



## DISCOVERY

Edited by  
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The Asbury letters for 1805 and 1811 offer some interesting reflections concerning his personal views of the church and ministry. Of special interest in the 1805 letter is his evaluation of the great importance of the camp meeting as a tool for evangelism. His concern for the cities was obviously a burden on his heart. As we read the letter we are also impressed with the rambling nature of its composition and thought.

The 1811 letter is much more focused and raises the question of what will be the outcome of Methodism if ministers marry, choose their circuits, or are selected by the church members “in their fanciful notions.” It is also interesting to read of his stepping down from the presidential chair never to return and the conditions which will prevail among the preachers.

South Carolina

Rambart Hall

Dec. 15, 1805

My very dear Brother

May great Grace attend thee. I am late returned from my visit through the Western States, Georgia, Charleston and to this place. When I survey the Western part of our Continent, the rich land, the rapid settlement, the charge of the Western Conference extends over a Tract of land from 1000 to 1200 miles in length, in Breadth from 2 to 3 and probably 400 miles. Our membership near 13000 our congregations comand one or 200,000 our traveling ministry about 50 the Local preachers one hundred and fifty. We have sent out Six missionaries to the Natchez, and New

Orleans, tis probable the three new territories have 30,000 Americans, poor lost sheep of the house of Isreal. Our Western Conference was held in great harmony, and there is a spreading growth of the work of God. We have 32 Districts in the Continental union. I can rejoice to hear that meetings extraordinary generally prevail in all of them. It is a common case in several parts to calculate upon 100 souls professing converting grace at a Camp Meeting. Georgia has been blessed, some parts of South and North Carolina, Virginia, in Norfolk and Richmond Districts, the arm of the Lord has been known. But you have doubtlessly heard D. Chandler's account of 150, 200, and 500 at Camp Meetings, and Q. meetings being made the subjects of extraordinary operations of justifying and many of sanctifying Grace. The Lambs of Judah are saved first, but oh our cities! And towns how awful their state, they will bear the Rod, and who hath appointed it. Yet what vast expense they are at if the Kingdom of God can be bought with money, to build churches and purchase Ministers. The Independents in Charleston have built a new church and steeple; report says will cost them 100,000 dollars or perhaps as many —?—, and after they have done, it will not hold more than one of our houses close wedged. The year 1805 has closed with uncommon displays of the power and glory of God, but I hope the year 1806 will exceed all we have ever known in America.

My letters of information from New Hampshire, from Vermont and Boston give good tidings, and from the Lake country and the Genesee. Indeed I am transcribing letters for another publication.

1806 It is a day of good tidings and we will not withhold our praise. I shall always take the cream! It is an argument that the more recent the accounts are, they are the most successful, and as I hold a correspondence with men in all the 17 United States, and Territorial settlements I can put in a Letter from the District of Maine and New Orleans, one from the North, South, and Centre. One great good flows from camp meeting. The Brethren sweetly mix and blend their spirits, and form a happy fellowship. The traveling and Local Ministry fight side by side in the glorious cause under the Captain of our great salvation, this brings on a blessed union in the two grand bodies of our Ministry. Camp Meetings are also the great plough that tears all up by the roots. These meetings are our forts and fortifications our War ships and gondoleirs, these holy meetings are our soldiers, these temporally and spiritually, will keep far our foes, of all kinds and keep peace and liberty at home. But as for the Cities God will convert them with his own hand. They will humble themselves. Where is there a City in America, or the world that has been more favored spiritually and temporally than New York? The Methodists should be plain men initialing none but the primitive church, Oh that you could go out continually into the streets and Lanes of the City, and make yourselves very vile. As to Br. Phoebus why is he talking and talking. I am like the old Negro said, "Talkee, and talkee."

Please write me upon the reception of this, to Norfolk. I rejoice that our Camp meeting at Stillwater was in the end and I'm sure productive of great good, according to Elijah Woolsey, and Albany has been visited—Br. Brummley writes we did not labour in vain in Ashgrove between 20 and 30 souls have been converted, and joined the Society. Old Br. Baker clasps his hands and they have great times. A camp meeting upon the Lake, 3000 people, Magistrates kept order, Oh order! Order! Is the good of the work. I am greatly comforted with so many to read, to preach, and pray. I am pleased with the Covenant the Conferences have entered into to pray for each other at their Sessions or Sittings—especially. You will mark the times of our sittings in Conferences, and be sure to pray for us in all your congregations. I think we have felt the good effects in the Eastern and Western Confer-

ences. Again another thing is good—writing Epistles to each other of the state of each Conference officially done. I have wrote a long letter. I suppose I have in this written to all the preachers of our order in the City. I am in the Spirit of writing on the Lord's Day. Bro. Crawford is gone to church. He has love and good will to you all, please give my Christian and Ministerial Love and Salutations to all you please. I have not room to say all. God be gracious to your little Family. Farewell.

As ever yours,

F. Asbury

S. Carolina, Charleston

Jan. 5, 1811

My dear Son,

May the God of all Grace make you perfect in every good work. Your short letter came safe. How diligent, prudent, and steady minded ought every man to be that hath a charge in the church of God, and over the ministry of the Gospel. Conferences have their powers, and Elders have their limits. Any information needful can always be conveyed upon paper from any preacher in Conference to the Bishops. It is the most excellent way for all the preachers to get married and Located to a few circuits of their choice, or made by the choice of preachers in power, or the people in their fanciful notions; where shall we be in the End?

I feel it is not with me as in years past the 50th year of my social exercise, 46th year of my travelling, 40th year in America, 66th year of my life. 3000 miles since we parted in Pittsfield is but a little part of our labour. (I have stepped out of the presidential chair, not to return). But to hear the murmurs of the preachers, see their tears, and discontents, I wish as much as may be, prevented by timely information. I am not at liberty to consult any one, and every one, but all are at liberty, to write anything and everything. It is proper I should know, or *we should know*. Our Western Conference gave us 22 stationed preachers. Increase of members of Society, 4000. Our Southern Conference, upwards of 2000. The whole western part of our Empire from 1800 or near 2000 miles, and our preachers are spread out on, and over the Spanish Lines. Camp meetings prevail. Our prospects are beyond expression good West and South. The stream spreads as wide as the United, and wider (Oh, may it be deep). In Europe *Bible Societies, missionaries*, the Methodists vie with ancient and modern times and people; Dr. Coke is indefatigable; collected (report says) collected 5000 pounds sterling in one year himself. The Methodists are pushing into every possible door in Europe, at home and abroad. I am in Love thine.

F. Asbury