ANTON BAST:
The Poor Man's Preacher of Copenhagen
by Donald Carl Malone

A young man stood before a judge in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1917 and heard his sentence:

My sentence upon you, young man, is that you report to Pastor Anton Bast and be in his care until your conduct and daily life warrant him in giving you the individual liberty you had before you stood before this court and were found guilty of a crime with which you have been charged.

The crime was theft. The circumstance was poverty, neglect, and an alcoholic father—conditions for which Pastor Anton Bast was known to be compassionate.

Little did the judge know that in eight years Anton Bast would be tried and found guilty of a similar crime.

But before his fall Bast rose high indeed. Few men in Methodism have earned such acclaim, and few men in Methodism have been forgotten so rapidly. One of his parishioners said of him, "Pastor Anton Bast, he's our friend. He's a father to all of us." It was proudly reported at the General Conference of 1916 that Bast was as tall as Abraham Lincoln both in height and heart.

Anton Bast was the first man without United States citizenship since Francis Asbury to ascend to the episcopacy in American Methodism. And he was the only American Methodist bishop to be defrocked.

I

Anton Bast was born in Lokken, Denmark on September 9, 1867, the son of a sickly painter of Norwegian descent. His father, Nochola Bast, joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1855. Anton Bast was converted to Methodism when he was nine years old. He began preaching at an early age and prepared himself for the ministry in accordance with the Discipline. In 1890 he was appointed to the church at Vejle. His second pastorate began in 1895 at Odense, where he remained for eleven years. It was at Odense that Bast became interested in social work and in temperance. He was a member of the City Council at Odense, and he founded

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a rescue mission called the “Storm Shelter” at Hjallese near Odense in 1897.3

Bast’s appointment to Jerusalem Church in Copenhagen came in 1906. The church was poor and in debt, and after two years Bast was ready to give up the work there. He consulted with Bishop William Burt, then episcopal leader of Europe, about the possibility of establishing a Central Mission in Copenhagen. In 1896 Bast had made a trip to London and had been influenced by a Wesleyan Preacher, Price Hughes, and his “Forward Movement” in England. Bast wanted to pattern his Central Mission (which was first called “Mission, Mercy and Rescue Work”) after that movement.4 In 1910 Bast traveled to America bearing Bishop Burt’s support and a testimonial letter from the King of Denmark.5 With the assistance of 2,000 Kroner which Bast raised in America the mission was established, and Jerusalem Church grew steadily from that time. In 1906 Jerusalem Church had 292 members and a budget of 30,000 Kroner; by 1920 its budget grew to 140,000 Kroner and its membership to 567. The Central Mission began with a budget of 12,000 Kroner and in 1920 it had a budget of one million Kroner.6

In 1897 Anton Bast founded a temperance newspaper, The Lighthouse, with his own money. In 1911 that paper, still owned by Bast, became the organ of the Central Mission. Its distribution came about quite by accident. On Christmas day of 1911 two problems emerged and solved each other. Copies of The Lighthouse had been published without the means of distribution. On the other hand mounting unemployment was producing more and more poor. The Central Mission put the poor to earning their livelihood by letting them distribute and sell The Lighthouse throughout Copenhagen. The fact that the proceeds went to the poor increased the publication’s sales.7

Jerusalem Church and the Central Mission were successful in spite of hard times. In 1914, the same year the Great War struck Denmark, Jerusalem Church burned and required two years of rebuilding. The rebuilding later proved beneficial since it provided

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3 Palle Rosenkrantz, Bishop Bast and the Poor People’s Money, trans. P. M. Peterson (New York: The Technical Press, 1928), pp. 10-15, 20. The prejudiced nature of this book written by a Danish attorney is indicated in the sub-title, “An Account of the Judicial Murder Committed on John Wesley’s Disciple in the Year 1926 in the Capitol City, Copenhagen, Denmark.” The opinions expressed cannot be taken as reliable. However, when the material can be gleaned from the poorly organized work, the book contains a wealth of information about Bast and his trial. The book is as much a commentary on Danish jurisprudence as it is about Bast.

4 Ibid., 11 f.

5 “Pastor Bast and the Central Mission, Copenhagen,” Christian Advocate, XCI (April 13, 1916), 495.

6 Rosenkrantz, loc. cit.

7 Ibid., 11, 15-25.
additional space for the Central Mission. Anton Bast and his family lived in a small apartment at Stakhusgade. His wife was ill and his two daughters were not strong. The pastor struggled to provide an education for his gifted son. 8

Anton Bast was motivated by a compelling social consciousness. Speaking of the Central Mission, he said:

We do it for Christ’s sake: His love compels us, we do it for their mother’s sake, we do it for the person’s own sake—for his or her human worth’s sake—and we do it for the community’s sake. 9

His operating principles were, “Treat the poor man as a count—and the count as a poor man,” “No one must go away without securing help!” “Immediate help must often be given,” and “All help is based on the principle, ‘Help give to help yourself.’” 10

Bast began by feeding and housing homeless men and giving them work cutting wood. At times he had 225 sleeping in the basement of the church. After ten years the Central Mission was expanded to an Old People’s Home for the elderly poor, housing eighteen pensioners and three workers, a Worker’s Home and Slum Lodging House housing about sixty men each night, an Employment Bureau securing work for 221 men, a Bureau for the Adoption of Children finding support for fourteen children and adoption for eleven, a Lighthouse circulation of 820,500 copies employing 572 persons, personal help and guidance for approximately twenty persons, a Home for Children who have sick mothers serving 178 in one year, and annual Christmas feedings. 11

E. E. Count, writing for the Christian Advocate, tells of traveling to Copenhagen to find Pastor Bast and eighty workers in the midst of preparations for a Christmas feeding. When asked how many he expected to feed, Bast calmly replied that he expected 30,000. Count was sure that Bast had made a mistake and actually meant 3,000. But Bast made it clear that there was no mistake—he meant 30,000. Actually 35,000 were fed that day. 12

Bast’s work became more and more celebrated. The April 13, 1916 issue of the Christian Advocate ran a special edition on the work of the Central Mission, with a full page of illustrations. 13

The same issue also published a children’s story, “How the Spring

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8 Ibid., 14, 28-30.
9 Ibid., 22.
10 Ibid., 30.
11 Ibid., 28 f.; Count, loc. cit.
12 Count, loc. cit.
13 “Pastor Bast and the Central Mission, Copenhagen,” loc. cit.
Flower Helped,” telling of a Central Mission children’s publication for its several orphanages throughout Denmark and praising Bast for his kindness to children.14

E. E. Count claimed that there was nothing like Pastor Bast’s work in America. The prime minister of Denmark requested in Parliament that Bast be granted free use of the railroads.15 A Danish weekly paper published a story about Bast entitled “A Progressive Man,” in which he was given the name “The Poor Man’s Preacher”—a title by which he became widely known.16 By 1920, because of Bast and the Central Mission, the Denmark Conference had established a position of influence among Methodists in Northern and Central Europe.17

The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met in May of 1920. Bishop John L. Nuelsen had been for four years episcopal leader of the European mission. However, work in Europe was so successful that Nuelsen was no longer able to supervise the work alone. It was proposed that the work be divided among three missionary bishops, and that proposal was adopted.18 On Saturday, May 18, 1920, Edgar Blake and Anton Bast were elected to the episcopacy, both on the seventh ballot.19 One can only speculate on what kind of victory it was for Bast. On the day before Bast’s election, Bishop Nuelsen announced to the conference that Mrs. Bast had died in Copenhagen.20

Bishop Bast was assigned to the Copenhagen Area (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland), and Bishop Blake was assigned to the Paris Area (France, Italy, North Africa, Jugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Spain). Bishop Nuelsen retained the Zurich Area (Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Russia).21

Returning home on the Norwegian liner Bergenfjord, Bast and 1,200 other passengers found themselves in grave danger. Fire broke out in the fuel tanks on the fifth of June, 1920. Bast anxiously prayed for deliverance from the peril, promising to work more diligently for God if rescued. In part he prayed, “I will try with

15 Count, loc. cit.
17 “Signs of Progress in Northern Europe,” loc. cit.
all my heart and soul not to betray your grace." At that the fire was miraculously extinguished. On an earlier occasion Bast was in danger at sea with his friend, Palle Rosenkrantz, when the old barge, Sluppen, began to take water. Rosenkrantz was terrified, but not Bast. Rosenkrantz said, "I remember how Anton Bast, the young minister who was on board and who was used to the sea, good naturedly laughed at me."

Methodism in Scandinavia was already strong when Bishop Bast inherited the work there. His first Annual Conference was held in Finland, where George A. Simons was superintendent, on August 4, 1920. In 1921 Bishop Bast ordained five graduates of the Danish Methodist Theological Schools in Copenhagen and Frederikshavn. He appointed John P. Ingerslew of the Jerusalem Church as head of the Central Mission and of evangelical work in Copenhagen. Shortly after Bast became a bishop, the Danish Annual Conference established a mission to Africa.

In the second year of his episcopacy, Bishop Bast toured Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, making pastoral visitations and conducting revivals. In the same year he enlisted the assistance of the Danish Government to take relief goods to Russia, which he distributed with the help of George Simons. While there Bast conducted a temperance campaign at Karelia. His concern for temperance extended to America too. Making a trip to the Bowery in 1923, he observed the great change which had taken place there since another visit which he had made before prohibition. This improvement, for Bast, was a case for prohibition. But the Bowery, Bast felt, still called the church to its real work: of fighting poverty.

Bishop Bast's episcopal record was not as impressive as his record as a pastor. He apparently was an adequate bishop, but not a great bishop. At the end of the quadrennium he reported normal progress in his area. The churches had grown some in every conference except Sweden.

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23 Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 5.
In November of 1924, Bishop Anton Bast was in the United States. One morning he checked his mail at the mission offices at 150 Fifth Avenue in New York City before going to the liner sailing for Denmark. There were awaiting him two letters and a cablegram from Denmark informing him that criminal charges had been brought against him on October 15, 1924. On the return voyage Bishop Bast wrote a letter, dated December 4, 1924, to the state's attorney requesting that his lawyer, Mr. Wenzzel, be contacted, asking for the content of the charge, and expressing concern to clear himself. The answer was received in the form of an arrest on December 8, 1924 during a meeting of the Central Mission board at Bishop Bast's office at 2 Stakhusgade. Bast was poorly treated, his files were confiscated, including personal letters and memoranda, and he was not permitted to call his children. According to the Danish newspaper, Dagens Nyheder (December 9, 1924), the composed Bishop Bast was interrogated by police officer Balle concerning the location of money, but Bast gave no information and detention was ordered by police attorney Stamm. Bast was imprisoned at Vestre Prison. About his imprisonment he said, "Oh, the Lord has been good to me during those twelve days imprisonment."

After Bast was released and his case was under investigation, George A. Simons, Superintendent of the Finland Conference and the St. Petersburg Mission Conference under Bast, paid him a visit. Simons had great admiration for Bast and added to his titles the "Antonius Magnus of Denmark." He arrived on December 27 to find a smiling Bast conducting a Christian service at Lower Hall of Jerusalemskyrkan for the homeless men of Copenhagen. Bast sat down at the organ and led them in singing hymns and then joined the others in marching around the Christmas tree hand in hand. Even under the pressure of investigation Bast's work did not stop.

Trouble had been brewing since Bast became bishop in 1920. Bishop Bast appointed John P. Ingerslew to succeed him as pastor of the Jerusalem Church. If Rosenkrantz's account can be relied upon at this point, Ingerslew was a less than adequate pastor. He

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31 Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 47-53.
33 As reported by Rosenkrantz, loc. cit.
35 Ibid.
contributed to the spiritual and financial disruption of the church, and apparently was in trouble with two women in the church.\textsuperscript{37}

Bishop Bast had appropriated $20,000 from the Board of Foreign Missions. He applied $5,000 to the liquidation of the Jerusalem Church debt and $15,000 to pay for the Central Mission Building adjoining the church. The pastor of the Jerusalem Church accused Bast of misappropriating the $15,000 and took the case to the civil courts—first to the Ministry of Justice and then to the Attorney General. Rumors spread about Bast's financial integrity, suggesting that he used the church funds for personal and family profit.\textsuperscript{38} Ingerslew also hinted about something of a vile nature concerning the bishop's "friendship to an especially noble and honorable man, his wife and son," and he raised suspicions that Bast may have caused his wife's death and burnt the Jerusalem Church. Ingerslew was suspended from the ministry and placed in supernumerary relationship, against Bast's objections, at the Danish Annual Conference. The conference found the grounds for the suspension in the 1920 Discipline, paragraphs 282-284, concerning "brother going against brother" and "sowing dissention in the church."\textsuperscript{39}

In the meantime Bast appealed to the Ministry of Justice to have his name cleared. The "Byrdall Kommission" was appointed to investigate the Central Mission and its accounts. The Central Mission hastily produced a list of receipts given for charity. Many of the receipts could not be substantiated. While the Byrdall Commission found no dishonesty or disorder in the Central Mission for three years back, the suspicion remained because of the inadequacy of the investigation. The cause of the inadequacy was attributed to the withholding of information by Bast and his lawyer.\textsuperscript{40}

Bishop Bast's name was not cleared. Suspicions had been raised and the damage had been done. Bast was arrested in December of 1924 and brought to trial for fraud on March 17, 1926.\textsuperscript{41} Some claimed that persecution by the state church and from the press led to Bast's being tried.\textsuperscript{42} However, as has been noted, Bast had the support of the state, and he himself acknowledged a friendly press.\textsuperscript{43} Simons noted that ninety-nine percent of the

\textsuperscript{37} Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 36 f.
\textsuperscript{38} Nuelsen, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{40} Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 40 f.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 116.
\textsuperscript{42} Charges of persecution were made in "Bishop Bast," Central Christian Advocate, LXX (April 1, 1928), 294; by Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 12; and by Dr. John R. Edwards, secretary of the Methodist Episcopal Board of Foreign Missions, in "The Case of Bishop Bast," Central Christian Advocate, LXX (March 25, 1928), 267.
\textsuperscript{43} Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 23.
Danish press supported Bast. Charge was brought to the State's Attorney, Gammeltoft, by Superior Court Barrister O. Fabricius and nine one-time members of Jerusalem Church, John Ingerslew, L. C. Hansen, Nelson, Allin, Captain Petersen, Swend A. Nelson, A. Gyldenthorp, Berger, and Hedstrom. The charge contained nine charges in three divisions, and each division was tried separately. The charges included having kept three treasuries and accounted for one, having used the legacy fund, having used the private product fund, having defrauded the fund for missions, having appropriated the contract for the rebuilding of Jerusalem Church, having made the trustees of the church responsible for the debt, having earned a fortune on the Lighthouse which ought to have belonged to the Central Mission, and not having given account of contributions amounting in the millions.

Word of Bast's arrest did not reach the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America until after his release. The church immediately rallied to the support of the Bishop. Bishops John Nuelsen and Edgar Blake were sent to investigate the case and lend support, and they were present throughout the trial.

Bast chose a trial by judges, but counsel for the defense, Mr. Wreschner, insisted on a jury trial. He later admitted his mistake. The trial reached the jury during the latter part of March, 1924.

Bast's papers, covering a period from 1917 to 1923, were audited by a revisor, Mr. Boytler, who made an abstract of the audit which a "washer woman" could understand. However, the columns in the abstract were set up in such a manner that was confusing and indicated cause for suspicion. Mr. Jespersen was auditor for the defense (counter revisor), but his figures were in such error that they were useless, and it was impossible for his work to be done over because of the cost. Palle Rosenkrantz called the abstract the "bordereau" after the French Dreyfus case. It lumped receipts from the Board of Foreign Missions for Bast's salary and the salary of his son who wrote for the Central Mission, from the Lighthouse, and from donations to the Central Mission into the same category. It was not clear that the Lighthouse belonged to Bast, and the
receipts for charity given by the Central Mission were inadequate. It appeared that Bast was receiving large sums of money for himself, for his son, Jørgen C. Bast, an author, and his son-in-law, Olaf Fønss, an actor in Germany. 62

The difficulty seemed to lie at two points. Bast did not keep the Lighthouse and the Central Mission separate, and he left funds in the hands of trusted agents. 63 While he operated the Lighthouse as his own publication, it was advertised and sold as an organ of the Central Mission. It was assumed by those who bought the paper, which some said was overpriced, that the proceeds went to charity. But because Bast could not produce adequate receipts for what he had given to charity, since much of what was given went to individuals in small amounts, it was not clear whether the proceeds of the publication went fraudulently to Bast or to charity through the Central Mission. 64 Then Bast’s agents added to the problem. Mr. Wenzzel, Bast’s lawyer, set up a false amount in the Christmas distribution, claiming that the excess was set aside in the “interest of agitation.” The treasury of “hidden need” was distributed by Miss Schou on her judgment. However, there were unexplained transfers of funds from the Jerusalem Church treasury to the “hidden need” treasury. 65

Of the nine charges, six were dropped immediately. It could not be proven that Bast had committed fraud to benefit himself at the expense of others (penal code 251) or that he intended fraud (penal code 253). He was found not guilty on those two charges. But he was found guilty on a technicality in the Danish law (penal code 257) called “scrap,” which was used when all else failed. Bast was guilty because “there is something wrong but we don’t know what.” 66 On March 19, 1926, he was sentenced to three months’ imprisonment. 67

The Methodist Episcopal Church gave Bast its support even when he was under conviction. Bishops Nuelsen and Blake interpreted the outcome of the trial as acquittal, since the bishop had to be sentenced on a technicality. 68 In a joint statement they said:

It is a great satisfaction for us as well as for all the friends of Bishop Bast within and outside of the Methodist Church, that Bishop Bast after a thorough investigation of all his financial affairs in a period

52 Ibid., 85, 92-101.
56 Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 21, 70-73.
57 Ibid., 73 f.
58 Ibid., 74.
59 “The Case of Bishop Bast,” loc. cit.
of more than ten years has been acquitted of all the fraud accusations. When anyone looks up the accusations that have been raised against him, this verdict seems to be a judicial as well as a moral victory for Bishop Bast.\footnote{Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 81 f.}

They claimed that the verdict was "only a technical victory for the prosecuting authorities," and affirmed their faith that the church would act favorably as it considered Bast's case to determine his position as a bishop.\footnote{Ibid.}

Bishop Nuelsen was also angered by the apparent injustice. He said:

This is a man who for years has been known in all sections of Denmark as a friend of every poor and downtrodden man, who has helped a greater number of destitute people, fed more hungry children, clothed more men and women, saved more unfortunate girls in shame than any other individual in the country, a man who toiled day and night in the interest of those who are in need, spending his life freely in sacrificial service, a man who has handled millions of kronors of benevolent money, who's integrity stood the test of the most searching scrutiny, this man has been sentenced in the courts of Denmark for a technical offense committed ten years ago in good faith and without any financial gain.\footnote{Nuelsen, "The Facts in the Case of Bishop Bast," loc. cit.}

To that Frank Mason North, chairman of the Board of Foreign Missions, added a charge against the Danish legal system:

In my knowledge of these various transactions, I find myself with an indelible impression of the extraordinary range of Bishop Bast's Christian service; an undisguised surprise at the nature and motive of the attack upon him; a deep wonder at a legal procedure which from the beginning has held him to be guilty until he could prove himself innocent; an unchanged confidence in his personal integrity; and an unfeigned admiration for his Christian fortitude in the midst of hardships of personality and life which, in my judgement, find few, if any, parallels in modern church history.\footnote{"A Conviction That Meant Vindication," loc. cit.}

Louis O. Hartman, editor of Zion's Herald and later a bishop, was involved in the European mission and understood the work there more than most. He considered the possibility that Bast might be guilty and that the church might share the guilt:

Now that the verdict has been rendered, perhaps it might not be irrelevant to consider to what extent the unlimited resources and
generous spending created throughout the church during Centenary days may, directly or indirectly, have influenced Bishop Bast in his failure to make careful distinctions in his appeals and accountings. And do we here at home base sufficiently insist upon scrupulous bookkeeping of all money handled in connection with the Central Mission? 

Indeed Bast was a bishop in a day of great missionary spending and speculation, and his inability to handle funds clearly seemed to be at the root of the problem. The attorney for the defense said that the case was lost because of Bast's insincerity and his unreliability in the handling of money matters. But Bast insisted that he did handle funds well. While operating the mission he said, "The Central Mission is run on a business basis, both as to the collection of money as well as in handing it out." Bast was imprisoned in June of 1926, still staunchly affirming his innocence. At his sentencing Bast said:

With a good conscience I declare here again that I am innocent of everything of which I am accused. Before God I declare that I have never intended to deceive anyone and hereby I declare again that I am innocent of everything for which I am convicted.

As he entered prison he said:

When today I enter the jail, it is under the sharpest protest against the sentence pronounced upon me, and I repeat today what I said to the jurors, I am altogether innocent in everything that I am accused of.

Three months' detainment only made his affirmation of innocence stronger. At his release on August 21, 1926, Bast said:

The three months' confinement far from producing any wavering in the conviction of my innocence has with overpowering force and under the most serious humiliation before God and my conscience made it clearer to me than ever, that I both could and should take the consequences of again declaring that my conviction and sentence amounted to a judicial murder, which can only be stamped as a conscienceless and disgraceful act.
Several attempts were made to reverse the court's decision. Before Bast's imprisonment a petition with many signatures requesting Bast's pardon was sent to the King. There were many who were sympathetic for Bast. In June of 1926 the president of the council and former department chief, Hendrick Vedel, who was also a superior court barrister, petitioned the Ministry of Justice on Bast's behalf and secured the signatures of many influential men. Superior Court Barrister Johan Jacobsen, out of his own interest, investigated the abstract of the audit and found it false and misleading. The account was audited (revised) again by a revisor, Laub Osterfeldt. With new evidence Vedel, Jacobsen, and Superior Court Barrister Palle Rosenkrantz appealed the case on September 27, 1927, to the State's Attorney. However, the Eastern Court denied the appeal on grounds that there was no new evidence, and the Superior Court upheld that decision.

Bishop Anton Bast was tried and sentenced, and he served his sentence. He had been dealt with as a Danish citizen. Now he had to be dealt with as a Methodist Episcopal bishop. Bast was a man of considerable reputation in his church. His church had supported him throughout the trial and imprisonment, and had regarded the charge as offensive. The *Christian Century* affirmed, "There is no doubt but that when his church reviews the case, Bishop Bast will be given a clean bill of health." 

III

After he was released from prison, Bishop Bast affirmed that he was willing to leave all suffering in the past and hold animosity for no one. He had not functioned as a bishop since the troubles began in 1924. At Bast's request his supervision had been taken over by others (Bishop Ernest Richardson in 1925, Bishop John Nuelsen in 1926, and Bishop Edgar Blake in 1927). Now Bast was in good health and good temper, and he was ready to resume his duties. There remained only the formality of clearing his name by the church.

To do that the Methodist Episcopal Church held a seventeen-day trial at the Hague in March of 1927. Bishop Thomas Nicholson of Detroit presided and Dorr F. Diefendorf, pastor at East Orange, New Jersey, acted as counsel for the defense. The trial was con-

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70 Ibid., 81-84. Rosenkrantz does not indicate which "department" or which "council."
71 Ibid., 85, 90, 97, 102-105, 109 f., 112, 117.
72 "Danish Methodist Bishop Sent to Prison," loc. cit.
73 Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 87.
74 Nuelsen and Blake, "Report of the Copenhagen Area," loc. cit.
75 Rosenkrantz, loc. cit.
ducted by a broad representation from the Methodist Episcopal Church in Europe. Fabricious, Ingerslew, and Boylter cooperated, and the papers confiscated at Bast's home and office by the police were available. However, Jespersen, the contra-visor, refused to help. The insinuations that Bast had contributed to the burning of Jerusalem Church and to causing the death of his wife were again revived. Four charges were brought against Bast: Charge I—seven counts of Falsehood (Immoral Conduct); Charge II—two counts of Deception; Charge III—one count of Imprudent Conduct; and Charge IV—three counts of Fraudulent Conduct. Charge I came from alleged falsification in relationship to his profits, income, and publishing concerns. The charge stated, "This report shows that the said Anton Bast has given the commission misleading and false statements concerning his competence as a Bishop within the Methodist Episcopal Church." Charge II claimed that Bast permitted his secretary to juggle the books, and that he misappropriated funds from the Board of Foreign Missions intended to pay the debt incurred from the burning of the Jerusalem Church. The third charge averred that "the said Anton Bast is guilty of improper association with a woman." The last charge claimed that Bast received profit from the Lighthouse, from the Sunday School, and from the War Relief Fund.

It was unanimously agreed that there was reasonable doubt on all of the charges, but all of the charges together indicated that something was wrong. The specifications of making a profit from benevolences and making a profit from his publication in Charges I and IV indicated "imprudent and unministerial conduct." Therefore, that was the charge which was placed under Charge III—Imprudent Conduct, the only charge which was sustained.

The bishop was suspended until General Conference of 1928. At that conference Bast was subjected to trial once more.

The 1928 General Conference in Kansas City was a challenge to the episcopacy. It saw charges brought against individual bishops and against the episcopal system in general. In the midst of this, the case of Bishop Bast did not speak well of episcopal authority.

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76 "The Investigation of Bishop Bast," Northwest Christian Advocate, LXXV (May 19, 1927), 469 f.
77 Rosenkrantz, op. cit., 53, 114.
78 Nuelsen and Blake, loc. cit.
79 Ibid.
80 "Methodists Suspend Danish Bishop," Christian Century, XLIV (March 31, 1927), 411.
Bishops retained their tenure and authority which was threatened during the conference, but the number of bishops was reduced from thirty-seven to thirty-three. Many areas outside of the United States were abolished.  

The Reverend Mr. Andrew W. Shamel of Pasadena, California, charged Bishops Nuelsen and Blake of connivance in the Bast case. Heresy charges were brought against Bishops William F. McDowell and Francis J. McConnell for immorality and for approving of the teaching of evolution. The charges brought by the Reverend Mr. George Cook of Wilmington, Delaware, were never taken seriously and were met with indignation.

Even while being on trial, Bishop McConnell found himself trying another bishop. A select committee of seventeen men was appointed to try Bishop Bast on the Hague charge of "Imprudent and Unministerial Conduct," and Bishop McConnell was appointed president of the committee. Dorr F. Diefendorf was again appointed counsel for the defense, and Fred D. Stone was counsel for the church. The Judiciary Committee admitted documentary evidence brought by Otto Fabricious, the initiator of the charges in Denmark. On May 17, 1928, the ecclesiastical court met to decide the verdict while Bast awaited in a nearby hotel room. The verdict came as no surprise. Bast, who still staunchly maintained his innocence, was found guilty on all counts. The report was made to the General Conference. Charge I of "Imprudent and Unministerial Conduct," specification number one and two were both sustained, and the one specification in Charge II of "Imprudent Conduct" was also sustained. Bishop Francis McConnell, president of the select seventeen, and H. W. Burgan, secretary, pronounced the following sentence on Bishop Bast before a very curious conference which was not informed about the content of the specifications:

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While continuing Bishop Anton Bast in the membership and ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the committee suspends him permanently from the exercising of the function of the office of Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church.\textsuperscript{88}

The undisclosed content of the specifications claimed that Bast had withheld profits from the \textit{Lighthouse} and had been seen frequently with a lady, the wife of a government official, on yachting trips.\textsuperscript{89} It was emphasized that the charges were not against the character of Anton Bast but were against his folly.\textsuperscript{90} The trial of Bishop Bast cost the Methodist Episcopal Church $26,901.29.\textsuperscript{91}

John P. Ingerslew, who began all the trouble, fared better at the Conference. He arrived in Kansas City on May 13, 1928, to seek reinstatement into the ministry.\textsuperscript{92} The Judiciary Committee recommended that he be reinstated on grounds that the Danish Annual Conference which charged him had not lawfully convened.\textsuperscript{93} He won reinstatement on May 27, 1928.\textsuperscript{94}

By a resolution introduced by J. I. Bartholemew, Anton Bast was permanently suspended from the functions of the episcopal office but was retained in the ministry. His name was recorded in the Roll of Bishops, and he was recorded as a member of the Denmark Conference where he was a member before his election to the episcopacy.\textsuperscript{95} On May 28, 1928, an adopted resolution granted Bast $800 support for June and for his return journey, and $75 each month thereafter, not to exceed six months, until he received annual conference support.\textsuperscript{96} However, Bast never was to receive that support, for under Danish law an ex-convict was prohibited from practice as a licensed minister.\textsuperscript{97}

As Anton Bast departed he sent a letter to the General Conference, saying in part:

\textsuperscript{88}Wade and Arters, op. cit., 343 f.
\textsuperscript{89}“A Bishop is Unfrocked,” \textit{loc. cit.} The second specification presumably had its source in Ingerslew’s insinuation about Bast’s “friendship to an especially noble and honorable man, his wife and son,” \textit{supra}, 10, and in the Hague trial’s charge, “The same Anton Bast is guilty of improper association with a woman,” \textit{supra}, 19.
\textsuperscript{90}“Methodists Vote Autonomous World Church,” \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{91}Ibid., 493.
\textsuperscript{92}“Methodists Vote Autonomous World Church,” \textit{loc. cit.}
First, I want to express my deep gratitude to God and the church, because I again am declared in good standing and am permitted to minister in the church according to my inner heavenly calling."

Waiving his right to appeal, he also said:

For while I maintain my uttermost protest against the charges raised against me, and my innocence for what I am accused for, I at the same time am exceedingly sorry for what the church has suffered on account of this sad case, and in view of the fact that the church as such had no responsibility in the circumstances which brought me into these sufferings or for certain procedures in the case, I would find it improper and illoyal also to put the burden of an appeal upon the heart and means of the church...

Bast expressed appreciation for his defense counsel, Dorr F. Diefendorf, and closed the letter with:

I feel that I am now out of the furnace, and only what was of no use was burned. God be praised. For my future standing, work and support I entirely trust God and the church. I shall for the day, by the Grace of God, earnestly seek to drop and leave this case and its details behind me and give my life entirely and wholeheartedly to rebuilding of what has been hurted and to promote the kingdom.\textsuperscript{100}

The Danish Annual Conference met at Svenborg, Denmark, on July 25 to July 29, 1928. At that conference the name of Anton Bast was removed from the ministry and the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church by voluntary withdrawal.\textsuperscript{101} Palle Rosenkrantz’s prophecy, “There will come a day when his (Bast’s) name will again be heard with the old ring,” \textsuperscript{102} did not come true. Bast’s name is not heard or seen again to any discernible measure until his death nine years later.\textsuperscript{103}

What can be said about Anton Bast? He did so much that was good and affirmed his innocence so strongly and so often. Yet three trials must have proven something. We can only say about him pretty much what was said at the trials—“there is something wrong but we don’t know what.” Anton Bast was much like the Biblical David or Peter. He was a man of faults to be sure, but just as surely he was an instrument of God.

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{wade} Wade and Arters, \textit{op. cit.}, 381 f.
\bibitem{ibid1} \textit{Ibid.}
\bibitem{ibid2} \textit{Ibid.}
\bibitem{minutes} Minutes of the \textit{Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1928 (June-October)}, (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1928), 614.
\bibitem{rosenkrantz} Rosenkrantz, \textit{op. cit.}, 122.
\bibitem{bast} Bast died on April 23, 1937 at the age of 69 and was buried at Vestre Kirkegaard Cemetery, Copenhagen. See Frederick DeLand Leete, \textit{Methodist Bishops: Personal Notes and Bibliography} (Nashville: Parthenon, 1948), p. 29.
\end{thebibliography}