I. SALARY OF THE BISHOPS

We normally think of the Christmas Conference as marking the initiation of an organized Methodist Episcopal Church. We tend to forget the considerable conference organization which antedated 1784 and the fact that the newly constituted church had continuity with its past.

Francis Asbury's salary, for example, remained at the figure set by the conferences of April 30 and May 28, 1784, "Question 18. What shall be allowed the General Assistant yearly? Answer. £24 with his expenses for horses and traveling brought to and paid at conference." ¹

It was not until 1789 that the Discipline listed a salary for bishops. "Question 37. What shall be the regular annual salary of the bishops, elders, deacons, and helpers?" The answer was £24 Pennsylvania currency. This became $64 in 1792, $80 in 1800, and $100 in 1816. In 1836 married bishops were allowed $200 and traveling expenses. Unmarried and superannuated bishops received $100 and traveling expenses.²

Prior to 1800 there was no clear indication as to how the salary for the bishops was to be raised. Some entries in Asbury's Journal suggest that at times it may have been as difficult to collect money for the bishop as for the preachers. Asbury says he received £4 from John Street Church, New York, in August 1785, and £28 from the Council, December 8, 1789, for the suffering preachers in the west. On June 30, 1791, he says of the people at Manchester, Massachusetts, "I refused their money." On August 4, 1798, he wrote, "I have never received a farthing in New England." On New York, August 31, 1792, he said that a friend gave him clothing and a little pocket money. On July 6, 1795, on leaving New York he recorded that he "received of their bounty towards bearing my expenses." The Baltimore Circuit listed gifts of about £8 on June 24, 1797, and £4 on March 1, 1800.³ Asbury later referred to this circuit as "clover."

The General Conference of 1800 wrote into the Discipline the provision that "Each annual conference is to pay its proportional part toward the allowances of the bishops." Their salary was then raised to $80, as indicated above.⁴

---

Asbury remained, with regard to salary, equal in poverty with his preachers; indeed he claimed but one-half the amount that he tried to secure for every married itinerant.

There is no deviation in him from the example set by the Wesleys nor that which he laid before Coke by letter of February 12, 1791.

I have served the church upwards of 25 years in Europe and America. All the property I have gained is two old horses . . . As to clothing I am nearly the same as at first; neither have I silver, nor gold, nor any property . . . I am resolved not to claim any property in the printing concern . . . it will be sacred to invalid preachers, the college and the schools. 5

Bishop Coke, whose nine tours of America aggregated a service of only about two years on American soil, apparently received no salary. Indeed, following the Christmas Conference he undertook the printing and binding of the Minutes, the sermon, and the Sunday Service. This required so much cash that he embarked on ship at Portsmouth with less than a dollar in his pockets after eight months in America.

There appear to be no records of the salary paid to the Bishops prior to 1800. The records for the period 1800-1810 are incomplete for the reasons that the Journal of the South Carolina Conference has not been located, that of the Virginia Conference has perished, and those of the remaining original conferences do not cover every year.

From 1802 to 1810 the Western Conference paid Asbury $171 in salary, an average of about $25 a year. The Baltimore Conference paid him $311 between 1803 and 1810, part of which may have been for expenses. In addition, that conference paid $150 to Daniel Hitt, who served as Asbury's traveling companion 1807-1808, and $40 to Henry Boehm, who served in the same capacity 1809-1810. Bishops William McKendree and Richard Whatcoat were paid by the Baltimore and Western Conferences, while Asbury's traveling companion, Nicholas Snethen, benefited from the latter conference in 1802.

In only one instance does the record definitely show that a bishop's stipend was prorated as were the deficiencies of traveling preachers and presiding elders; in 1803 the Western Conference paid Asbury $10 on a $20.36 deficiency.

Bishop McKendree's account for 1808 shows that he received $175 from seven conferences. His salary was $80, and $61.63 was for traveling and other expenses. This left $33.27, which the Bishop carefully noted was due the conference. 6

After 1810 the accounts of the bishops are usually recorded in the Western (subsequently Ohio) Conference Journal. In 1811 Mc-

---

Kendree reported receipts of $200 and expenses of $125.52\(\frac{1}{4}\) between sessions of that conference, while Asbury was deficient $23.70 in meeting his expenses. The following year the new Ohio Conference listed Asbury’s receipts as $220 and shows to a penny his traveling expenses between each conference, including $6.10 for postage. Asbury still had $51.13 in hand, if he had not given it away. Bishop McKendree’s books were not in as precise order as Asbury’s; he supposed he had $26.50 remaining but could not keep an accurate account because he had “paid for two men and horses, and once for a carriage with three horses.”

In 1814 McKendree was still estimating his expenses at about $105.\(^8\) In 1816-1817 the Ohio Conference settled the accounts of the bishops by voting each one, including the absent Enoch George, $15.81.\(^9\)

In 1824 the expenses of the bishops became a claim on the Book Concern:

7. The Book Agents and the Book Committee in New York shall be a committee to estimate the amount necessary to meet the family expenses of the bishops, which shall be annually paid by the Book Agents out of the funds of the Book Concern.\(^10\)

This paragraph was stricken from the Discipline in 1832, but in 1836 the Discipline said:

7. Each annual conference in which a bishop or bishops may reside, shall annually appoint a committee of three or more, whose duty it shall be to estimate the amount necessary to furnish a house, fuel and table expenses for said bishop or bishops and that they be authorized to draw on the funds of the Book Concern for said amount.\(^11\)

In 1830-1831 it was reported that the bishops’ expenses, paid by the Book Concern, aggregated $1150.\(^12\)

In 1836 the Baltimore Conference desired to provide for the family of the deceased Bishop John Emory, estimating $300 as the amount needed, but Mrs. Emory declined any stipend. The same conference in 1837 reckoned Bishop Waugh’s needs for table expenses and house rent to be $950, while in 1838 they set $300 for rent and $900 for table expenses.\(^13\)

By this time, of course, the Methodist Episcopal Church had passed the early period in which its bishops—Asbury, Whatcoat, and McKendree—were unmarried and had no homes.

Though the bishops almost always received their entire salary, it was not always adequate. Asbury while in Winchester, Virginia,\(^7\) William W. Sweet, Circuit Rider Days Along the Ohio, p. 106.
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 126.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 157.
\(^10\) The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1824, p. 179.
\(^11\) Emory, op. cit., p. 246 f.
\(^12\) Mss Report—Baltimore Conference Papers.
November 11, 1804, wrote, "The Superintendent Bishop of the Methodist Church in America being reduced to $2, he was obliged to make his wants known." Even so Asbury tried to live on what he received, while he often sought to raise money for his preachers. His Journal shows that on January 31, 1802, he received a public collection of nearly $60 in New Bern, North Carolina. On May 21, 1803, in New York he signed a memorial to the court to claim £300 left by Miss De Ployster "for the bishops and clergy of the Methodist Church, to be appropriated in the best manner for the good of the Society." On May 10, 1805, he wrote that Sarah Williams of Philadelphia had "left £200 to the disposal of Bishop Whatcoat and myself: we ordered its application to the Chartered Fund."

Our first bishops advanced money for printing and for other necessities. Asbury's Journal shows that on July 16, 1787, he advanced cash "for nails and planks to cover the chapel at Berkeley Springs, [W.] Virginia." At the Georgia-South Carolina Conference, April 10, 1788, Asbury made this entry in his Journal: "Our little conference was about £61 deficient in quarterage, nearly one-third of which was made up to them." On June 29, 1789, he gave £14 to Adam Cloud for deficiencies while a preacher "to get rid of him." On February 15, 1800, in Virginia one of Asbury's friends "wanted to borrow £15; I showed him all the money I had in the world $12, and gave him $5."

The bishops encouraged others to make contributions for the support of the preachers. Some facts and figures gleaned from the Baltimore Conference Journal between 1801 and 1817 are indicative. In 1801 the conference received $20 from Bishops Asbury and Whatcoat toward deficiencies of the preachers. The conference then voted not to draft its full share from the Chartered Fund. In 1802 the conference sent some surplus money and its Chartered Fund dividend to the Eastern Conference at Monmouth, Maine. Donations by the Baltimore Conference in other years up to 1817 were: 1803, $100 each to New York and Boston and $80 to Philadelphia; 1804, $50 each to New York, Boston, and Philadelphia; 1807, $300 to the New England Conference; 1809, $222 to the Eastern Conference; 1811, $43.45 to the New England Conference; 1813, $389 to Philadelphia; 1814, $63 to the most necessitous conference; and 1817, $347 to the Canada Conference.

With pleasure Asbury wrote several times to "Mamma," the wife of Captain Charles Ridgely of Maryland's famous Hampton, to thank her for coming to his aid and that of the poor ministry. In 1807 he remarked to her:

It cannot be supposed that 150 Dollars per year is sufficient . . . to buy me clothing, horses and carriage, and to pay all my expenses in travelling 5000

miles a year. If I had not here and there a friend like Mamma Ridgely, when the cries of the widows, and fatherless children, of preachers; as well as distressed preachers single men that labour, and fare hard for 10 Dollars per year. . . .

II. TRAVELING EXPENSES, GRATIS HOSPITALITY, AND PERQUISITES

Bishop Coke, who lamented the high cost of travel in America, also recorded numerous instances of generous assistance from Americans and particularly Methodists. In 1785, when he wrote, "I had advanced so much to pay [printers and binders] and travelling is very dear in America," an innkeeper entertained him gratis. In Smithfield, however, he complained of expensive ferries and the charge of 3 shillings sterling for fodder and corn for his horse. At Portsmouth he had less than a dollar remaining, as indicated above.

In 1796 Coke said that the depraved captain of "Friendship" withheld his luggage and food and put him off in Chesapeake Bay instead of at Baltimore. Coke had to set off in St. Mary's County with but one shirt in his coat pocket. On October 28, 1797, the ship "President" was captured by French privateers and Coke was stripped of his clothes. American friends then supplied his wants.

Asbury with his vast acquaintance in America (it was claimed that he was known personally to more persons than any other American of his time) sometimes complained about high prices and felt that he was cheated. But more often he had reason to express gratitude for the kindnesses shown him by the people, including strangers. His Journal shows, however, that he never really liked or approved of the people in New England.

Asbury's great concern was spiritual affairs, not temporal matters or physical comforts. In 1810 at Perry Hall, he wrote:

Rode 10 miles to the new chapel in Middle River Neck. I would not ride in the coach. Will my character never be understood? But gossips will talk. If we want plenty of good eating and new suits of clothes, let us come to Baltimore, but we want souls.

Yet like death and taxes, financial expenses continued for Asbury. On January 10, 1790, he wrote that the James River ferries alone had "cost us £3 since we left Annapolis." On April 10, 1790, he noted they had ridden 30 miles to Amis' in Tennessee, "where we were well entertained for our money. Coming along I complained that people would take no pay for food or services; that complaint has ceased." Three days after he wrote that since four horses and three men had been on expenses for four days, "I judge it is high time to move." On April 3, 1792, at Rock Castle Station, Kentucky,

he complained that “corn cost us a dollar per bushel.” On March 4, 1793, he wrote that at a house near Columbia, South Carolina, “we got a little bread, drank our own tea, had horses fed and paid two dollars the next morning.”

On May 30, 1794, two men rowed him across the Potomac River; they “appeared to be satisfied with a quarter dollar each.” May 5, 1795, in Virginia, Asbury said he and his party suffered from irregularity “in food and lodging,” but he added, “the people are very kind, give us the best they have, and that without fee or reward, so that I have only spent about two shillings. On August 4, 1798, this entry appears in his Journal: “We frequently spend a dollar per day to feed ourselves and horses: I never received as I recollect any personal beneficence, no, not a farthing, in New England; and perhaps never shall, unless I should be totally out of cash.”

Asbury worried sometimes about how he would meet his traveling expenses. On June 30, 1813, he wrote, “We have spent about ten dollars a month as road expenses; but where is our clothing and our horses to come from; what will we have left for charity? It must be gotten from $200 allowed us by the conference. But may we not beg? For ourselves—no.” 20 Eight days later he said, “We have not brethren at every place, and the east is not hospitable: Maryland, or the South!” 21

Asbury had to ponder his wardrobe! “I was much obliged to my friend for renewing my clothing,” he wrote on August 11, 1792. At New Rochelle, New York, on July 27, 1805, he said, “I took a day to refit clothes.” In South Carolina, December 9, 1812, he remarks that he is “in want of clothing.”

The Western Conference in 1809 voted that: “Bishops are to be considered as exempt cases and therefore they are to be allowed as expenses whatever they may pay for official letters and for persons to conduct them from place to place.” 22

In the eastern cities the churches sometimes took care of a bishop’s expenses. St. George’s Church in Philadelphia, on September 2, 1796, paid for new shoes for Mr. Asbury’s horse, and in 1813 bought him eyeglasses, hat and tailoring on a coat for $14.91. By the generosity of the same church, Bishop McKendree received a hat, cloth, spyglass and thermometer, altogether costing $16. The four horses of the two bishops were boarded and shod for $23. On Asbury’s last visit to Philadelphia in 1815, the total bill for himself and his horses cost the church $18.62. 23

The chief refitting station for the bishops seems to have been

20 Journal, II, 736.
21 Journal, II, 737.
22 Sweet, Rise of Methodism in the West, p. 155.
23 From records of St. George’s Church, courtesy of Frederick E. Maser.
Baltimore and the people of Baltimore City Station (now Lovely Lane Church) took care of Asbury in the best manner when he was in the city, and they did the same for the other bishops and for their local presiding elder. Some $831.87 was paid out by the Baltimore City Station over a four-year period, 1815-1818, as itemized below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Expenses Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1815-18</td>
<td>John Patterson’s bills for Bishops for [Clothing]</td>
<td>$384.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815-18</td>
<td>For keeping Bishop’s Horses</td>
<td>$77.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815-16</td>
<td>William &amp; Mrs. Wilkins for Bishops and Bishop’s Linen</td>
<td>$16.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27, 1815</td>
<td>For repairing Bishop’s Carriage</td>
<td>$5.17 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20, 1815</td>
<td>Bible for Bishop Asbury</td>
<td>$6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 8, 1816</td>
<td>Bishop Asbury’s Funeral Expenses:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rev. Mr. Bond for expenses in removal</td>
<td>$66.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lambert Thomas for coffin</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Curran—Stage and Horse Hire</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timothy Richards—Horse Hire</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linen, etc.</td>
<td>$5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$173.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11, 1816</td>
<td>Postage—Bishops</td>
<td>$1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 22, 1818</td>
<td>Expenses Bishop McKendree</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1, 1818</td>
<td>Thomas Towson—Bishops T. [sic] Horse</td>
<td>$160.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bishop Roberts</td>
<td>$11.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other extensive aid was given Asbury by Marylanders, as shown by his will drawn in June, 1813, in which he said he expected to leave $2000 to the Book Concern, all of it money inherited from Methodists in Maryland.25

III. TRAVELING COMPANIONS AND MODES OF TRAVEL

While it was agreed in Conference in 1782 that every assistant preacher must so order his circuit that “either himself or one of his helpers may travel with Mr. Asbury in the circuit,” it was not until 1801 that this minute was formalized in the Methodist Episcopal Church, when, according to Asbury, it was agreed that each bishop should always have an elder with him as a traveling companion.26

Asbury recorded in his *Journal* what this meant to him! “My friends in Philadelphia gave me a light, little four-wheeled carriage; but God and the Baltimore Conference made me a richer present—they gave me John Wesley Bond for a travelling companion.” 27

Asbury’s traveling companions are not mentioned as often as his horses and conveyances. Indeed, several companions received little if any notice in the *Journal* for their service. Incidentally, Asbury’s tribute to Bond is matched by the recently discovered *Reminiscences of Asbury* by Bond.28 The purposeful Asbury was more wordy con-

24 Baltimore City Station Record Books, Israel Collection, Maryland Historical Society.


26 *Journal*, II, 732.

27 *Journal*, II, 756.

cerning his animal power. In the day of scant and expensive stage routes, inferior roads or no roads at all, with long distances to cover, efficient horsepower was as important to Asbury as "horsepower" under the hood of an automobile is important for present-day bishops.

One five-week period in 1805 illustrates Asbury's traveling problems:

Germantown, Pa., August 3: "I have bought for $100 a neat little Jersey Wagon."

August 21: "I am indebted to a kind providence for my good little wagon and my excellent and active driver and good preacher [Joseph Crawford], too."

August 26: "I purchased a horse and bent my course through Wheeling."

Newmarket, Ohio, Sept. 10: "The wagon was a covering in the heavy rain. The roads were dreadful to Williamsburg, Claremont County."

Asbury grew more infirm with the passing years. Yet as late as his sixty-sixth year he said he preferred the saddle to a carriage. He noted that when on horseback, "I can better turn aside to visit the poor; I can get along more 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." 29 Nine months later he was still in the saddle, at which time he wrote one of his most tender comments about his horse:

My lame horse grows worse. We stopped at Dickson's where I gave ninety dollars for a mare to supply the place of poor Spark, which I sold for twenty dollars; when about to start he whickered after us; it went to my heart—poor slave; how much toil has he patiently endured for me! 30

Asbury's adventures in travel were many, but his humorless comments usually leave the reader to note his pathos. He was no Wesley to tell us that the missiles flew thick while he was preaching, but that one invited him into a coach where he received no hurt since a fat lady sat on his lap. Asbury says simply, "My chaise was shot through" (April 16, 1777), or "My horse began to sweat, swell and tremble and died on the road. We put Levin Moore's horse in the sulky, and rode to Annamessex" (May 21, 1799).

Roads were made by Asbury to any place he wanted to go. On October 17, 1799, he said he rode "eight miles over a path where no sulky ever went before."

Only occasionally did Asbury complain about a horse. On April 28, 1788, he wrote, "Pack horse would neither follow, lead, nor drive, so fond was he of stopping to feed on the green herbage. I tried the lead, and he pulled back. I tied his head up to prevent his grazing, and he ran back. . . . I was much fatigued, and my temper not a little tried." He wrote often of poor roads. Of the road to Connellsville,

29 Journal, II, 652.

30 Journal, II, 681 f.
Pennsylvania, he said, August 15, 1810, "I enter my protest, as I have yearly for forty years, against this road."

Toward the end of Asbury's life a new type of road was coming into vogue; while traveling in Tennessee, October 13, 1814, he wrote of it, "Forward we jolted over the turnpike (for which they made us pay a dollar)." A year later in the same state he protested, "We came upon the turnpike—a disgrace to the state and to the undertakers. . . . It is a swindling of the public . . . to demand tolls on such roads as these." 31

Five months later John Wesley Bond was offering his last support to the dying Asbury, and in May, 1816, Bond was sadly accompanying the casket from George Arnold's near Fredericksburg, Virginia, to Baltimore. Bond brought with him a little book which is now at Lovely Lane Museum. In this book one may note the precise account between Bishop Asbury and the Conferences for 1816.32 Bond also preserved a printed minute paper with many subscriptions for the benefit of the destitute preachers. This paper, which witnesses to the measure of devotion on the part of the man who was called Father Asbury, is kept to this day in the vault at Drew University.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1, 1816</td>
<td>To Balance of 1815.</td>
<td>27.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>To my allowance for the present year</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>To sundries while lying sick 18 days on the Cyress</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>To allowance of J. Bond</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>To Cash paid J. W. Bond for road expenses</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 21st</td>
<td>To Cash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>To cash paid J. W. Bond for road expenses</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* January 1. To Balance of 1815. 27.34%  Jan. 1st By Cash recd. from S. C. Conf. $40.00

Mr. Schell read this paper before the Annual Meeting of the Executive Committee, Association of Methodist Historical Societies, at Lake Jumalaska, N.C., July 17, 1965.

("Manuscript left among the papers of the late Dr. Samuel Jennings given by his daughter, Mrs. Owens, to the Rev. L. F. Morgan and presented by him to the American Methodist Historical Society February 23, 1865." Also contains copy of the valedictory address by Francis Asbury to William McKendree 1814.)