veil between this world and the next. Both in and out of worship, Methodists regularly experienced ecstatic visions and dreams, sometimes of the delights of heaven or the terrors of hell.

All of this happened to the music of Charles Wesley and the many later Methodist hymn writers who built on his poetics of piety, both in their singing and in their everyday religious speech. Many were songwriters themselves. Sarah Jones frequently published her pieces, and Tennessean John Adam Granade was the Chris Tomlin of his day. Something about Methodist piety with its emotional, evocative, and experiential nature sought expression in poetic form.

Their internal conversation had this poetic messiness too. How did one Methodist ask another about her fellow society members? Not “How is your church doing?” but “How does Zion prosper?” When the time came to name new chapels, popular names like Ebenezer, Bethel, and Pisgah served to remind the faithful of a blurred line between this world and the biblical one.

What was it like to be an early Methodist? Overall it was an *intense* experience. Though no one else took the drastic step that Jeremiah Minter did to show his piety, all Methodists appreciated a desire to yearn for salvation and burn for the Savior, Jesus Christ:

They are despised by Satan’s train,  
Because they shout and preach so plain.  
I’m bound to march in endless bliss,  
And die a shouting Methodist. 

*Lester Ruth is a research professor of Christian worship at Duke Divinity School and the author of A Little Heaven Below: Worship at Early Methodist Quarterly Meetings and Early Methodist Life and Spirituality.*





# The bishop and his mentor

THE SAINTLY GERMAN LEADER WHO INFLUENCED AND FRUSTRATED ASBURY

*J. Steven O'Malley*

**"FORTY YEARS** have I known the retiring majesty 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."

Thus Asbury wrote of the father of German-American revivalism, Philip Wilhelm Otterbein (1732–1813). He also testified, "There are few with whom I can find so much unity and freedom in conversation, as with Otterbein." He requested in 1784 that Otterbein assist in consecrating him as superintendent of the newly formed Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC). He preached Otterbein's funeral sermon, eulogized him as the "angel of the church of Philadelphia" (Rev. 3:7), and spoke of his mentor as "the holy, the great Otterbein."

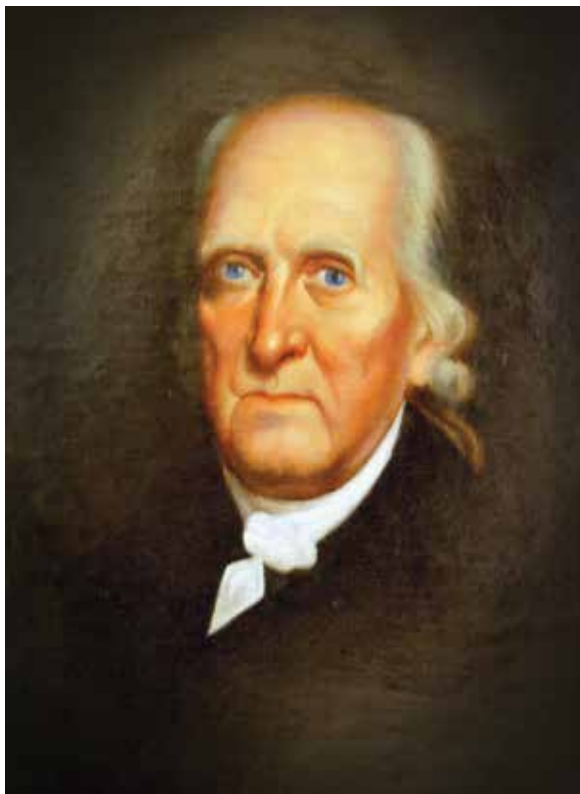
That tribute notwithstanding, Asbury felt lifelong frustration and disappointment with German revival leaders who refused to adopt a Methodist organizational style. Asbury's remarkable success in organizing and deploying Methodists actually had two notable exceptions: Germans and African Americans. The latter eventually shook off white control, even the somewhat

**PHILIP WOULD HAVE BEEN PLEASED** In 1847 Otterbein's spiritual heirs founded one of the first colleges in the nation to admit women and African Americans, and named it in his honor.

supportive control of Asbury (see "My chains fell off," p. 21). And the former came equipped with their own leaders—and their own ways of doing things.

Asbury wrote in his journal in 1803: "There are now upwards of twenty preachers who are somehow connected with Mr. Otterbein and Mr. Boehm, but they want [lack] authority, and the church wants discipline."

Two centuries later, the heirs of those "twenty preachers" would join with Asbury's spiritual descendants. But in the early 1800s, this growing German-language revival traced its beginning to a breaking down of church boundaries and organization. While senior pastor in a prominent German Reformed congregation in Baltimore, Otterbein got word that God was doing a new thing in the back country of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.



In 1767 he ventured to hear a Mennonite farmer named Martin Boehm (1725–1812, father of Asbury’s traveling companion Henry) speak of the profound breakthrough of Jesus Christ in his life. The educated pastor spontaneously embraced the rural preacher and exclaimed, “Wir sind Brüder” (We are brothers).

### THE FIRST BUT NOT THE LAST

There, in a Mennonite barn amid the plain people, America’s first homegrown denomination, the United Brethren in Christ (UBC) sprang forth. Its origin was an act of union between two opposites—Otterbein, ordained a state church pastor, and Boehm, heir to the state-persecuted radical Anabaptists. Here God was doing a new thing.

Otterbein also came to recognize that God was doing something new among Asbury’s people, the flourishing Methodists. But his German flock cared little for Methodist order and discipline. And from his side, Asbury, though impressed with the single-minded Christly vision of the UBC, did not want to stretch his young movement too thin on the broad American landscape. It would have taken more German-speaking men than he had to join Otterbein’s group in ministering to the vast regions of Pennsylvania, Maryland, western New York, and western Virginia where there was a predominance of German settlers.

Asbury thought German culture would soon assimilate into the English-speaking majority and become reachable by Asbury’s tireless English-speaking

**“CHRIST IN US”** Otterbein devoted much of his life to breaking down denominational barriers.

circuit riders. But the failure of the movements to join forces was somewhat surprising considering the long acquaintance of the two leaders. Asbury’s formative meetings with Otterbein occurred before Asbury became a bishop, but their friendship continued for almost 30 more years.

When Asbury arrived in Baltimore in 1774, the German leader was already a mature, seasoned pastor with extensive theological education from Herborn University. He possessed a conscious awareness of the ecumenical dimensions of the church, rooted in his church’s Heidelberg Catechism (1563). And he had already emerged as the leader of the Pietist wing in the German Reformed Church in North America, a missionary effort of the Dutch Reformed Church in Amsterdam.

Yet the seasoned German befriended the young Methodist itinerant on mission from Wesley in England and preaching the Arminian message of free grace (see “Asbury’s simple message,” p. 11). Otterbein had already publicly announced that he disagreed with Calvinists over predestination and church membership based on a doctrine of the elect, and that he wished to advance “in fellowship and brotherly love” with persons of all denominations, beginning with his own.

Otterbein based this initiative on the Heidelberg Catechism, which declared that the Son of God, “through His Spirit and Word,” was gathering a community of persons from all times and places to confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ through the infilling of the Holy Spirit—apart from racial, ethnic, or linguistic differences. To that end, Otterbein gathered preachers among the German Reformed who agreed with him into the “Pipe Creek conferences,” so named for their location in rural Maryland. There they met for two years before the onset of the Revolutionary War in 1776.

Otterbein intended to reach the lost for Christ by practicing the *means of grace* (various devotional practices including prayer, fasting, and Holy Communion), through *catechesis* (education of the faithful), and through voluntary prayer fellowships within his parish and beyond. Asbury was a lay Anglican preacher of the Methodist revival in England, unordained and forbidden by Anglican rules to administer the sacraments. He also had little entrée into the non-Anglo communities of the German migration to North America.

What drew him to Otterbein was the German’s experiential faith in “Christ in us” and his winsome proclamation that mere church attendance is not sufficient to make a Christian: “It is a pity that we almost always seek the salvation of Christ and His death outside of ourselves.”

Otterbein concluded, “Christ has also given us a picture of what he must do within us, that he must destroy





**“WE ARE BROTHERS”** Above: At this barn in 1767, a Reformed pastor embraced a Mennonite farmer, and a movement was born.

**PASSING TIME** Right: Unlike Asbury, Otterbein had a permanent home, graced by this stately clock.

the kingdom of Satan within us as much as He must destroy the kingdom of Satan outside us [Heb. 2:14–15]. . . If there is no Christ in us, there is also no Christ for us.”

But they differed in several significant ways. First, Asbury focused more on the immediacy of saving and sanctifying grace than did his German mentor. Otterbein believed that evidence of salvation in Christ shows in a life transformed by grace, but, unlike Asbury, he did not insist upon instantaneous conversion.

Otterbein was also, unlike Asbury, contending for faith amid many intensely committed Calvinists who asserted that Christian hope came only through confessing one’s election in Christ and eternal security as an elect person. Otterbein believed instead that hope comes from perseverance in the daily walk in Christ: “Whoever clings to grace and stays close to Jesus, and whoever rushes to God with persistent, faith-filled prayer, will keep on going.”

This is not a struggle, but a journey in which “one may even become carefree and joyful toward God.” Asbury once asked Otterbein, “When did you become converted?” and the German’s answer was, “by degrees, while I was a pastor at Lancaster.”

Contrasting ideas on how to run a church reflected these differing attitudes. Asbury eagerly promoted the systematic approach the Wesleys had designed

and adapted it for the American context. In 1792 he harshly rejected a challenge to the authority of Methodist bishops posed by James O’Kelly in Virginia. (O’Kelly eventually founded a “Republican Methodist Church” on more democratic grounds.)

By contrast, Otterbein long maintained spiritual fellowship with a group called “unpartisan” preachers, for their commitment not to be divided by any sectarian views. One day these preachers would serve as the nucleus of the denomination begun in that Mennonite barn in 1767, the United Brethren in Christ.

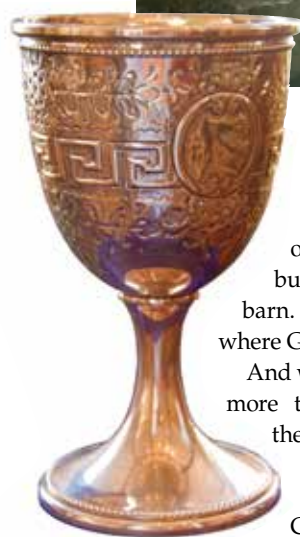
### GREATER THAN ANY ONE FORM

Otterbein took this stance not out of a careless disregard of structures and ecclesial order, but because he distinguished between outer forms of religion and the heart of the matter. For him God’s mission was a greater and more compelling norm for evangelism than adherence to any form of church polity, including the Methodist plan of systematic conferencing.

As floods of German-speaking immigrants settled across the frontiers of the middle colonies, Otterbein thought they were as sheep without a shepherd. The harvest was ready, and it was to be manifest despite European-devised categories of church life—Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic, Anglican, or Mennonite. Or even Methodist.

Asbury, while a layman until 1774, harked back to Wesley’s Anglican structures





of authority. Though an ordained minister and university graduate, Otterbein's authority among his preachers could be traced not to his own German Reformed denomination, but to the marginalized in Isaac Long's barn. He sought above all to identify with where God was at work on God's terms.

And what, after all, was God about? Perhaps more than Asbury thought. Work among the Germans did not die out, but grew among millions of immigrants to North America, across 35 states and 6 Canadian provinces, over the next two centuries. Germans became the largest ethnic group in North America, second only to immigrants from the British Isles, and the UBC was the ninth largest religious body in the United States by 1906.


#### FREE OF A PARTY SPIRIT

In 1946 the UBC united with the even more Germanic "Evangelical Association" founded by Jacob Albright (1759–1808). The resulting denomination, the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB), served as the conduit of a long line of witnesses to Christ running back to the great Pietists of Germany. In 1968, long after Asbury and Otterbein were dead, the heirs of Otterbein's "twenty preachers" actually did unite with the Methodists at last to form the United Methodist Church. At the time of their merger with Methodism, the EUB had 763,000 members in more than 4,000 US congregations, plus hundreds of mission congregations in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

**A DIFFICULT PASSAGE** Above: Many 19th-c. immigrants sailed to America on boats like this one; millions of Germans were among them.

**A SYMBOL OF UNITY** Left: Wesley sent this Communion chalice to the United States when Methodism became a denomination, but not until 1968 did Otterbein's followers become part of that union.

Asbury bemoaned the fact that the "Otterbein folk" hesitated to embrace the Methodist plan; but their resistance was based on a view of Christian community that affirmed the "unpartisan" desire to operate "according to the will and mind of God, that the church of God may be built up, and sinners converted so that God in Christ may be honored." Otterbein may well have commended to Asbury his statement that "whoever becomes free of sin and a party spirit has God to thank." For Otterbein, to be free of sin was also to be "unpartisan," free of party spirit, willing to have fellowship with all.

The spontaneous meeting between Boehm and Otterbein that birthed the United Brethren occurred on Pentecost, 1767. That was well before the American republic was conceived. The birth of the United States would at last usher in a Methodist structure separate from Anglicanism. And that structure would be built on the foundation of Asbury's tireless travels, but it would not be built on the foundation of Otterbein's unpartisan spirit. 

*J. Steven O'Malley is John T. Seamands Professor of Methodist and Holiness History at Asbury Theological Seminary and the author of Early German-American Evangelicalism and Pilgrimage of Faith: The Legacy of the Otterbeins.*



# “My chains fell off”: Richard Allen and Francis Asbury

**R**ichard Allen (1760–1831) first saw the light of day as “Negro Richard,” a slave to Benjamin Chew, attorney general of Pennsylvania and owner of a thousand-acre farm. Early in childhood Richard and his whole family were sold to plantation owner Stokeley Sturgis. Sturgis was, Richard later wrote, “what the world called a good master.” He treated his slaves well and allowed them to attend Methodist preaching, but he also sold off part of Richard’s family when he got into debt.

At the age of 17, Richard was converted in classic Methodist style: “I cried to the Lord both day and night . . . All of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and, glory to God, I cried.” He convinced his master to allow Methodists (including Francis Asbury) to preach in the Sturgis home. Sturgis, soon converted by famous white Methodist Freeborn Garrettson (1752–1827), decided to free his slaves. He allowed Richard to work to purchase his freedom.

Free, Richard took the surname “Allen” and began a career as a traveling Methodist preacher. Working also as a sawyer and a wagon driver, and walking everywhere, he traveled through South Carolina, New York, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. In 1784 he attended the founding conference of the MEC in Baltimore along with Harry Hosier, Asbury’s traveling companion (see “Preachers, fighters, and crusaders,” pp. 35–38). The only two African Americans in attendance, they were not allowed to vote. Asbury asked Allen if he would travel with him, but said he had to sleep separately when they traveled through the South. Allen refused.

In 1786 Allen ended up at St. George’s, a Methodist society in Philadelphia. Church leadership restricted him to preaching only at 5:00 a.m. to African Americans. But Allen and his friend Absalom Jones (who would one day be America’s first black Episcopal priest) formed a Free African Society and kept preaching and praying.

White leaders, feeling crowded out, built a gallery for their black members. But one day a white trustee, still unhappy, pulled Jones up off his knees and said, “You must not kneel here.” When Jones refused to stand, white members began pulling all of the African American worshippers to their feet. “We all went out of the church in a body,” Allen wrote, “and they were no more plagued with us in that church.”

Allen and Jones broke ground on a new church in 1793 against white opposition, and it soon chose to become Anglican. Allen, who wanted to remain



**BISHOP ASBURY AND BISHOP ALLEN** Allen broke with white Methodist control to become founding bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Methodist, began a new society: “The Methodists were the first people that brought glad tidings to the colored people. I feel thankful I ever heard a Methodist preach.”

Asbury helped Allen out behind the scenes, removing some white leaders who had opposed him and Jones and installing Garrettson in their place. He also preached the dedication sermon for Allen’s church, “Mother Bethel,” in 1794 and ordained Allen the first black deacon in the MEC in 1799 (though he told no one and failed to record it in his journal as he did white preachers’ ordinations).

Still subject to white leaders in Philadelphia, Allen fought for over 15 years for control of the building. Finally, in 1816—the same year Asbury died—courts ruled that “Mother Bethel” belonged to the African American group, marking the beginning of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). Allen concluded his autobiographical narrative with these words: “The God of Bethel heard her cries, / He let his power be seen; / He stopped the proud oppressor’s frown, / And proved himself a King.” —Jennifer Woodruff Tait

# Methodists on the move

1725

1750

1775

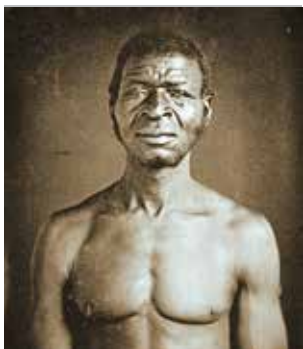
1800



**1700S: POLITE BRITISH SOCIETY VALUES A RATIONAL RELIGION, NOT AN ENTHUSIASTIC ONE LIKE METHODISM.**

## *Informal Beginnings*

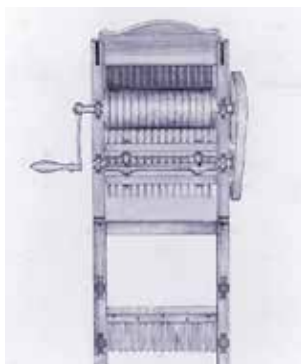
- 1703 – John Wesley born.
- 1707 – Charles Wesley born.
- 1725 – Martin Boehm born.
- 1726 – Philip William Otterbein born.
- 1729 – “Holy Club” forms at Oxford.
- 1735 – John Wesley journeys to Georgia as a missionary.
- 1738 – Wesley brothers have “heartwarming” experiences.



**1750: ALMOST ONE-QUARTER OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE COLONIES ARE ENSLAVED AFRICANS.**

## *Renewal Movement within the Church of England*

- 1739 – Methodist societies form in and around London.
- 1744 – John Wesley holds first conference of preachers.
- 1745 – Francis Asbury born.
- 1747 – Thomas Coke born.
- 1752 – Otterbein arrives in America.
- 1758 – John Wesley baptizes two African slaves, breaking Methodist color barrier.



**1794: ELI WHITNEY INVENTS THE COTTON GIN, CEMENTING SLAVERY'S PLACE IN SOUTHERN CULTURE.**

- 1759 – Jacob Albright born.
- 1760 – Methodist colonists arrive in America. Richard Allen born.
- 1763 – Robert Strawbridge organizes a Methodist class in Maryland.
- 1766 – Barbara Heck and Philip Embury establish a Methodist congregation in New York City. A group



**1773: BOSTON TEA PARTY GIVES VOICE TO COLONIAL FRUSTRATIONS.**

of “unpartisan preachers” begins meetings that will one day develop into the United Brethren in Christ (UBC).

- 1769 – Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore, Wesley's first official missionaries, arrive in America.
- 1770 – Mary Evans Thorne appointed first woman class leader in colonies.
- 1771 – Francis Asbury arrives in America. **American Methodists number 600.**
- 1773 – Thomas Rankin leads first conference of American Methodist preachers.

## *Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church*

- 1784 – John Wesley names Thomas Coke superintendent for America. Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) founded at the Christmas Conference and preachers ordained. Asbury elected and ordained as general super-

intendent. Richard Allen and Absalom Jones are first African Americans licensed to preach by the MEC.

- 1787 – Cokesbury College opens in Maryland. John Wesley writes to Asbury deploring genocide of Native Americans.
- 1788 – Charles Wesley dies.
- 1789 – Asbury and Coke visit President Washington. Methodist Book Concern established.
- 1791 – John Wesley dies. **American Methodists number 57,000.**
- 1792 – Coke and Asbury hold first General Conference of MEC in Baltimore. Allen leads African Americans out of St. George's Church.
- 1794 – Allen founds “Mother Bethel.”
- 1796 – Cokesbury College



**1776: AMERICANS DECLARE “WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.”**



## How Methodism transformed in America from a small immigrant sect to a leading Protestant denomination

Adapted from a timeline prepared by the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church, <http://www.gcah.org/history/united-methodist-church-timeline>.

1800

1825

1850

1865



**1814: US FORCES CREEK CHIEF SELOCTA TO SIGN AWAY 14 MILLION ACRES, A PRECURSOR OF BROKEN TREATIES TO COME.**

closes after a fire. James Varick organizes Zion Methodist Episcopal Church in New York.

### *Expansion, Revivals, Reforms, and Schisms*

- 1800 – Otterbein and Boehm found United Brethren in Christ. MEC issues letter on slavery, allows bishops to ordain African American deacons.
- 1807 – German followers of Jacob Albright organize the Evangelical Association. EA and UBC will one day join with each other (1946) and with Methodists (1968).
- 1808 – Methodists adopt a constitution. Jacob Albright dies.
- 1810 – EA holds first German camp meeting.
- 1812 – Martin Boehm dies.
- 1813 – William Otterbein dies.
- 1814 – Thomas Coke dies.
- 1816 – Francis Asbury dies.

Allen forms the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME).

- 1817 – Richard Allen permits an African American woman, Jarena Lee, to preach.
- 1820 – Varick founds AME Zion denomination (AMEZ). Reformers debate roles of bishops and laity in MEC. **American Methodists number 500,000.**

- 1823 – *Zion's Herald*, first Methodist weekly newspaper, published.
- 1830 – Methodist Protestant Church organized, seeking a more democratic approach to Methodism.
- 1833 – Turtle Fields becomes first ordained MEC Native American minister.
- 1835 – MEC layperson Phoebe Palmer (see CH 82) institutes a weekly prayer meeting in her home.
- 1836 – EA begins famous newspaper *Der Christliche*



**1849: CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH BRINGS TO MANY DREAMS OF STRIKING IT RICH.**



**1860: ABRAHAM LINCOLN (SHOWN HERE WITH SON TAD) IS ELECTED AMID LOOMING TROUBLES.**

*Botschafter* (Christian Ambassador).

- 1840 – Newbury Bible Institute (Vermont) founded as the first American Methodist seminary.
- 1841 – *Ladies' Repository*, first Methodist periodical for women, published.
- 1843 – Radical abolitionists exit MEC to form Wesleyan Methodist Church.
- 1844 – Methodists split over issues of slavery and bishops. Indian Mission to Oklahoma Territory organized.
- 1845 – MEC, South (MECS) organized after 1844 split.
- 1847 – Charity Opheral receives first UBC preacher's license given to a woman. Otterbein College established as first UBC college.
- 1848 – MEC begins mission work in China.

- 1850 – Five Points Mission established in New York City.
- 1852 – Deaconesses first mentioned in MEC.
- 1853 – Benigno Cardenas preaches first Methodist sermon in Spanish in New Mexico.
- 1855 – Garrett Biblical Institute opens in Illinois.
- 1856 – MEC gives presiding elders authority to employ African American pastors. William and Clementina Rowe Butler become first MEC missionaries to India.
- 1857 – UBC passes a resolution that no woman should be allowed to preach.



**1861-1865: SOLDIERS LIKE THESE UNION TROOPS CLASH IN BLOODY CIVIL WAR BATTLES.**

- 1860 – Phoebe Palmer proclaims the rights of women to preach in her book *Promise of the Father*.
- 1864 – Frank Smith, African American preacher, is admitted with full clergy rights to New England Annual Conference. **American Methodists number 1,800,000.**



# A new kind of Methodism and a new kind of bishop

MATTHEW SIMPSON'S JOURNEY BEGAN VERY MUCH LIKE ASBURY'S, BUT IT DID NOT END THAT WAY

*Scott Kisker*

CADIZ, OHIO, was one of those western towns where Francis Asbury sent a corps of itinerant preachers to share a simple gospel. There young Matthew Simpson (1811–1884) lived with his pious Methodist, Irish immigrant grandmother and extended family.

As a youth Simpson had the problem of many second-generation Methodists; despite being steeped in Methodism from childhood, he still was not “converted” in the Methodist sense. Educated by his Methodist uncle, he attended Sunday services, read the Bible, avoided grosser sins, and even went briefly to a Methodist college. Finally, in 1829 at age 18, he went forward to the altar at a camp meeting. There were no bolts of lightning and no special enlightenment, just a resolve to be religious and join the church at the first opportunity.

Over the next 50 years, this young man of humble roots would undergo a transformation that mirrored that of the church, the nation, and even the world at large, all at lightning speed.

## RULES? WHAT RULES?

Within a few years of his conversion, even as he pursued a medical license and career as a doctor, Simpson was called to preach, appointed as leader of a Methodist class, and granted an exhorter's license—all without having applied. Others saw in him the ability to lead and spurred him on, yet he personally struggled to live a life sanctified by grace until one day while reading Proverbs 3:5—“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart”—he was convicted to do just that.

In 1833 Simpson was licensed to preach and, as was common, admitted to the fellowship of traveling



**LINING UP TO REACH YOUTH** *Left:* Methodists at the turn of the 20th c. celebrated their achievements in educating and civilizing.

**FROM THE BACKWOODS TO THE FRONT PEW** *Right:* Simpson valued education, church voting rights for lay Methodist men, and above all the unity of Methodism.

preachers on a four-year trial basis. Though “on trial” he asked to work near Cadiz, to get his medical practice in order and look after his mother.

Simpson considered quitting when he heard preachers with “unction” and saw that their converts outnumbered his. But he also compared himself with less educated preachers and decided he could do as well as they. Within a year he was assigned to prosperous industrial Pittsburgh, the largest Methodist society in the conference, with two churches, Liberty Street and Smithfield. His first stop in Pittsburgh was the elegant home of Methodist James Verner, a wealthy lumberman and brewer. There he met Verner’s 16-year-old daughter, Ellen.

Simpson married Ellen Verner on November 3, 1835, the year he was appointed to Liberty Street. Usually young clergy were expected to ride more difficult circuits and to wait until the end of their four-year trials before marrying. But Simpson was not usual.

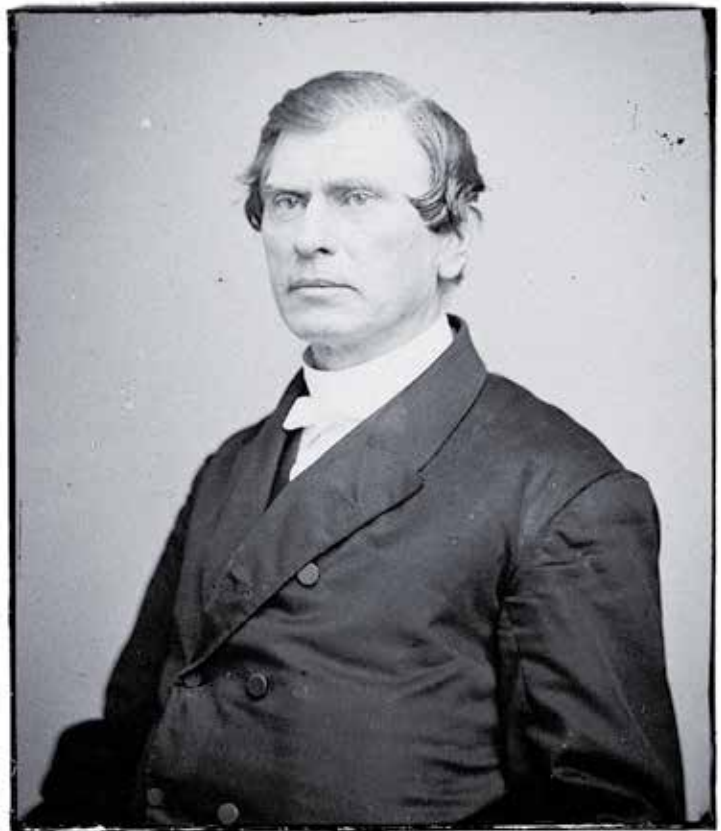
The Methodist system limited appointment lengths and did not let churches choose a pastor. But when Liberty Street wanted Simpson to stay on after his time was up, a prominent layperson and brother-in-law of a Methodist bishop helped craft an appeal that resulted in Simpson’s reappointment. The two Pittsburgh churches split from each other as a result. Such conflicts occurred more and more as city Methodists began to conform to the practices of other denominations.

For his final two years on trial, Simpson landed another city appointment (Williamsport). His next appointment in 1837 would not be to a church, but to Allegheny College, a Methodist institution. In every way, Simpson was on a fast track.

#### APPOINTMENTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

Simpson always valued education, even though his own came primarily through personal study. The faculty of Allegheny College were so impressed with his knowledge, they voted to grant him an honorary master of arts degree. He preferred to earn a degree, but he also preferred a Methodist degree, so he accepted. He also accepted a professorship of natural sciences. And he was officially ordained—though he never pastored a church again.

“Uneducated” Methodist preachers had so far converted more sinners and planted more churches than the college-educated ministers of other denominations. But now churches began to demand the type of preaching their more respectable Presbyterian and



Congregational neighbors received. Methodist colleges became increasingly important in producing educated clergy.

Simpson was soon named vice president of the college and a member of the board of trustees. In 1839 he became the first president of Indiana Asbury University (now DePauw) in Greencastle, Indiana—a college formed by Indiana Methodists in direct competition with local Presbyterians.

Simpson traveled widely on behalf of the college, developing a reputation as an orator and winning the support of influential friends. He aimed to hire professors who would not proselytize but would nonetheless instill a religion-based morality. He also wanted to steer clear of politics. But this would prove impossible, as the biggest test of the new nation was brewing.

Border conferences like Pittsburgh, where slavery was legal in places, paid lip service to the *Discipline*, the Methodist statement that slavery was a great evil. But they forbade preachers from stirring the pot by expressing abolitionist views or attending abolitionist meetings. By the mid-1830s, tensions were reaching a peak.

Though he favored abolition in theory, Simpson began to shift to a more conservative position on slavery: he thought it was taken for granted in the Bible and thus could not be sinful in all cases. He also began to blame abolitionists for damaging the unity of the church with their extremism. He wanted abolition, but not at the cost of dividing Methodism.

**COMFORTING A NATION** Simpson arranged the funeral (right) for his friend Abraham Lincoln (below). He offered the opening prayer at the White House services and preached the Springfield, Illinois, funeral sermon.



Simpson became a delegate to General Conference just as the gap between church law and practice became unsustainable. Bishop James Osgood Andrew (1794–1871) of Georgia had acquired a slave after his first wife's death. Georgia law forbade him from emancipating her, and the *Discipline* from selling her. The 1840 General Conference did not expel Andrew, thus allowing a slaveholder to continue as a bishop.

By 1843 the MEC had lost 8,000 laypeople and 150 ministers to a new abolitionist Wesleyan Methodist Connection led by preacher Orange Scott. Debate in the 1844 General Conference was dramatic and bitter. By then Andrew owned a slave from his second wife as well. Finally General Conference proposed suspending Andrew from the exercise of his episcopal office as long as he could not, or would not, free his slaves.

Southern delegates drafted a Plan of Separation, permitting annual conferences in slaveholding states to separate and reorganize as the MEC, South. Simpson viewed this as hasty and blamed the South, and slavery, for the division of his beloved church.

#### A GREAT CHURCH AND A GREAT EMPIRE

With noted gifts of persuasion and a growing list of influential friends and supporters, Simpson was selected in 1848 as the editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*. He generally avoided controversy as editor, but in a political conflict with Indiana congressman Bill Brown over the Compromise of 1850, Simpson used the paper's wide circulation to contribute to Brown's defeat.

In 1852 Simpson was elected a bishop, in part due to his skill at crafting a compromise over pew-selling. He settled back in Pittsburgh, but not for long. Methodists soon made him part of a delegation to take fraternal greetings to Irish and British Methodists and represent American Methodists at a conference in Berlin.

Honored throughout his stay, Simpson went on to tour important Protestant locations in Europe. Noting dramatic changes and growth on that continent, he predicted that a few powerful nations would ultimately put an end to war; America was destined to be one of the world's great civilizing empires, he thought, and Methodism would be its main religion. In 1859 he moved his episcopal residence to the Chicago suburbs to be near the church's new Garrett Biblical Institute.

By now Methodism was deep in the conflicts lashing the nation. Methodist papers North and South condemned each other. Some Northern preachers in the South were threatened, even banned. A Texas mob lynched a Northern preacher with whom Simpson had traveled. Tensions were also rife *within* the MEC, especially between New England states and those on the Mason-Dixon Line. Nearly every Northern Methodist conference established a committee "on the state of the country" to lobby state and federal governments.

After Lincoln's election, Simpson made his way to Washington, DC, to meet with him and ensure that Methodists got their share of the political spoils. But Lincoln gave Methodists relatively little. Undeterred, in 1863 Simpson moved again, this time to Philadelphia to be nearer centers of political power. He made frequent



**PEN PALS** *Right:* Simpson's influential friends included congressmen, the secretary of state, and Abraham Lincoln's son Robert.

**"WHO WILL WIN THE CROWN?"** *Below:* According to this coin commemorating Simpson, it will be "he who sacrifices most."

trips to Washington, DC, and spoke often in its churches. He also began to tour giving his famous "War Address," which combined Christian enthusiasm with patriotic fervor. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton said Simpson had done more than anyone to encourage support of the Union forces.

By 1864 it was clear that Lincoln needed the Methodists for his reelection and the continuance of the war effort. They were by far the largest denomination represented among those fighting and dying on the fields of battle. Lincoln asked Simpson to substitute for him at a speaking event.

The bishop preached on the providence of God in the affairs of the nation, paying tribute to Lincoln and denouncing the South. In March 1865 Simpson attended Lincoln's second inauguration, preaching in the capital on the Sunday following to the president and his wife. He was able to secure a cabinet position for Methodist senator James Harlan of Iowa and the continuation of his friend John Evans as governor of Colorado Territory. On April 9, 1865, General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox. Two days later, on Good Friday, Lincoln was assassinated. The president's cabinet wired Simpson, asking him to arrange the funeral.


Relations cooled between Methodists and Lincoln's successor Andrew Johnson. When Congress moved to impeach Johnson in 1866, General Conference was meeting in Chicago. Simpson introduced a resolution that they set aside an hour for prayer to "save our Senators from error" (the "error" being failure to impeach). Both the secular and church press agreed that the resolution was directed at Waitman Willey, a wavering senator and a Methodist, who did indeed capitulate. Johnson was impeached. Simpson accepted the invitation to open the next Republican convention with prayer.

### LETTING THE LAYPEOPLE IN

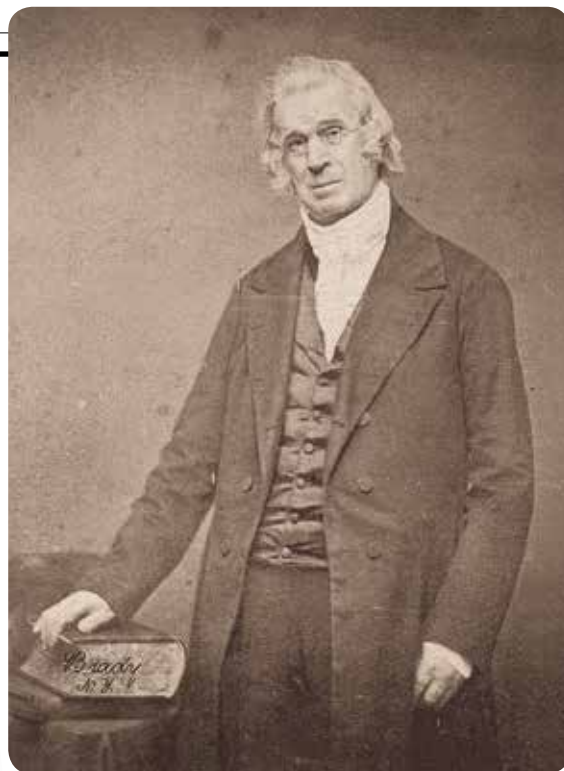
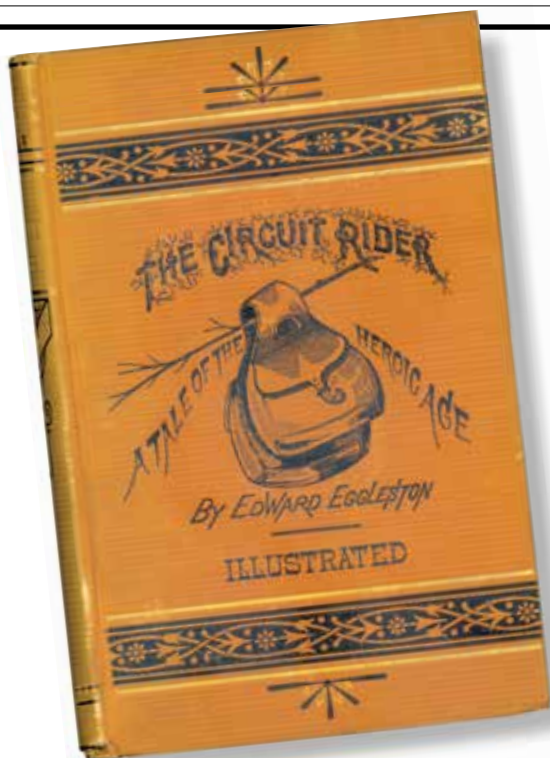
As bishop, Simpson traveled extensively and stayed in the homes of affluent Methodist laypeople, from bankers to Wall Street traders. He began to believe that such friends should have influence in the councils of the church and in 1860 proposed to allow lay (male) representation to General Conference. The conference agreed, but in necessary follow-up votes in the annual conferences the proposal failed.



Simpson began speaking out, which was controversial. Bishops were not supposed to publicly endorse a side, and Simpson had maintained silence with regard to slavery. But on lay representation, he broke this taboo, and in 1868 the measure succeeded.

Simpson's final years brought him both affluence and influence. President Grant attended the wedding of Simpson's daughter. When he died in 1884, Simpson left a \$100,000 estate. By then, his vision for Methodism had largely come to fruition. It was no longer an organization of uneducated evangelists and backwoods preachers spreading the Gospel. Methodists were important. They were educated. They were ministers of high-steeple churches in the best parts of town. They were professors, college presidents, journalists, congressmen, governors. Even President Grant attended a Methodist church. Methodism was the largest church in the United States. It was arguably the most dominant form of American Christianity. 

*Scott Kisker is professor of the history of Christianity at United Theological Seminary, an ordained United Methodist minister, and author of Mainline or Methodist? Recovering Our Evangelistic Mission.*



# From John Wesley to Ben-Hur

METHODISM'S CONTINENT-WIDE CONFLAGRATION SPREAD THROUGH PAGES PRINTED BY THESE PUBLISHING PIONEERS

**Candy Gunther Brown**

FOR YEARS IN ENGLAND, John Wesley sent out his preachers with a dual commission: as preachers, true, but also as booksellers, bringing an *informed* piety to their hearers. When Methodism crossed the pond, this impulse crossed with it. The average itinerant circuit rider brought sermons, news, and the sacraments to his preaching outposts. But he also carried a precious form of education and entertainment: books.

When he opened the first office of the Methodist Book Concern in 1789, Thomas Coke reflected: "The people will thereby be amply supplied with Books of pure divinity for their reading, which is of the next importance to preaching." The Book Concern was the first American publishing house to systematically print and distribute evangelical books, from Bibles and hymnals to medical advice, across the nation—at a time when secular publishing remained in its infancy. And carrying books around in your saddlebag was not optional. The General Conference required *all* ministers to act as agents for *all* official Methodist publications.

**"THOSE WERE THE DAYS"** Above left: Later Methodists thrilled to stories of Methodism's heroic beginnings like this novel from 1878.

**GIVING THE READERS WHAT THEY WANT** Above right: Many called Nathan Bangs the "Father of Methodist Publishing."

## A ZEAL FOR PUBLISHING BOOKS

But the endeavor might not have gotten off the ground without the tireless efforts of Nathan Bangs (1778–1862). Few individuals did more for Methodist publishing than Bangs. Born in Stratford, Connecticut, of old Puritan stock, Bangs joined the Methodists in 1800 and soon enlisted as an itinerant preacher and missionary to frontier areas (in those days southern Ontario and Upstate New York!), undaunted even by the outbreak of the War of 1812. He reflected, "I feel more strongly attached to this work than ever... O my Soul enter into a fresh engagement to be more than ever engaged in doing the Master's work."



**SINGING GOD'S SONGS** Methodist Fanny Crosby said many of her hymns were dictated by the "blessed Holy Spirit."

Bangs maintained this zeal throughout his long and productive life: writing 14 books, preaching, organizing camp meetings, founding the Methodist Missionary Society, and serving as president of Wesleyan University. When he first arrived at the Book Concern in 1820 to take charge, he found the 30-year-old institution deeply in debt and with only a few poorly selling books.

Bangs entered into the crisis with typical zeal and focus, providing the Book Concern with its own printing press, a bindery, and an office. In the 1820s and 1830s, he founded and edited Methodism's major periodicals: the *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* and the *Christian Advocate*. He also told Methodists their own story in his four-volume *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1839–1842). They ate it up. By 1829 the *Christian Advocate* claimed 20,000 subscribers, the second highest number then recorded by any periodical in the world. No secular paper could boast a circulation higher than 4,500.

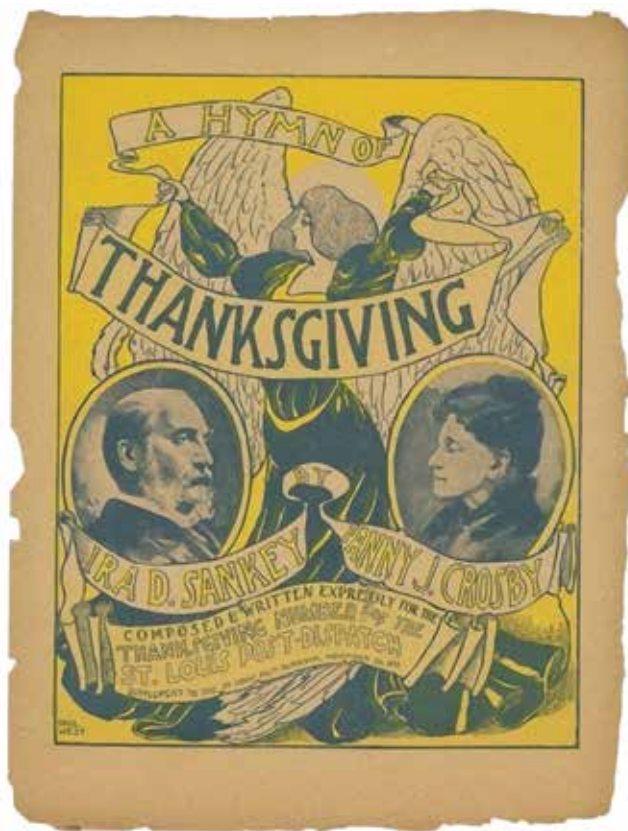
By 1860 the Methodist Book Concern published eight regional papers as well as German and Swedish editions, a quarterly intellectual review, a literary magazine, a missionary paper, a women's magazine, and four Sunday school papers. The total weekly circulation of all official Methodist papers ranked with the nation's most successful periodicals. *The Methodist Western Christian Advocate*, published from 1834 to 1939 in Cincinnati, outstripped every other paper in the region.

### FROM REVIVALS TO CURTAINS

All of the Book Concern's periodicals shared a common agenda: "the spread of what we believe to be the genuine doctrines of the gospel, and true vital godliness and scriptural holiness." The *Christian Advocate* printed matters of "miscellaneous interest" from the transcendent to the mundane: revival and missionary reports; doctrine; keeping the Sabbath; Sunday schools; dueling; temperance; general news; brief memoirs; poetry; book notices; items for children, youth, and ladies; history and natural science; and eventually commerce, agriculture, and the law.

The *Advocate* strove to maintain a "conservative-progressive spirit" that preserved "our blessed Theology unmarred," while adapting to "changing circumstances." In the same paper, you might read reports of a stirring revival in Ohio, catch up on Congress's doings, and gain advice on how to wash your curtains. The *Christian Advocate* also published testimonials about the usefulness of reading Methodist literature—conveniently published by the Book Concern, of course.

The intellectual *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* published more demanding (and longer) articles

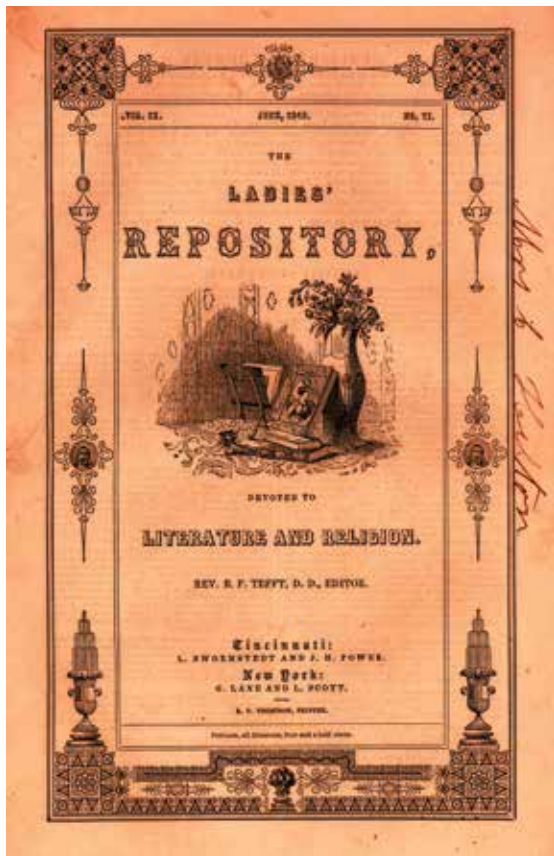


intended to "study the tactics of the opposing hosts, and throw up an impenetrable shield against all their fiery darts": theological and practical memoirs, sermons, articles, and in-depth book reviews on matters of doctrine, church government, missions, and Sunday schools—with occasional attention to topics in science and history.

Combining preaching with publishing was in the blood of all Methodists: the African Methodist Episcopal Church began a distinct publishing arm in 1818, only two years after it officially wrested "Mother Bethel" from white control (see "My chains fell off," p. 21). Its *Christian Recorder*, the first enduring periodical owned and edited by African Americans, began operations in 1848 and is still going strong today.

In the nineteenth century, the *Recorder* seldom counted more than 5,000 subscribers, but it exerted an influence well beyond these numbers, inviting contributions from all church members, including the "self-taught and the self-educated. . . . Come, clergy and laity, come friends, one and all . . . let us hear what you have to say" about establishing the "Redeemer's kingdom upon the earth." One writer commented that it acted as a "silent, but most efficient [African American] missionary," going "where the colored preacher or teacher is seldom, if ever, heard of, much less, suffered to speak," even entering the parlors of white "ladies and gentlemen."

Other things besides periodicals accompanied Methodists as they conquered a continent. Memoirs of



exemplary lives encouraged readers to aspire to similar devotional heights. Hymns aided worship at camp meetings and church services, and during private devotions. Official Methodist hymnals stood in a line reaching back to John Wesley's *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* (1737) from his unsuccessful trip to Georgia as a missionary. Numerous unofficial Methodist collections also encouraged devotional singing. *The Wesleyan Psalmist; Or, Songs of Canaan* (1842) was typical in offering, as its subtitle claimed, *A Collection of Hymns and Tunes Designed to be Used at Camp-Meetings, and at Class and Prayer Meetings, and Other Occasions of Social Devotion*.

No individual wrote more of the hymns in common circulation among these Methodists—and indeed among many evangelical Protestants—than blind Methodist poet Fanny Crosby (1820–1915). She gave the world over 8,000 published hymns including “Blessed Assurance,” “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior,” and “To God Be the Glory.” Often complying with requests to compose words to match melodies played for her, Crosby attested that she wrote her “most enduring hymns . . . during the long night watches, when the distractions of the day could not interfere with the rapid flow of thought.”

Crosby was not the only one bringing a Methodist message to the masses. The four Harper brothers, Methodists all, envisioned publishing as an evangelical calling and founded America's most successful trade

**THE FAMILY CIRCLE OF ITS DAY** Methodist women took much advice from Methodist magazines like *The Ladies' Repository*.

publishers for the general public, Harper and Brothers (now HarperCollins) in 1818 on a foundation of “character, and not capital.”

### INSTRUCTIVE AND MORAL LITERATURE

Although not restricting themselves to religious titles, the Harper brothers resolved to print only “interesting, instructive, and moral” literature. They competed aggressively in the national print market six days a week, but never allowed themselves or any of their employees to work on a Sunday.

Harper earned a national reputation as an innovator and leader and was the first American trade publisher to introduce book series: purchasers would buy a larger number of volumes, including lesser-known titles, if they thought the books belonged together. *Harper's Family Library* offered families a wide assortment of biography, travel, and history selections.

They also published magazines. At midcentury, when only a handful of periodicals had subscription lists over 100,000, *Harper's Weekly* averaged 120,000 subscribers. By 1885, 200,000 copies of *Harper's New Monthly* circulated monthly in the United States and 35,000 in Britain. Its 144 two-column pages for \$3 per year gave readers more words for the penny than any other monthly. And the most costly and elaborately illustrated volume in all of the United States before the Civil War was *Harper's Illuminated and New Pictorial Bible* in 54 parts (assembled by the purchaser) with 1,600 engravings. The Bible—morocco-bound, hand-tooled, gold-embossed, and gilt-edged—sold for \$22.50, a princely sum.

But Harper discovered its greatest publishing success of the century with a work that bridged religious and secular literature: General Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur* (1880). By 1913 its sales skyrocketed to 2,500,000. Like Harper as a whole, it triumphed at the crossroads of Methodism and commerce, appealing to readers interested in detailed historical narrative, emotional plots, and doctrinal content. For many readers, its realistic story line reinforced biblical truth claims.

Even after a century, publishing still fueled Methodist growth and did for many what Nathan Bangs had claimed the Book Concern should attempt: “To guard the purity of the press, to promulgate sound, Scriptural doctrine, to spread the most useful information, and to proclaim to all within the hearing of its voice ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ.’”

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# The Damnation of Theron Ware

*Harold Frederic was a Presbyterian journalist, but his satirical 1896 novel about a Methodist pastor who falls prey to the world, the flesh, and the devil illuminated Methodism's changing faces. It opens in a crowded church with these words:*

No such throng had ever before been seen in the building during all its eight years of existence. People were wedged together most uncomfortably upon the seats; they stood packed in the aisles and overflowed the galleries; at the back, in the shadows underneath these galleries, they formed broad, dense masses about the doors . . . [for] the closing session of the annual Nedahma Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Bishop was about to read out the list of ministerial appointments for the coming year. . . .

There were very old men among these—bent and decrepit veterans who had known Lorenzo Dow, and had been ordained by elders who remembered Francis Asbury and even [George] Whitefield. They sat now in front places, leaning forward with trembling and misshapen hands behind their hairy ears, waiting to hear their names read out on the [retired] list. . . .

The sight of these venerable Fathers in Israel [godly older men] was good to the eyes, conjuring up, as it did, pictures of a time when a plain and homely people had been served by a fervent and devoted clergy—by preachers who lacked in learning and polish, no doubt, but who gave their lives without dream of earthly reward to poverty and to the danger and wearing toil of itinerant missions through the rude frontier settlements . . . log-huts, rough household implements, coarse clothes, and patched old saddles which told of weary years of journeying; but to even the least sympathetic vision there shone upon them the glorified light of the Cross and Crown. . . .

The large majority of those surrounding these

**COMFORTABLE AT HOME** Above left: Life as an everyday Methodist by 1900 looked much more like this painting of a happy Victorian family than like the images on pp. 12–16, a development satirized in Frederic's novel (above right).

patriarchs were middle-aged men, generally of a robust type, with burly shoulders, and bushing beards framing shaven upper lips, and who looked for the most part like honest and prosperous farmers attired in their Sunday clothes. . . . There were scattered stray specimens of a more urban class, worthies with neatly trimmed whiskers, white neckcloths, and even indications of hair-oil—all eloquent of citified charges; and now and again the eye singled out a striking and scholarly face, at once strong and simple, and instinctively referred it to the faculty of one of the several theological seminaries belonging to the Conference.

The effect of these faces as a whole was toward goodness, candor, and imperturbable self-complacency . . . it wore its pleasantest aspect on the countenances of the older men. The impress of zeal and moral worth seemed to diminish by regular gradations as one passed to younger faces; and among the very beginners, who had been ordained only within the past day or two, this decline was peculiarly marked. . . .

But nothing was further from the minds of the members of the First M. E. Church of Tecumseh than the suggestion that they were not an improvement on those who had gone before them. They were undoubtedly the smartest and most important congregation within the limits of the Nedahma Conference, and this new church edifice of theirs represented . . . a scale of outlay and a standard of progressive taste in devotional architecture unique in the Methodism of that whole section of the State. —From Chapter 1.



# Doing “more beyond”

JENNIE FOWLER WILLING, LIKE MANY NINETEENTH-CENTURY METHODIST WOMEN, SET OUT TO CHANGE THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

*Priscilla Pope-Levison*

**IT ALL BEGAN** with a fall into a well. At the age of two-and-a-half, Jennie Fowler Willing (1834–1916) tumbled into a well on her family’s Illinois farm property, struck her head against the side, and sustained severe nerve damage. That injury spurred on chronic health problems that eventually affected her ability to attend school after age nine. For years, she yearned for an education. Finally, at age 28, she asked God to help her get an education so she might do more to serve God and the Methodist Church.

## **SURRENDERING TO JESUS**

Willing (she had married at 19) then dedicated herself to a self-education method of study for 15 minutes a day, because her eyes were too weak to do more. She set a rule that if she missed one day of study, she had to make it up as soon as possible. Even at 15 minutes a day, her method was astonishingly successful. She even taught herself German, was hired by a local school as a teacher, then by Illinois Wesleyan University as professor of English language and literature. She also authored 200 articles and 17 books. Her personal motto, *plus ultra*—“more beyond”—epitomized everything Willing dedicated herself to accomplish.

**THE POWER OF THE PARLOR** Many Victorian Methodist women presided over parlors like this one preserved at St. George’s UMC today. Phoebe Palmer, one of the 19th-c.’s most famous Methodist women, began a widespread movement in her parlor for greater holiness among Methodists (see CH 82).

Willing, a lifelong Methodist, experienced a religious conversion in her youth during an evangelistic service held in her town, but she wrote more often about her experience of sanctification. Like her dedication to self-education, it occurred at the age of 28.

“I shall never forget the hour when I made that surrender,” she wrote. “One afternoon when the Holy Spirit sent His light into the depths of my soul, I discovered, hidden away, like the wedge of gold in Achan’s tent, a determination to work, and study, and make something of myself. . . . When I saw that, I was enabled to say, ‘I give it all up. Henceforth for me, only thy will, and thy work.’ The pain of the surrender was so severe that a knife seemed to pierce my heart, and the tears leaped from my eyes.”

From that time on, she devoted all of her work to God’s service—primarily through the Methodist Church. Like many middle-class Methodist women in





**WASTING NO TIME** *Left:* Jennie Fowler Willing fought her whole life to bring the Gospel to women and the poor and to eliminate the liquor traffic.

**LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND** *Below:* Willing's students in New York ministered to children like these seen outside a tenement on Cherry Street in Manhattan.



the late nineteenth century, Willing chose mission, temperance, and evangelism as the avenues of her tireless activity. In all three, she resembled many other gifted women of her generation who rose to lay leadership positions though ordination was denied them.

Willing served as an officer in both the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) and the Woman's Home Missionary Society (WHMS) of the Methodist Episcopal Church. From 1886 to 1890, as secretary of the Bureau for Spanish Work of the WHMS, she oversaw its efforts in New Mexico and Arizona.

Underlying her work in mission was her personal belief that every woman—single or married, childless or a mother—is a missionary. She exhorted women to be active in mission work for God, beginning at home: "Let the home, where she does her best work, have her strongest thought, her main strength, her most devout prayer." She chastised women who allowed laziness or vanity to deter them from working on behalf of mission.

In particular, she named women who, in her opinion, wasted money on dressing their dogs in "satins, ermine and jewels," or who wasted their time on "queer bits of fancy work [embroidery]" or "neighborhood tangles that yield only a harvest of gossip and ill-feeling." Instead, she believed that as a missionary, every woman is obligated to devote herself to be loyal to God to the "heart's core."

Committed to the temperance movement as a second area of activity, Willing delivered a stirring speech in 1874 in conjunction with meetings and marches of the "Woman's Crusade" to support a ban on liquor. The speech led to the formation of a national temperance organization, which she then chaired for a year. Out of it came the Woman's Christian Temperance Union

(WCTU), which grew so rapidly that it became the largest women's organization in the United States by the end of the century. (Read more about famous WCTU president Frances Willard in "Preachers, fighters, and crusaders," pp. 35–38). Willing served as vice president of the WCTU and edited its first periodical. Her loyalty to the WCTU lasted throughout her life. When she died at the age of 82, she was president of the New York City unit and organizer for New York state's WCTU.

### PREACHING JESUS

The WCTU provided a platform for Willing's third area of ministry—evangelism. Thousands of women, like Willing, enlisted as WCTU evangelists to preach Jesus Christ and temperance. In one year alone (1896), WCTU evangelists around the country held 75,000 evangelistic meetings, 10,000 religious visits, 6,000 church services, and 3,000 Bible readings; they distributed 4,000,000 pages of temperance literature and prompted 6,000 conversions. Willing served for several years as secretary of the WCTU's Department of Evangelistic Institutes and Training.

There Willing also continued her calling as an educator, founding the New York Evangelistic Training School in New York City in 1895 after the death of her husband. (They had moved to NYC in 1889.) Her school provided a two-part curriculum in Bible study and practical work to train men and women to be urban evangelists. Located in the heart of New York City at Thirty-second Street near Tenth Avenue, the school stood near the homes and jobs of several thousand factory girls and many young working men who needed, in Willing's opinion, to hear the Gospel message where they worked and lived.



Students at the school were required, as their practical work component, to give an hour every day to religious visitation in the neighborhood, assist in the school's evening chapel service, teach Sunday School, give Bible readings, and preach sermons.

In these settings students gained hands-on experience in evangelism and urban mission. Willing also provided evangelistic training in the evening lectures she gave at the school, which were collected in the book *How to Win Souls*.

In the book's introduction, Methodist bishop Willard Mallalieu described glowingly its potential to awaken the church to evangelistic work: "If the seventy thousand, more or less, Protestant clergymen in the United States, and as many more Christian men, and as many more Christian women would read this book, catch its spirit, follow its suggestions, and work out, in daily life, its soul winning methods, this whole land of ours would speedily become the prepared inheritance of the Lord Jesus Christ."

### PARTNERS FOR JESUS

Willing was also a Methodist preacher. In 1853 she had married William Cossgrove (1829–1894), a Methodist minister who was eager to partner with her in ministry. They resided most of their married life in Illinois, where William pastored and Jennie taught at Illinois

**LADIES IN SHINING ARMOR** Many 19th-c. women, like Willing, exercised a public and political mission through participating in the temperance crusade.

Wesleyan University and led her mission and temperance organizations. They had no children. Their marriage exemplified a partnership of equals with each supporting the other's ministry. William, a presiding elder in a local Methodist district, issued Jennie a license to preach in 1873, and she, in turn, served a small church in his district though denied ordination.

In a letter to Jennie, William wrote of his commitment to her ministry, poking fun at the double standard that accepted a man's prolonged absence from home, but not a woman's:

We men are a selfish lot. Everyone [sic] of us will avail himself of the help in evangelistic or temperance work that some other man's wife can give, but it is quite another thing when it comes to having our comfort interfered with. . . . Everybody pities me because you leave me alone so much. I don't know whether they think I'm too delicate, or that I can't be trusted to stay alone. If I were a bishop, or a brakeman on a freight-train, or anybody between the two, I might leave you months at a time, and nobody would make a fuss about it.

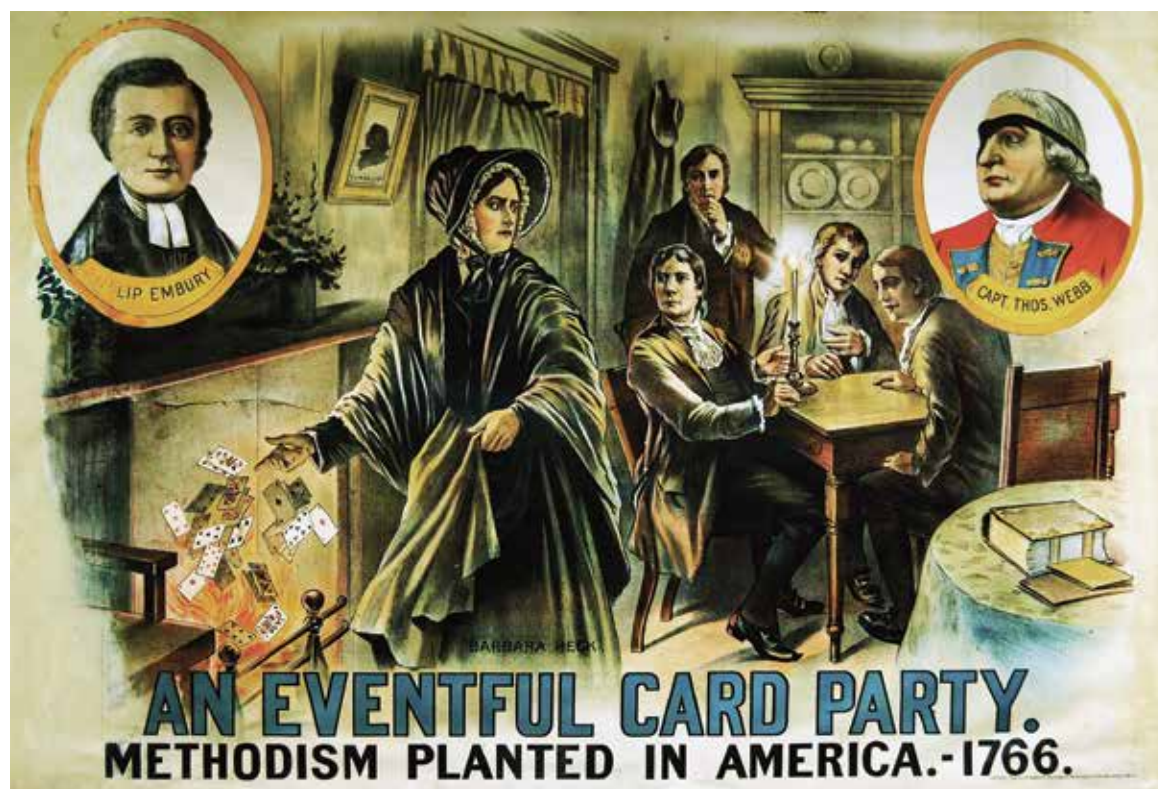
(Jennie's brother, Charles Fowler, was in fact a bishop; see "Preachers, fighters, and crusaders," pp. 35–38.)

Jennie Fowler Willing embodied the best of the Methodist spirit. She personified the Wesleyan way of salvation rooted in an overarching experience of grace, beginning with God's first stirrings in the soul through prevenient grace to justifying grace at her conversion and sanctifying grace at her sanctification. She exemplified the Wesleyan commitment to a disciplined and methodical life that enabled her—day by painful day—to achieve a high level of education, despite her limitations.

She also embodied the Wesleyan promise of sober living with her dedication to temperance. She lived the Wesleyan commitment to evangelism, especially of the poor and dispossessed, in New York City's factories and tenements. Finally, she represented the Wesleyan encouragement of women in ministry as she preached in churches, camp meetings, WCTU gatherings, and on the streets of America's towns and cities. She wrote in *Diamond Dust* (1881), "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." [Gal. 3:28] When the Christian Church cuts down through the gloss and prejudice to the core of the meaning of that utterance we may look for the millennium." ¶

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# Preachers, fighters, and crusaders

HERE ARE THE STORIES OF SOME OTHER METHODISTS WHO FIRST HELPED SETTLE—AND THEN TRANSFORM—A CONTINENT

*Gary Panetta and Kenneth Cain Kinghorn*

## **BARBARA HECK (1734–1804) AND PHILIP EMBURY (1729–1775)**

Barbara Ruckle Heck and Philip Embury were Irish immigrants and cousins who shared much in common: their native home of Ballingrane, Ireland; a zeal for Jesus inspired by John Wesley; and common passage to New York in the 1760s as some of the very first Methodists to arrive in the New World.

Embury, however, got off to a slow start practicing Methodism in his new home. The story goes that in 1766, Heck walked in on her cousin playing cards—a frowned-upon practice for a former Methodist preacher from Ireland. She tossed the cards into the fireplace, saying “Philip, you must preach to us or we will all go to hell, and God will require our blood at your hands.”

Embury returned to preaching, starting at his own house with a congregation of five. By 1767 the

**“WE WILL ALL GO TO HELL”** American Methodism quite possibly picked up steam after a forbidden card game.

congregation began renting a rigging loft (so-called because the space was used to rig ships’ sails). A year later, they constructed the spacious Wesley Chapel on John Street—it could hold between 1,200 and 1,400 worshippers—among the earliest Methodist meeting houses in America. A later building (1841) still houses John Street United Methodist Church on the same spot.

Loyal to Great Britain and sensing revolution in the air, Heck, Embury, and other Irish Methodists left New York City in 1770. As they traveled, they founded Methodist societies. Embury moved to Upstate New York, where he soon died in a mowing accident. Heck (whose husband, Paul, served for a time in the British Army) eventually wound up in Upper Canada where she died in 1804, an open Bible in her lap. Her grave marker



reads: “Barbara Heck put her brave soul against the rugged possibilities of the future, and under God brought into existence American and Canadian Methodism.”

#### **HARRY HOSIER (c. 1750–c. 1806)**

Though born into slavery, Harry Hosier, also known as “Black Harry,” gained his freedom during the Revolution and became one of American Methodism’s most remarkable preachers. Hosier traveled the circuit with some of the best-known early Methodist preachers: Francis Asbury, Thomas Coke, Richard Whatcoat, and Freeborn Garrettson. Asbury once acknowledged that the best way to attract a large congregation was to announce that Hosier would preach. He and Richard Allen (see “My chains fell off,” p. 21) were the two non-voting African American representatives at the MEC’s official founding.

Hosier could not read or write but possessed an unusually retentive memory. He refused offers to learn to read, fearing it might take away his gift of preaching. Observers reported that his preaching flowed forth eloquently in almost flawless English and in beautiful cadence, weaving in remembered Scripture and hymns.

In 1786 Hosier accompanied Asbury to New York City and preached at John Street Church. An article in the *New York Packet*, taking the first official notice of Methodism in the city, spoke of Hosier as “an African whose excellent preaching excited more interest than that of the Bishop [Asbury].” Oxford-educated Thomas Coke exclaimed, “I really believe he is one of the best preachers in the world. There is an amazing power [that] attends his preaching, though he cannot read; and he is one of the humblest creatures I ever saw.”



**INSPIRED PREACHER** *Left:* Harry Hosier’s eloquent sermons offended some, Asbury wrote, because he told them “they must be holy.”

**COURAGEOUS WOMAN** *Above:* Jarena Lee traveled more than 700 miles in a single year, giving almost as many sermons as miles she traveled.

#### **JARENA LEE (1783–?)**

One of the earliest-known African American women preachers, Jarena Lee would let nothing—including illness at sea, restrictions against women preaching, and the hazards of traveling without male protection in nineteenth-century America—prevent her from preaching, often before racially mixed audiences.

Born February 11, 1783, in Cape May, New Jersey, to free but poverty-stricken parents, Lee was sent to work as a servant at the age of seven. Tormented with doubts about the destiny of her soul, Lee converted to Methodism at the age of 21 under the preaching of AME founder Richard Allen, but assurance eluded her for a time. Worries nearly drove her to suicide until she heard of the doctrine of sanctification. Lee soon experienced what Methodists called a new birth and freedom from sin’s power thanks to the Holy Spirit’s indwelling. Firmly rooted in Christ, Lee felt free to follow her call despite resistance from the church’s male hierarchy.

Lee’s eloquence and fervor won over no less than Richard Allen. Allen, struck by Lee’s off-the-cuff exhortation during a guest pastor’s sermon, decided that she was called to preach as much as any man and authorized her to do so.

When and where Lee died is unknown. Her autobiographical work, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee* (1849), still makes for compelling reading.





### PETER CARTWRIGHT (1785–1872)

Cartwright once called himself “God’s plow-man.” No wonder. A chief player in the drama of American Christianity’s westward expansion, he claimed to have personally baptized 12,000 adults and children over a more than 50-year ministry.

“It is true we could not, many of us, conjugate a verb or parse a sentence, and murdered the King’s English almost every lick,” Cartwright later wrote about himself and his fellow circuit riders. “But there was a Divine unction attended the word preached, and thousands fell under the mighty power of God.”

Cartwright felt tugged by the Spirit to the distant highways and byways of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky: preaching appointments hundreds of miles apart, with few paths to mark the way. Revivals could be dangerous occasions thanks to thugs and rowdies. A good fist (sometimes the preacher’s!) might accompany a good word.

Cartwright was the man for the job. According to his autobiography, frontier danger attended him almost literally from the cradle. Converted at a revival in 1801, he soon grasped the psychology of revivals—and brought to them his powerful voice, gift for storytelling, sharp wit, and profound conviction.

Cartwright’s hatred of slavery led him to best Abraham Lincoln in an 1832 run for the Illinois Senate. Nevertheless, Cartwright opposed abolitionists, whose radical tactics he thought un-Christian, and believed that moral persuasion would best end slavery and preserve the Union.



**PUGNACIOUS EVANGELIST** *Left:* Peter Cartwright claimed to have thrown more than one punch in the cause of Methodism.

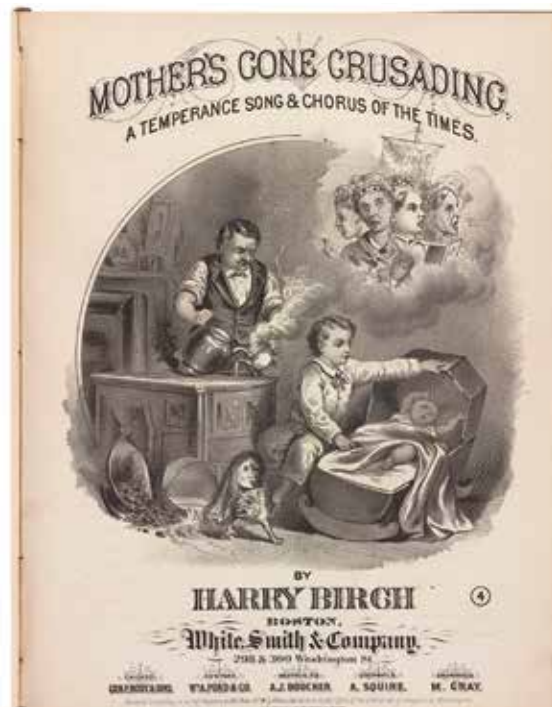
**WITTY AND WISE** *Above:* James Buckley put his law training to good use as an expert on Methodist constitutional law.

Cartwright’s *Autobiography* (1857) even impressed Charles Dickens. “If we cannot love him for his meekness, nor admire him for his refinement,” Dickens wrote, “at least we must honour him for his truth, and respect him for his zeal.”

### JAMES BUCKLEY (1836–1920)

Known as the “Wit of Methodism,” James Monroe Buckley’s fame was such that one ministerial colleague remarked, “General Conference does not begin until Dr. Buckley sits down.”

A keen observer of national and international affairs, Buckley regularly traveled abroad in France, Germany, and Russia. His prolific writings ranged from debunking faith-healing movements to the art of oratory to abundant practical advice to young men. In *Oats or Wild Oats?*, he counseled them to work hard and avoid alcohol, expensive amusements, and indiscreet young women. Buckley’s contemporaries



claimed him to be the only Methodist to have written as many words as John Wesley.

Born in Rahway, New Jersey, Buckley distinguished himself even before his conversion by restless energy and a capacity to argue convincingly almost any side of any question. He flirted with the antireligious ideas of Thomas Paine and Voltaire while studying law; Christian friends despaired of ever arguing Buckley into faith until his ill health and a revival combined to force a breakthrough in 1856.

Opposed to women's suffrage and to innovations in Methodism that ranged from women's ordination to individual Communion cups, Buckley was sometimes characterized as the "Captain of Conservatives." During his long tenure as editor of Methodism's widely read *Christian Advocate*, he launched a campaign for the construction of the Methodist Episcopal Hospital in Brooklyn, which inspired the building of other hospitals nationwide.

#### **FRANCES WILLARD (1839–1898) AND CHARLES FOWLER (1837–1908)**


"Dr. Fowler has the will of a Napoleon, I have the will of a Queen Elizabeth."

So wrote famed Methodist Frances Willard in 1874 of her relationship with Charles Henry Fowler, former fiancé turned implacable opponent (and brother of Jennie Fowler Willing; see "Doing 'more beyond,'" pp. 32–34). As Northwestern University's new president, Fowler used his authority to undermine Willard, dean of the Women's College. Fowler won the battle—he weakened Willard's authority, forcing her to resign—but Willard won the war.

**FATHER'S POURING TEA** *Left:* Willard spent her life working for temperance, claiming (as did a popular song, *right*) that alcoholism lay at the heart of much social misery.

The two had met while Willard was teaching during the early 1860s at Northwestern Female College (now Northwestern University) and Fowler was studying nearby at Garrett Biblical Institute. For the first time, Willard felt valued for her mind. Nevertheless, she broke off the relationship, finding their personalities incompatible.

Willard found a new calling in social activism. By the 1890s, her reputation would eclipse Fowler's impressive accomplishments as a pivotal president of Northwestern University and as an MEC bishop.

Her efforts as leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, not only to ban alcohol but also to reform gaping economic inequalities of the Gilded Age and to argue for women's right to vote, made her a household name indeed comparable to that of Queen Elizabeth. Not merely Prohibition and women's suffrage but also many twentieth-century social welfare policies can be traced to her leadership. "The world is wide," she famously said, "and I will not waste my life in friction when it could be turned into momentum." 

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# The patriarch broods over his family's future

*When Asbury knew death was approaching, he mused on the future of the people called Methodist. In August 1813 he wrote a valedictory address to William McKendree, elected a bishop in 1808, in which he warned Methodists against settling down like other churches:*

**A**las for us! out of 700 traveling preachers, we have about 100 located in towns and cities and small rich circuits. Guard particularly against two orders of preachers: the one of the country, the other for the cities; the latter generally settle themselves to purchase ministers [pay high salaries], 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!

... In the seventeenth century... 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 MEC held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland. You know, my brother, that the present ministerial cant [gossip] 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. ...

Schools, colleges, and universities undertake to make men ministers that the Lord Jesus Christ never commanded to be made... 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?... We lay no claim to the Latin, Greek, English, Lutheran, Swedish, or Protestant Episcopal Church order... Would their bishops ride five or six thousand miles in nine months for eighty dollars a year... 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?



**ASBURY IN AMERICA** Above left: Methodists have remembered Asbury for over 200 years, as this memorial plate makes clear.

**"WHAT GOD HATH DONE"** Above right: Francis Asbury's unfinished address urged Methodists to go on as they had begun.

*In January 1816, three months before his death, 70-year-old Asbury began an address to be read at the 1816 General Conference in May, encouraging Methodists to go on in the way they had begun. In the end his unfinished address was read along with his address to McKendree:*

**M**y loving confidential Sons in the Gospel of the grace of God, in Christ Jesus, great grace rest upon you. The God of glory cover your assembly and direct all your acts and deliberations for the Apostolic order and establishment of the Church of God in holy succession to the end of time. Only recollect as far as your observation or information will go, what God hath done by us in Europe and America in about 70 years in Europe, and less than 50 years in America, and what wonderful things he may do for us and our successors in future years if we stand fast in the Gospel doctrine and pure Apostolic ordination, discipline and government into which we have been called and now stand.—*From The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*





# The continent was their parish

CHRISTIAN HISTORY TALKED WITH HISTORIAN RUSSELL RICHEY ABOUT WHO METHODISTS HAVE BEEN AND HOW ASBURY MADE THEM THAT WAY

**CH:** What stamp did Asbury leave on American religion?

**RUSSELL RICHEY:** Asbury modeled a very distinctive leadership style: popular, affirming, energetic, accessible, and accountable. He effectively claimed Wesley's Arminian theological system, focused on lived religion, not refined doctrinal discussion. It was Scripture-based and hymn-sung and proclaimed the human ability to respond to God's grace. Asbury focused Methodism on evangelistic doctrines, practices, lifestyle, and purpose.

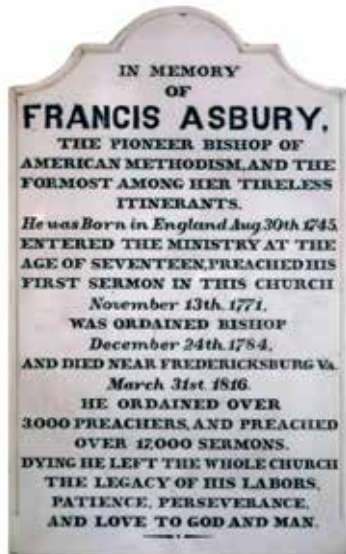
He and his fellow preachers lived within the conference system of mutual accountability, meaning they came together and recognized their accountability to one another and then sent folks out with a mandate to go to the whole continent. The word that gets at that is "discipline," a way of living with and for one another and to God's purposes. To this day Methodists put all their rules together in a book called the *Discipline*. Today's *Discipline* is about organization and procedure, whereas early ones were tracts on how to live.

Methodists saw themselves as a movement redemptive for the continent and for all people. They also had a denominational theory of the church: if you can't transform the nation yourself, you can at least honor the efforts of other movements. They broke the mold of Calvinism. Before Methodists, the dominant American theology came from Presbyterians in New England such as Jonathan Edwards. The Arminian stamp of free grace on American society is very important, and Asbury is key to that.

**CH:** Why didn't his model of leadership transfer?

**RR:** It was very difficult to sustain. First, it was *male*. Women were certainly doing things in Methodism, but the official system that Asbury put in place was male and, in its fullest expression, white male. It was *monastic*. Legislation was enacted against people who got married prematurely. Methodism prospered when Asbury found preachers like him, unmarried and ready to live a regimen of traveling for God. Staying put





has somewhat taken over the Methodist church now, but it's against Asbury's vision of leadership.

Asbury's leadership was *missionary*, involving all members. It required more in the way of ongoing pastoring than preachers on big circuits could do. Lay class leaders had to carry it on. As Methodists matured, became middleclass, and settled in cities, that missionary character faded. It was also *militant*. Asbury favored an austere, committed fashion of life; like officers in a war with enemies and things to be conquered. And it was *muscular*: despite Asbury's health troubles, he subjected himself to whatever was necessary to take God's word to people who needed it.

Asbury was *monarchic*, with power held at the top. Pastors never knew where they were going, and congregations never knew whom they would get as pastors. Asbury died in 1816, and by 1820 you see the rise of the Methodist Protestants [who broke away rather than accept bishops appointing local clergy]. This continues to be an issue in Methodism up to the present. And he had a *monopoly*: early Methodism really had *two* bishops, Coke and Asbury, but Asbury was in charge. When Asbury died Methodists moved quickly to add to the number of bishops and deploy them across the country.

Methodists started afresh after Asbury. They recognized they had no new Asbury and that more than evangelism is necessary to live in American society. They had new periodicals and new colleges. They needed leadership as educated as their parishioners. And by the late nineteenth century, if you wanted to see what Protestantism looked like, you looked at the Methodists: hospitals and colleges spread across the country, and an extraordinarily effective Sunday school movement. Other denominations wanted to copy them.

**CH:** How did Methodism lose its central place in American culture?

**RR:** Methodists put vision and energy and church

**200 YEARS OF PRAISES** Methodists worship at an early 1800s camp meeting (*far left*) and in the 2010s at historic John Street United Methodist Church (*above*). Asbury is still remembered at John Street through this plaque (*above left*).

structure and leadership into the temperance cause, seeing it as related to all sorts of other social issues: unemployment, spousal abuse, poverty. When Prohibition failed, Methodists lost the central point in their vision, organizational structure, and imagination.

Mainline Methodists put incredible efforts into recovering after the twentieth century's wars, surviving the Great Depression, rebuilding Europe, and energizing ecumenical movements. But church union between North and South came at the price of writing racial segregation into church law. Along with other mainline churches, Methodism suffered as city centers emptied. Leaders held out flags for integrating churches, schools, and communities and for opposing war in Vietnam. They got far out ahead of the Methodist people. Members fled. Later, homosexuality and abortion divided the church as they did American society. Birth rates declined.

Methodism found in none of those concerns or causes flags people could rally around. But recently I do see signs that, with the guidance of its bishops, United Methodism is endeavoring to truly behave as the global church it has become. ¶

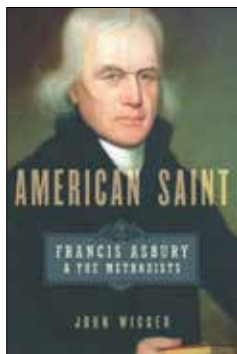
*Russell Richey is an ordained United Methodist minister, emeritus professor of church history at Emory University, emeritus dean of Candler School of Theology, research fellow at the Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition at Duke Divinity School, editor of Methodist Review, and the author, co-author, or editor of 20 books, mostly on Methodism and American religion.*

# Recommended resources

WHERE SHOULD YOU GO TO UNDERSTAND METHODISTS? HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CH EDITORIAL STAFF AND THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS

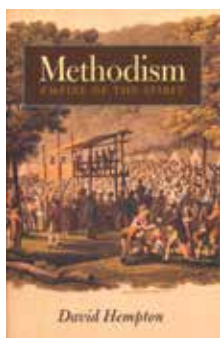
## BOOKS

- Francis Asbury towers over the landscape of early American Methodism. John Wigger's *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (2009) tells the story not only of Asbury's life but of many of the leaders and ordinary people with whom he came into contact. Asbury's journals and letters are available online, but if you want them in print, pick up *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury in Three Volumes* (1958).



- To read more about what it felt like to live, think, and preach as an early American Methodist, check out Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989); Lester Ruth's *A Little Heaven Below: Worship at Early Methodist Quarterly Meetings* (2000); and Ruth's *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality: A*

*Reader* (2005), which contains amusing and informative excerpts from everyday Methodists' diaries, letters, and hymns; and Wigger's *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (1998).



- Some excellent books that begin with early Methodism but bring the story into the present day are David Hempton's *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (2005); Karen Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (2001); and Jason Vickers's edited *Cambridge Companion to American Methodism* (2013). Read more about Methodist "relics" in Colleen

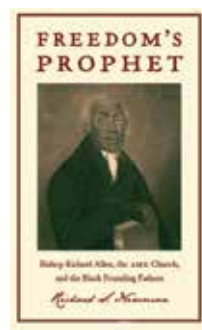
McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (1995), and see many, many pictures of objects from saddlebags to teapots in Kenneth Cain Kinghorn's *The Heritage of American Methodism* (2008).



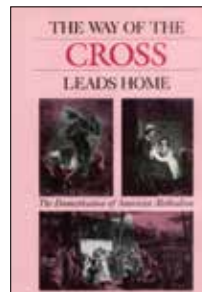
- For more on Philip William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, Jacob Albright, and the Evangelical United Brethren tradition, consult Arthur Core, *Philip William Otterbein, Pastor and Ecumenist* (1968); J. Steven O'Malley, *Early German-American Evangelicalism* (1995); and O'Malley and Vickers, eds. *Methodist and Pietist* (2011), a

collection of essays that brings the story all the way into the twentieth century.

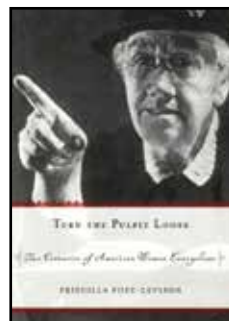
- Books on the African American tradition include Richard Allen's autobiography *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* (1833); James Campbell's *Songs of Zion* (1998); Dennis Dickerson's *Religion, Race, and Region* (1995), *A Liberated Past* (2003), and *African Methodism and Its Wesleyan Heritage* (2009); and Richard Newman's *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (2009).



- The Methodist journey from radical movement to respectable denomination is well told in Hatch and Wigger, eds. *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture* (2001); Gregory Schneider's *The Way of the Cross Leads Home* (1993); and William Warren Sweet's *Methodism in American History* (1954). Jennifer Woodruff Tait treats Methodist involvement in temperance in *The Poisoned Chalice* (2011).

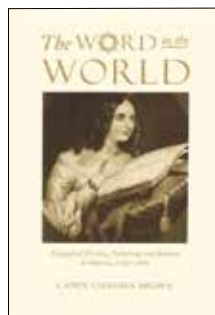


- Find out more about Bishop Simpson in George Crook's *The Life of Bishop Matthew Simpson of the MEC* (1890) and Robert Clark's *The Life of Matthew Simpson* (1958); and about Jennie Fowler Willing and other Methodist and holiness women in Priscilla Pope-Levison's *Turn the Pulpit Loose: Two Centuries of American Women Evangelists* (2004) and *Building the Old Time Religion: Women Evangelists in the Progressive Era* (2013).



- How did publishing fuel Methodism's growth and respectability? Read that story in Candy Gunther





Brown's *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America* (2004); Eugene Exman's *The House of Harper* (1967); and the two volumes of *The Methodist Publishing House: A History* by James Pilkington (1968) and Walter Vernon (1989). Famed Methodist Fanny Crosby told her own story in *Memories*

of *Eighty Years* (1906) and Abel Stevens told Nathan Bangs's in *Life and Times of Nathan Bangs, D.D.* (1863).

Biographies and autobiographies of some of the figures in our Gallery include:

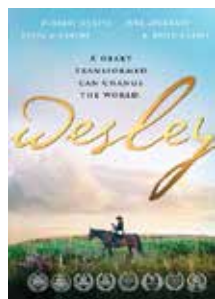
- George Mains, *James Monroe Buckley* (1917)
- *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright* (1856); Robert Bray, *Peter Cartwright, Legendary Frontier Preacher* (2005)
- G. Lincoln Caddell, *Barbara Heck: Pioneer Methodist* (1961); W. W. Withrow, *Barbara Heck: A Tale of Early Methodism* (1880)
- Warren Smith, *Harry Hosier, Circuit Rider* (1981)
- *Religious Experience and Journal of Jarena Lee* (1849); Susie Stanley, *Holy Boldness* (2004)
- Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (2000) and volumes edited from Willard's works by Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford and Amy Slagle, *Writing Out My Heart* (1995) and *Let Something Good Be Said* (2007)

## PAST ISSUES OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issues of CH relevant to this issue's topic are

- 2: *John Wesley*
- 10: *Pietism*
- 23: *Spiritual Awakenings in North America*
- 45: *Camp Meetings and Circuit Riders*
- 69: *The Wesleys*
- 82: *Phoebe Palmer, Mother of the Holiness Movement*

Some are available for purchase. All can be read online at [christianhistorymagazine.org](http://christianhistorymagazine.org).

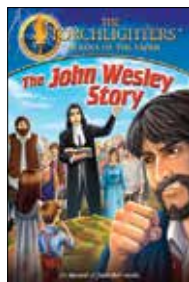


CH has also published the book *Wesley Country*.

## DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO

Vision Video has a number of videos about the origins of Methodism in England, including the award-winning 2010 feature film, *Wesley: A Heart Transformed Can Change the World* and the 1954 classic

*John Wesley*. Also available are *A Heart Set Free* and *Hymns of Praise* (both about Charles Wesley); *John Wesley: The Man and His Mission*; *Encounters with John Wesley*; and *A Portrait of Susanna Wesley*.



rider drama *Sheffey*.

The animated Torchlighters DVD *The John Wesley Story* effectively brings the story of Methodism's beginning to children. Helpful films about early American Christianity that set the Methodists in context include *Great Awakening*; *People of Faith: Christianity in America*; *Gospel of Liberty*; and the historical circuit-

## ONLINE SOURCES

Many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century biographies and autobiographies of famous Methodists can be found online: Richard Allen, Nathan Bangs, Peter Cartwright, Fanny Crosby, Barbara Heck, Jarena Lee, and Matthew Simpson. (In the online edition of CH, follow the hotlinks). So can *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, and you might enjoy famed Methodist novelist Edward Eggleston's *Circuit Rider: A Tale of the Heroic Age*.

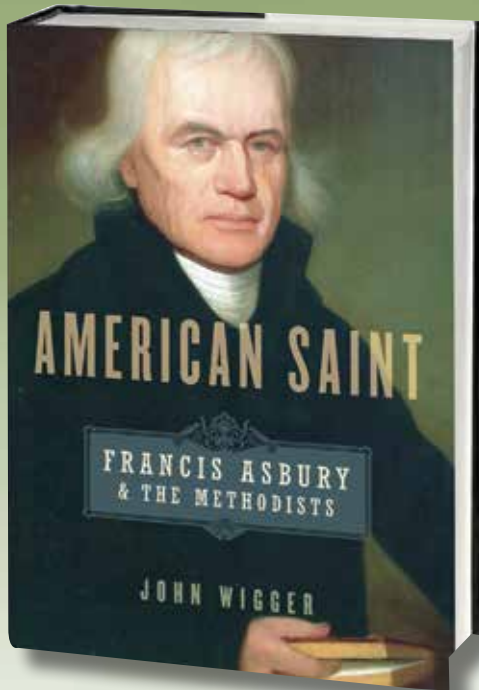
The modern United Methodist Church, the largest American successor to Asbury's vision, has a website full of Methodist historical resources courtesy of its General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH). Also check out the United Methodist Archives Center, a cooperative venture between GCAH and Drew University; and the United Theological Seminary's Center for the Evangelical United Brethren Heritage.



History-related websites of other denominations besides the UMC that trace their origins to Wesley include the AME, AME Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Free Methodists, Nazarenes, United Brethren in Christ, and Wesleyan Church.

Several individual churches significant to the history of Methodism have extensive websites on their history, including "Mother Bethel" AME, John Street UMC, St. George's UMC, and Varick AMEZ. And finally, you might get a kick out of the following article: Thomas Tweed, "John Wesley Slept Here: American Shrines and American Methodists." (If you want it in print, it's in *Numen* 47, no. 1 [2000]: 41–68).

# Featured from OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



## American Saint

*Francis Asbury and the Methodists*

JOHN WIGGER

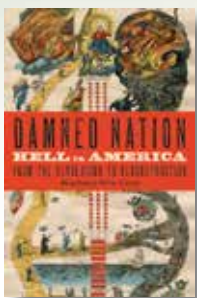
The definitive biography of Francis Asbury, *American Saint* offers a revealing interpretation of the early years of the Methodist movement in America.

2012 (Hardcover 2009)

558 pp.

Paperback \$26.95

## Also of Interest



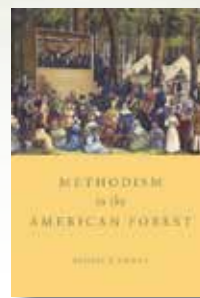
### Damned Nation

*Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction*

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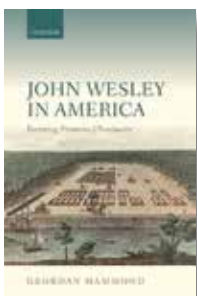


### Methodism in the American Forest

RUSSELL E. RICHEY

This book explores the ways in which Methodist preachers interacted with and utilized the American woodland, and the role camp meetings played in the denomination's spread across the country.

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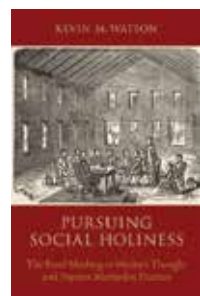
### John Wesley in America

*Restoring Primitive Christianity*

GEORDAN HAMMOND

This is the first book-length study of John Wesley's period as a missionary in colonial Georgia, providing an innovative contribution to debates about the significance of a formative period in Wesley's life.

2014 256 pp. Numerous illus.  
Hardcover \$85.00



### Pursuing Social Holiness

*The Band Meeting in Wesley's Thought and Popular Methodist Practice*

KEVIN M. WATSON

This is the first in-depth examination of the early Methodist band meeting: a group of five to seven people who focused on the confession of sin to grow in holiness.

2014 240 pp. Hardcover \$74.00



***"Look to the rock from which you were hewn..."***  
(Isaiah 51:1, NRSV)



## **The United Methodist Archives and History Center**

History matters. And the history of America's most explosively growing church movement matters to all of us. Here at the United Methodist Archives and History Center, learn about how Methodists ministered to a continent, and how they "looked to the rock" through a library and archive full of books, diaries, letters, novels, newspapers, tracts, saddlebags, mugs, plates, staggering statistics, and even one pair of lightning-struck shoes they left behind.

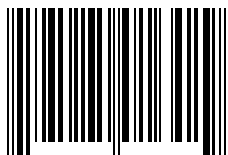
The Center is open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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The Drew University Library  
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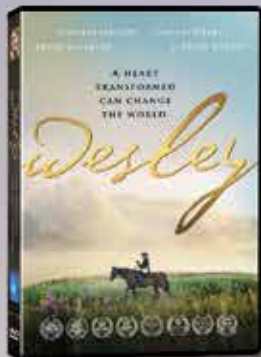
# AVAILABLE FROM VISION VIDEO

## Wesley: A Heart Transformed Can Change the World

Step into eighteenth-century England, and experience the transformation of one man whose heart-wrenching search for peace haunts him even as he pours himself into a life of service and evangelism. Now, for the first time, John Wesley's fascinating spiritual struggle is presented in this award-winning feature film based on his own private journals. Directed by John Jackman. Starring Burgess Jenkins, June Lockhart, Kevin McCarthy, R. Keith Harris, and Carrie Anne Hunt. Dove Family

Approved for ages 12 and up. Drama, 117 minutes.

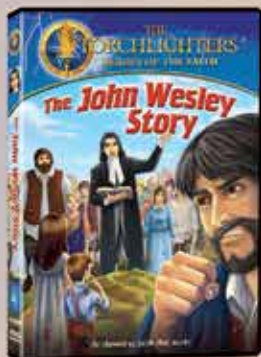
**DVD - #501370D, \$14.99**



## Torchlighters: The John Wesley Story

Share the message and ministry of John Wesley with children through this special episode of *The Torchlighters*. When young John is miraculously saved from his family's burning home, his mother is certain that God has a great purpose for the boy's life. After years of trying to live out that purpose on his own strength and good works, Wesley finally embraces saving grace. Will John take his message outside the church walls to the needy and outcast? This action-packed episode of *The Torchlighters* is a high-quality, animated production for ages 8 to 12. 30 minutes plus extras.

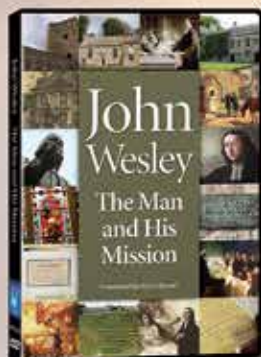
**DVD - #501596D, \$12.99**



## John Wesley: The Man and His Mission

Journey throughout England and follow the story of one of the most influential people who ever lived. The work of John Wesley spread around the world and still impacts social justice, politics, and religion today. This beautifully produced documentary, hosted by Wesley expert Keith Garner and shot at key locations, provides a comprehensive view of John Wesley's life and legacy. Documentary, 55 minutes.

**DVD - #501539D, \$14.99**



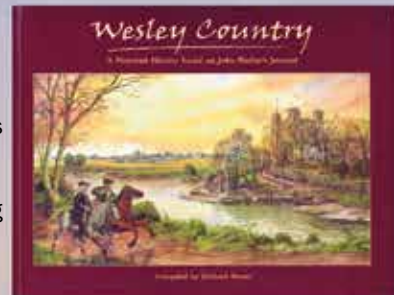
## Wesley Country

Based on Wesley's Journals

This hardbound book is a pictorial history of Wesley's reflections on society and his meetings with famous people of his time, including George Whitfield, William Wilberforce, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Gray. The layout and treatment of

the script give the book a natural period flavor. Compiled by Richard Bewes. Hardcover, 120 pages, 12.5" x 9".

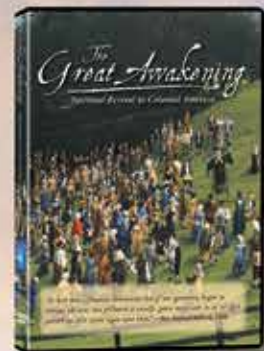
**Book - #5239, \$14.99**



## The Great Awakening

Through the use of extensive source material, unique images, and interviews with historians, this DVD traces the origins and progression of the Great Awakening in the colonies. Celebrate the radical and lasting changes brought about by this movement of the Holy Spirit, and consider the need for spiritual awakening in our time. Documentary, 35 minutes.

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