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The Itinerancy
Its Power and Peril

BY
JAMES A. HENSEY

INTRODUCTION BY
JOSEPH B. HINGELEY

THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

DEDICATION

TO THE REV. AUSTIN M. COURTENAY, D.D., WHOSE LONG AND USEFUL MINISTRY EXEMPLIFIES THE UTILITY OF THE ITINERANCY, WHOSE HIGH QUALITIES OF HEAD AND HEART HAVE LONG ENDEARED HIM TO THE CHURCH, AND WHOSE SELECTION OF THE WRITER AS HIS ASSISTANT AT A CRITICAL PERIOD IN HIS CAREER WAS THE PROVIDENTIAL BEGINNING OF A FELLOWSHIP THAT HAS GREATLY ENRICHED HIS LIFE, THIS WORK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION

THE subject of this book and the book itself greatly interest me. The graphic account of the itinerancy—what it is and what it does—is a splendid tonic for the discouraged "blue Monday" Methodist preacher, and invokes a spirit of thankfulness that the early call to another denomination was not heeded. The manner in which the itinerancy accomplishes the efficient distribution of the ministers, putting every man just where he belongs, brings one to the enthusiastic conclusion that it is best not only for the preacher, but also for the people and for the Kingdom. To it must be attributed that brotherhood among Methodist preachers, unlike that of any other denomination.

While Methodism is of the people and belongs to the people, yet vast power is concentrated in the hands of the episcopacy, though somewhat modified by time and the increasing responsibility of the bishops to the General Conference. Any study of the superintendency would necessarily include the general superintendency of the bishops, and the special superintendency of the district superintendents.

The younger men who are now being clothed with the responsibility of the district superintendency will greatly appreciate the wise suggestions

of this book concerning the discharge of their responsible duties. Even the change of the name from presiding elder to district superintendent is significant of a change in the office itself. The average district superintendent is a more efficient officer than was the average presiding elder. He has injected into his administration some of the *intensity* which is involved in the etymology of the word itself, namely, "superintendent—one who stretches himself over"—his work. It may be true, as some have suggested, that a real supervision makes smaller bishops and larger superintendents, but it is undoubtedly true that the district superintendency is a larger office than it ever was before. The district superintendent is the adviser and father confessor of young ministers. By kindly help, wise suggestions, and even correction, the thoughtful young pastor becomes obligated to the faithful superintendent, who knows his men, their strength and weakness, and who stands by them. The superintendent who cares for his preachers will find the preachers caring for the churches.

It is easy to magnify limitations, but all of the twenty presiding elders who were my associates in the Cabinet had a uniform desire to strengthen the Kingdom, and lucky indeed the young district superintendent who finds a Bishop Merrill at the head of the table and a long-headed John F. Chaffee

at his side. The nervous fear that his more experienced brother will take advantage of his inexperience will disappear, and he will find that the real superintendent has a carefully digested plan, not only for his own district, but which considers the general welfare of the work.

It would be a pleasure to summarize the various chapters, and show how they deal, in an interesting and convincing way, with all the phases and activities of the itinerancy. This book ought to interest every Methodist, whether preacher or layman, for it deals in the most intimate fashion with the inter-relations of the itinerancy. Perhaps I may be permitted to say that the chapters on "The Cabinet," "The Itinerant in the Itinerancy," "The Perils of the Itinerancy," and "Accident or Providence" demand special praise.

Dr. Hensey's nervous, epigrammatic, accumulative style enables him to mass his materials with great skill, and the reader will find himself gripped as by the hands of an interesting romance. Every Methodist, after reading this book, will be ready to renew his allegiance to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and especially to the one great peculiarity developed by all types of Methodism—the itinerancy.

JOSEPH B. HINGELEY.

Chicago, Illinois,
December 22, 1917.

PREFACE

ALWAYS unique, time has emphasized the efficiency of the itinerancy among the ecclesiastical systems of the world.

While the achievements of the itinerancy are an open book, the secret springs of its power and interior *modus operandi* are only too often objects of conjecture and misunderstanding by those who should know it the best and appreciate its deeds the most.

The author does not hesitate to deal frankly with the most intimate phases of the itinerancy. The system has suffered because its "out-of-sight" processes have been poorly understood by ministry and laity. Rumors, ill-founded conjectures, and foolish suspicions thrive in an atmosphere of silence and secrecy.

The opinion is ventured that prevailing criticisms of the itinerancy, especially when leveled against the episcopacy and district superintendency, are based upon misconception. Collecting fog in baskets would be a futile method of eradication. Let the sun rise, and the fogs will go.

When the church knows the truth—the whole truth—about the itinerancy; when all of its

processes are brought into the light; when the reasons for, and the method of, the annual distribution of its army of itinerants are clearly understood, serious criticism will disappear like mists before the rising sun. There is nothing about the itinerancy that need be hidden or spoken of in whispers. It was born in the light, and thrives best when its processes are known and its controllers are both fearless and frank.

Neither apology nor explanation is offered for the untrammeled discussion of all questions relating to the operation of the itinerancy. If this end has not been achieved, the original intention has miscarried. This manuscript has not been written hastily or carelessly, and no confidence is violated in stating that it has been subjected to long and critical scrutiny before being accepted for publication.

The author is under heavy obligation to Bishop Joseph F Berry, D.D., LL.D., the Rev. George C. Wilding, D.D., and the Rev. Charles Sumner Kemble, A.M., B.D., for their careful perusal of the various revisions of the manuscript, and wise suggestions concerning the development of the theme, and especially to the latter for the correction of various verbal *errata*.

Believing that the better understanding of the itinerancy will enhance its power, and strengthen the hands of those intrusted with its operation,

and humbly praying that the Head of the church may bless the message to the accomplishment of these ends, the author sends this work upon its mission.

JAMES A. HENSEY.

Binghamton, N. Y.,
January 1, 1918.

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THE ITINERANCY

THE genesis of a movement is often shrouded in mystery or its earliest memorials are tantalizingly obscure. The results can be measured and the processes by which they were achieved understood, but the distant causes calling the new force into being, giving it organic form, and enabling it visibly to affect the course of human history, are often subjects of interesting but hopeless speculation.

Few memorials of the Methodist movement are either obscure or missing. Its logical development can be traced step by step from its birth in the virile brain, eager heart, and flaming soul of one man—John Wesley—to its far-flung battle trenches reaching to the ends of the earth.

This story need not be told. That has been done many times, fully, interestingly, and fascinatingly, by facile pens and brilliant minds. Its forensic achievements, theological triumphs, educational conquests, and evangelistic victories comprise an oft and well-told tale.

But it does come within the purview of the subject to inquire into the causes for the quick response of the English-speaking world to the evangelistic message of the early itinerants, and to learn the secret of that efficient organization which so swiftly garnered the fruits of one of the most widespread and beneficent intellectual and spiritual awakenings that have ever blessed human society. These causes may be quickly summarized:

The Low State of Religion in England and America

The situation was menacing. English Protestantism was in ebb tide. Vital religion was flouted by preachers and derided by the populace. The great doctrines of the Reformation had become meaningless phrases. The apostolic gospel, reintroduced by the German and Swiss reformers, had suffered eclipse. The clergy of the Established Church were generally addicted to card-playing, fox-hunting, horse-racing, and were noted for their devotion to the flowing bowl. Their services were droned, for the most part, to empty pews. Religion was only remotely related to life. The masses had drifted out of the churches, established and dissenting, and it did not seem as though they could be won back. An eminent churchman of that period, Isaac Taylor,

says when Wesley appeared the Anglican Church was "an ecclesiastical system under which the people of England had lapsed into heathenism, or a state hardly to be distinguished from it," and that Methodism "preserved from extinction the languishing nonconformity of the last century, which, just at the time of the Methodist revival, was rapidly in course to be found nowhere but in books."

The long reign of Calvinism in America had produced results little less alarming. Religion was a negligible factor in the young nation's life. If the whole matter of salvation had been predetermined without the possibility of either mistake or change, why need one give the subject attention? Results would be unavoidable and according to schedule!

The situation in America was rendered additionally hazardous by the rapid settlement of a virgin continent. The restless frontiersmen eagerly followed the footsteps of the setting sun. The woodman's ax broke the stillness of the primeval forest; the crunching wheels of the "prairie schooner" carried the pioneer onward and outward, while new communities were dotting the continent as the stars crowd the skies. Existing denominations had neither message nor method adequate to the situation. The nonevangelistic message of the churches; the long preparation for

the ministry generally demanded by all the denominations; the life-pastorate, then in vogue, with its candidating and calling, presented a threefold difficulty which, without the providential intervention of Methodism, might have doomed the American continent to moral and spiritual darkness.

Spiritual Emphasis of the New Movement

If Methodism had been an intellectual vagary, a doctrinal revamp, or simply an introducer of new modes of worship and methods of work, the cycle of its influence would long since have been finished, and its history written. *But Methodism was a spiritual revolution.* It originated in an earnest yearning for spiritual peace and personal holiness. Its progenitor was not a daring innovator, an ambitious ecclesiastic, nor a disappointed seeker of religious beneficies. His eye was single: to lead a holy life himself, and spread scriptural holiness over the world.

"For three quarters of a century," wrote the Rev. Dr. Barrows, a non-Methodist, in 1866, "Methodism has been the breath of God blowing across the continent, refreshing and reviving faint and dying souls, giving new life to millions and changing the condition of the religious atmosphere of the world."

"The breath of God blowing across the conti-

nent"! The highest of all possible encomiums, but anything less would not be the whole truth. The spiritual triumphs of early Christianity were repeated. With its deep consciousness of spiritual realities; its abhorrence of sin; its conviction of the moral guilt of all, with no possibility of self-recovery; its unyielding faith in an atonement deserved by none, but intended for all, and all-sufficient; its intellectual recoil from the doctrine of divine partiality; its belief in regeneration—the possible restoration of every soul to its lost equilibrium; its clear sense of the witness of the Spirit to personal redemption; its deep joy, flowing like a river in flood, full and satisfying; its clarion call to immediate repentance, insistence upon immediate faith, and promise of immediate forgiveness; its "sweet communion, solemn vows," thrilling songs, stirring testimonies, sympathetic fellowship—ah! is it any wonder that Methodism was awakening, compelling? Ridicule swelled its ranks, and persecution only solidified its following. It was ancient Christianity in modern times.

A New and Efficient Economy

John Wesley was not a speculator in methods, but a daring follower of the fugitive intimations and suggestions of Providence. He had a keen and open mind. Systematic rather than enthu-

siastic, methodical rather than emotional, keenly intellectual, deeply spiritual—his head was ever above the fogs, and his feet always upon the solid earth.

Wesley had no preconceived plan for the organization of his followers, or for the development of the work daily growing more formidable. He originally contemplated nothing more than the spiritual quickening of the mother church. But the new wine could not be put in old bottles. The dynamic force of the new movement could not be denied self-expression. It could no more be a "sect" in the Established Church than Christianity could have lived as a "sect" in Judaism. In each case it was not a new phase of thought or mode of worship, but a new life struggling for breath, and demanding opportunity for growth and development. The establishment has often regretted its hostility to the Wesleys and their coreligionists, evidently thinking that the new cloth could have been sewed onto the old garment. But separation was both inevitable and desirable. The old order could not adjust itself to the new interpretation, and the new ideas could not express themselves in the old modes. It was better for both, and infinitely better for the world, that each should go its way unhindered by the other.

The itinerancy is the distinguishing feature of

Methodist economy, a startling innovation, the chief agency in its rapid spread, and the principal source of its present power. The itinerancy was neither forethought nor afterthought, but logical sequence. Wesley expected help from the established clergy, but was soon disillusioned by their bitter antagonism. Little groups of followers began to appear in scattered communities. Wesley was indefatigable, but he could not be omnipresent. The converts were largely from the humbler walks of life—colliers, cobblers, laborers, farmers, small tradesmen, and village folk, without education or social position. Rebuffed by the regular clergy, and without consecutive spiritual oversight, their position was indeed a precarious one.

"What," Wesley asks, "was to be done in a case of such extreme necessity, where so many souls lay at stake? No clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was to seek some one among themselves who was upright of heart and sound of judgment in the things of God, and desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, to confirm them, as he was able, in the ways of God, either by reading to them or by prayer and exhortation." It was a short step from exhortation to exposition, and a shorter one from exposition to preaching. *A lay ministry was the undesigned result.*

But a new difficulty arose. There were more societies than helpers. Earnest men began to travel from town to town, and the itinerancy—Methodism's right arm of power—*was the second undesigned result.* A few men covered a wide territory. When the labors of these men were systematized the whole movement assumed a coherency and a permanency which it has never lost.

The government of English Methodism, up to the day of his death, was Wesley's private affair. He counseled with the preachers, and rendered a personal decision binding upon all. There was increasing restlessness toward the close of his long life, but no open rebellion. Those who were not pleased retired, a privilege accepted by not a few. Wesley stationed the preachers, and in doing so permitted neither discussion nor appeal.

Prior to the revolution, Wesley exercised, through his representatives, the same undisputed power over the Methodist movement in the American colonies, a power which he never attempted to regain after independence had been achieved. Indeed, the infirmities of advancing age, the slow and uncertain modes of travel and communication, his fragmentary knowledge of the whole American situation, and the urgent demands of the new continent for an organized and responsi-

ble officiary made it necessary to give the transatlantic movement organic form. This great task Wesley did not hesitate to undertake, and his influence with American Methodists was still sufficient to cause the acceptance of his decision without serious question.

The organic structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church is the mature judgment of its great founder. Restricted by ecclesiastical environment, by paternal and sympathetic relations to the church of his youth, harassed by vigilant and powerful critics, and embarrassed by the immaturity of his own views, Wesley gave to English Methodism the best form possible under the circumstances. In America he had a free hand. Long experience and deep study had clarified his views and settled his convictions. When the hour of destiny struck, Wesley was ready, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, the most scientifically articulated ecclesiasticism in all the range of Protestantism, began its great career.

Fully convinced that "presbyter" and "bishop" were synonymous terms, he yet hesitated to use the *title* "bishop" when ordaining Thomas Coke "superintendent" of the Methodist Church in America, and instructed him to proceed with the ordination of Francis Asbury to the same office. To have assumed the title of bishop for himself, or to have given it to Coke and Asbury, would have

displeased most of his followers and alienated many of them, and would have clouded his last days with a new and bitter controversy.

Structural Changes in American Methodism

The episcopacy and the presiding eldership, now the district superintendency, are the distinguishing governmental features of American Methodism. The episcopacy was a part of the original polity, and the district superintendency was quickly added.

If Wesley had had a thousand years for consultation and consideration, he could not have bestowed a richer boon upon American Methodism than the episcopacy. It has given the church official, dignified, and efficient leadership. Prior to the coming of Dr. Coke, Francis Asbury held the post of leadership by a tenuous ascendancy. How much authority he should wield, and for how long, was being eagerly discussed by the itinerants. Democracy was in renaissance, the nations were aquiver with republican sentiments, and the people were reaching for the reins of power in state and church.

The power of appointment, held by Francis Asbury under authority from Wesley, was in jeopardy. If that should be abridged—by no means an impossibility—the efficiency of American Methodism would be seriously imperiled. It

is eloquent testimony to the moral influence of Wesley and Asbury, and also to the enlightened judgment of the men who composed the memorable Christmas Conference of 1784, that they were willing to accept a system contrary to the prevailing sentiment of the age. The experienced men in that Conference were well enough acquainted with the itinerancy to know that it could not for any great length of time survive the abandonment of its peculiar, responsible, and concentrated leadership.

The second distinguishing feature of American Methodism, the district superintendency, originated quite accidentally—or, is it not better to say, Providentially? None of the American ministers had been ordained prior to the Christmas Conference of 1784. The people were clamoring for the sacraments which their pastors did not have the right to give. Twelve men were ordained to administer them throughout the church, and to facilitate their task the church was divided into twelve districts. The district superintendency grew out of this situation.

The work of administration was becoming increasingly difficult. Bishop Asbury could no longer visit every church annually. He began to consult the "elders," who had traveled where he could not go. They had valuable information, though without authority, save in the matter of

the sacraments, and the bishop naturally began to consult them when fixing the appointments.

This is the simple story of the origin of the district superintendency. Again, it was neither forethought nor afterthought, but logical sequence.

CHAPTER II

THE ITINERANCY—WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT DOES

Before investigating the operation of the itinerancy—how it is worked—it may be desirable to estimate its value in the light of history.

No Longer on Trial

First a necessity, next an experiment, it has become the chief bulwark of a world church. Long tested in the harsh school of experience, its efficiency has been proven on some of the fiercest moral battle fields the church has ever known.

Apostolic in Nature

The Divine Founder of Christianity was an itinerant preacher. He "went about doing good." Galilee, Samaria, and Judæa saw his face and heard his voice. He sent out his disciples two by two to prepare the way for his coming. Later, groups of disciples in varying numbers were commissioned to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Interrupted by the crucifixion, these itin-

erant labors were soon resumed. Paul caught the same spirit. Restless as the ocean, Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch, Tarsus, Corinth, Athens, the islands of the sea, and even Rome—proud mistress of the world—heard this acute dialectician and burning witness for the risen Redeemer.

Christianity won its earliest triumphs with itinerant preachers. Scattered by persecution, or impelled by a sense of divine urgency, the first teachers and preachers went everywhere. However far harried believers were driven in their search for spiritual freedom, the story of the cross was told, and new communities of believers sprang up. The world empire of Christianity could have been built in no other way.

Choice and necessity combined to make John Wesley an itinerant preacher and to use the itinerant method in building his societies. His scattered converts were too few and poor to support settled pastors, even had such men been available. But the itinerancy, in Wesley's hands, was at once reduced to a scientific basis. His "lay helpers" did not wander about, controlled by impulse or driven by necessity. Their activities were centrally directed. The reins were held in a steady hand. Watched by a vigilant eye, they were directed by superior judgment and resolute will.

THE ITINERANCY IN PRACTICE

Fundamental Requirements in an Itinerancy

A successful itinerancy demands three things:

1. Centralized authority. There must be ultimate authority, all the better if it be centralized in a single individual. An itinerancy demands quick, accurate, and final decisions. Authority must be at the maximum and appeal at the minimum. This authority English Methodism had under Mr. Wesley, and the Methodist Episcopal Church under its bishops has always possessed it.

2. Preachers must believe in the itinerancy, and submit themselves unhesitatingly to its authority. It is significant that the larger the Methodist Episcopal Church becomes—the branch in which centralized authority has reached its highest development—the less disposition is there to question its utility for churches or preachers. While the pioneer preachers were believers in the itinerancy, it was the subject of frequent and prolonged discussion, and powerful attempts were made to introduce certain modifications. Such efforts have long since ceased, and it is questionable whether there exists a more loyal body of men than the thirty thousand ministers of Episcopal Methodism, who annually submit the dearest interests of life to the hazards incident to an itinerant ministry.

3. There must be a loyal constituency. The

church must have a clear understanding of the itinerancy, what it is and how it operates, and not only be willing to accept its many advantages, but also to endure its incidental disadvantages. Long and intimate acquaintance with the itinerancy satisfies the minister that the system is his friend, even when his wishes cannot be granted; but the layman who may have given the system only cursory consideration, and who may judge it entirely from the local standpoint, easily grows impatient when his views are not instantly and fully heeded.

What the Itinerancy Does

Theories, however cautiously developed or cogently phrased, are always uncertain. Until reduced to the test of actual experience, under varied conditions and for an adequate period, they are simply possibilities. Defensible in theory, they may prove impossible in practice. Prophecies concerning the itinerancy would now be strangely out of place—the world knows what it does. It began as a fact, was bitterly assailed by hostile theorizers, and has lived long enough to show that they were wrong.

A System

This cannot be overemphasized. The itinerancy

is not a haphazard makeshift, doing its best under the circumstances, but a scientific system, basing its decisions upon accurate data, painstakingly acquired. It does not send men about whom it knows little into communities about which it knows less. Maladjustments are occasionally unavoidable because of the meager capacity or crass dispositions of certain preachers, or because the authorities must deal with an intractable local officiary. The defects of the itinerancy are few in number and of minor significance; its excellencies are manifest and manifold, giving the church one of the most daring and capable ministries ever known.

Initiatory Power

The itinerancy sends men instead of waiting for them to be called. Jesus "sent" his disciples. Before leaving the world he prepared for the future: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." His disciples were not to loiter about Jerusalem until "called." They were to "go," go at once, and go everywhere.

The itinerancy never loses the strategic initiative. It is always on the offensive. It does not stay out of communities into which it is not invited, but goes *wherever needed.* Is there anything finer in Methodist annals than the story of its introduction into New England by the lone, un-

heralded itinerant, Jesse Lee? The Spirit of God had been calling him for five years, and at length, in the face of a thoroughly established and hostile ecclesiasticism, the task was undertaken. But behind Jesse Lee stood the mobile, flexible, dauntless itinerancy; sending its follow-up itinerants, encouraging the few believers, and fostering the feeble societies. Across the Alleghanies and the fertile plains of the Middle West, over the Rocky Mountains and the rolling prairies, westward to the Golden Gate the itinerancy has sent its heralds of truth. Scarcely a camp fire was lighted but that a Methodist itinerant, by its flickering rays, told again the story of the light of the world. While frontiersmen were "winning the West" from wild beasts and wilder men, humble itinerants were building a spiritual empire for Jesus Christ.

In the older communities where the itinerancy established churches more than a century ago it still retains the initiative. Its constant, accurate knowledge of the field and exact information of the industry and capacity of its workers, its cautious survey of shifting populations, enables it to advance or retreat, defend or attack, as the situation may warrant.

Cultivates the Whole Field

Every section of the vineyard must be culti-

vated, every nook and corner gleaned. Other systems provide easily for the choice sections, the itinerancy cultivates the whole. There are no forgotten fragments, overlooked leaks, or unmasoned breaches. The smallest church, the poorest community has a vigilant representative in the Cabinet, pleading its cause, and insisting upon consideration.

A nearby industrial community was filling up with country folk. The pastor of a local church with a nonitinerant polity was asked the question: "You are probably receiving many accessions by letter?"

"No," he replied, "scarcely any at all."

"Why, how can that be?" was the surprised answer. "Hundreds of people are annually moving into your community from the surrounding territory."

"Yes," was the reply, "but they are either Methodists or ———," naming another denomination, "mainly the former."

Was this coincidence or result? Undoubtedly the latter! The other denominations were once largely represented in this territory. Unlinked in an itinerancy, weakened by deaths, removals, and a waning population, they had ceased to exist. But Methodism still lived out over the hills, and when the inhabitants moved cityward they filled up the Methodist churches.

Perpetual Efficiency Demanded

The "settled" pastor has a comfortable feeling of proprietorship. Only gross incompetency or grave errors in judgment or conduct will abbreviate his stay. The itinerant preacher is without artificial protection. Efficiency is his only safeguard. The district superintendent will come shortly to see how he is "getting on"; in a little while the fourth Quarterly Conference will express its opinion, and the Cabinet will carefully review the year's work.

The itinerancy applies common-sense standards of efficiency to the ministry. A man is not given a responsible position indefinitely, and left without direction or control.

A learned and eloquent preacher was called to a church of another denomination. The population soon shifted, leaving his church, occupying an entire city block, far down town. The pastor could not adapt himself to the new conditions. He candidated, but in vain, and stayed on indefinitely. The few influential members who remained were his personal friends. When he died an endowment of forty thousand dollars had been exchanged for a mortgage of twenty thousand!

The itinerancy knows nothing of "leisurely pastorates," "pleasure-loving parsons," "hangers-on" in comfortable places, drones dozing in the sun-

light, while the fair fields of Zion are weed-grown and cattle-tramped. The system proceeds upon the assumption that men are employed to do definite tasks, that these tasks will be seriously undertaken, and that every man will expect only such consideration as his work warrants. All men do their best under pressure. Indeed, necessity is the best faculty developer ever fabricated.

Prevents Stagnation

The bishop and his advisers, known as district superintendents, might well be called the "Conference Board of Strategy." They do not wait until the patient has deceased and hold an inquest. However interesting and accurate, the verdict would be futile—the decedent can only be buried. The Cabinet detects the slightest rise in temperature, or notes the intermittent pulse. But the Cabinet is not merely an expert diagnostician. It possesses the sovereign remedy.

Every appointment in Methodism terminates annually. Think of it, thirty thousand pastorates coming to an abrupt close every twelve months! When the church shall have fifty thousand pastors it will be the same. There are no loopholes, exceptions, nor special cases. Great pulpiteers, modest preachers, model pastors, gifted administrators, the useful and the useless, the hard workers and the skillful shirkers, all are annually

loosened from their moorings and set adrift. Many of them may be tied up again at the old dock, but tied up again, not tied there still!

The power of accommodation is very great in a system where every pastorate ends yearly and yet may be resumed indefinitely. This presents the double possibility of going when necessary and of staying when needed. It is the limit of flexibility.

Best for the Churches

There must be quite one hundred thousand Methodist churches scattered throughout the world, all established by the itinerant system, and all built within the past one hundred and seventy-five years. It is not assumed that the itinerancy is entirely responsible for this great achievement. The Arminian interpretation of the Holy Scriptures has been a powerful aid, especially in the earlier days, but that the itinerancy has been the leading factor in this astonishing growth there can be no question.

The settled pastorate has its undoubted advantages, but they are few in number and of doubtful significance. An occasional church and a few pastors may have privileges under that system unknown in the itinerancy.

Consider how well the itinerancy cares for the local church:

1. Every church has a pastor. Even the little church, or the schoolhouse appointment attached to a large circuit, has consecutive religious services and an available preacher in emergencies. There is no distressing hiatus between pastorates. To the bishop and district superintendent is committed this delicate and difficult adjustment. A modified freedom of choice has been assumed by certain churches, though reluctantly recognized, and it is always subjected to final revision by the presiding bishop. But this "modified choice" must be exercised quickly, and confined within certain recognized limits. If the church cannot decide, and practically at once, the bishop will do so. The system does not tolerate vacancies. The Conference does not close until every church has been supplied with a pastor, unless it should have the rare experience of not having enough men. Careless officials, hesitating churches, and objecting preachers reach the end of their tether. The bishop has the power to station every preacher and fill every pulpit, *and he does it!* Everybody may not be satisfied, but there are no unsightly gaps and weary waiting for the accidental discovery of the right man. The appointments are all made, always made, and the work goes on.

2. The local church is never compelled to keep the wrong man indefinitely.

They met down by the river bank one lovely

evening in the month of August. One, a layman in a church with a nonitinerant polity, the other, a Methodist preacher.

"O, yes," said the layman, "I have both heard of you and heard you." And he at once introduced a subject about which he had evidently been thinking.

"I want to congratulate your church on its splendid polity," and there was considerable warmth in his tone.

Knowing that his church had experienced difficulty in securing a pastor, the preacher replied: "Yes, it is a fine polity when the church is looking for a new preacher."

"But I was not thinking of that," he replied with a smile, "but of the ease with which, in your church, a congregation can get rid of the wrong man."

And then he told the pathetic story of how they had installed a ministerial misfit, and how there could be no hope of release for years to come.

Three years have passed, with conditions slowly changing for the worse, and *no hope of release for years to come!*

Some years since an excellent layman came into the Methodist Church from another denomination. He was out of harmony with the old creed, and impatient with the chronic strife over the settlement and retention of pastors. He said: "I

was no sooner in the Methodist Church than I found it in an uproar over the pastor. Some were for and others against him. Greatly distressed, I said to my wife, 'Well, I guess all churches in America are alike.'" (He was an Irishman.) "But I soon had a very happy surprise. In a few weeks the Annual Conference came, the preacher quietly moved away, and the very next Sunday his successor was in the pulpit. The threatened division was not only prevented, but every trace of it soon forgotten."

3. No long and painful controversy over the retention of the pastor is possible. There are no congregational meetings with all their baneful possibilities, where the question is discussed and voted upon. Generally a quiet word to the district superintendent will settle the matter. He understands the situation, and has probably discussed it with the pastor, or will now do so. Rasped feelings and bitter criminations will be unnecessary. Perhaps in a majority of cases this simple expedient answers every need.

It must not be supposed that men are hastily moved or inadequately protected. Equal justice to church and pastor is the aim of the authorities. They are not the victims of idle gossip nor irresponsible rumor. They know whether the suggested removal is really desirable. It is their duty to see that justice is meted to the church and

the preacher. The persistence of the itinerancy proves the practical accomplishment of this end. If the churches suffered, they would languish; if the preachers were not protected, desertions would be many and recruits few.

4. There is no confused hearing of candidates nor appeals for a "hearing" by would-be candidates.

A letter from a boyhood schoolmaster contained a pathetic sentence. He had entered the ministry in a denomination with a distinctively nonitinerant polity. He had a brilliant mind, and estimable qualities for the office to which he had been ordained, but was peculiarly unfitted temperamentally for candidating. He could neither be at his ease nor at his best under such circumstances. He said: "Eight years ago I gave myself, heart and mind, without reservation, to the ——— Church. I was promised a pulpit in a little while. But this promise has never been kept."

Waiting eight years for a call that never came! The itinerancy could have turned those years to constant and profitable use. The system would have done for him what he could not do for himself—the candidating.

5. The bishop not only has the power of appointment at the session of an Annual Conference, but the power of exchange or removal in the interim. In the event of the bishop's absence from the juris-

diction of an Annual Conference, the district superintendent exercises the same power of exchange or removal. The church is given immediate and complete protection against ministerial recreancy. There is no painful waiting for action, no cumbersome and inadequate machinery to set in motion, no technical checks and foolish quibbles. A beginning is made at once, and the end comes quickly. Only those who have seen the celerity and accuracy with which the itinerancy moves in time of peril can appreciate this inestimable benefit.

6. The itinerancy keeps its preachers at their maximum efficiency. The nonitinerant system is based upon the assumption that all ministers are capable of serving the same congregation indefinitely, and with undiminished efficiency—a manifest error. Real worth may not decline, *but attractiveness wanes.* Face, voice, and manner become familiar, and do not charm as of yore. Peculiarities are known, methods become threadbare, the initial impulse has been lost. The preacher cannot change himself into another personality. The itinerancy solves this problem in the most agreeable manner.

The preacher is not like a skilled mechanic who does definite tasks over and over for a long series of years, and who, consequently, does them with ever-increasing ease to himself and satisfaction to

others. The preacher is a dealer in mental initiatives, spiritual impulses, and moral purposes. His task bristles with difficulties of the most serious nature. He must be gracious in manner, of charming personality; fluent of speech; quick, eager, but of reliable mentality; chaste as a phrase maker; profound as a thinker, and accurate in his conclusions; harmonious in teaching, merciful in judgment, and patient under criticism. Every man must be a gentleman part of the time, but the minister must be a *Christian gentleman* all of the time! Is it a wonder that comparatively few men in any generation achieve conspicuous success in such a profession?

The itinerancy gives intelligent recognition to this serious truth. It does not condemn men incapable of prolonged or indefinite service in a single community. By systematic rotation it utilizes such ability as its preachers may possess. Sterility in the pastorate and exasperation in the pew are reduced to the minimum.

7. The itinerancy distributes the various talents of the ministry. "Variety is the spice of life," true everywhere, the ministry included. Variety awakens interest, prevents dull uniformity, and taps unexpected sources of power. Hortatory gifts predominate in one preacher. He can rouse the careless, and awaken those "dead in trespasses and sins." Another is a builder in the finer graces

of the Christian life. He opens new vistas of truth to eager souls. Still another has special adaptability for work among children and young people. His church will echo with the happy voices of children. And yet another is a master in physical betterments. New churches and parsonages, or the radical renovation of existing plants are the common achievements of his ministry. The itinerancy makes an *annual distribution of these talents.* The builder will not stay where his special talent will be unneeded for a generation. Nor will a revivalist go where a great building project is imminent.

It is inevitable that the frequent distribution of these gifts, according to local necessities, will give the work of an entire denomination a completeness, a perfection of achievement, impossible in any other system.

8. The itinerancy makes an indefinite pastorate possible whenever desirable or necessary. The system gradually outgrew the time limit necessary in the beginning, when mobility was absolutely demanded and hard to achieve in a new country, with long distances, bad roads, and hard conditions. Its utility becoming less apparent with the lapse of time, it was finally adjudged a burden and abolished. Efficiency is the only limit. Great social, evangelistic, or constructive enterprises are not embarrassed by having their originators torn

away. A great man has time to build up a great church, and can, if he wishes, devote his entire ministry to one or two pastorates.

The itinerancy does not *compel long pastorates.* When itinerants stay indefinitely it is because they are annually invited to return. Long pastorates are not based upon an invitation given five, ten, or fifteen years before. Yesterday the question was discussed in the Quarterly Conference, and a new invitation, minted by the present wishes of the congregation and based upon existing prosperity, was handed to the preacher. He does not go back because the fathers made a mistake years ago, and the children are doing their best to stand by it!

The Itinerancy is the Best System for Preachers

1. It gives every man employment. A preacher who did not think his talents appreciated changed to a church with a nonitinerant polity. Having well rooted ideas as to salary and location, he launched out upon the untried sea of candidature. He sailed far and wide, but never made port. In despair, he put back into the familiar harbor and tied up at the old dock. The itinerancy put him to work at once! No idle Methodist preachers stand in the market place waiting to be hired. No "want" advertisement need be slipped into a

religious journal under a pseudonym. All his strength can be given to his task. Others are paid to *worry about his future.*

2. The itinerancy affords every preacher continuous employment. The fear of unemployment stalks like a menacing ghost behind every preacher dependent upon a nonitinerant system. Occasionally it catches up and impudently linking arms, laughs at its shrinking victim as he marches down the public highway of life.

He was an educated Christian gentleman, in the very prime of life.

It was a wet, chilly morning in early winter. He had a discouraged, bedraggled look.

"You know," he said, as his eyes sought the floor, and a faint flush suffused his cheeks, while his trembling lips had to be moistened before he could begin again, "you know, after a trying pastorate of four years, and the failure of earnest plans to lift my church to a higher spiritual plane, I resigned."

Yes, his hearer had learned that much from the public press, but presumed the resignation had not been tendered until there was a fair prospect for work elsewhere.

"No, I had nothing in prospect, and have less now. My wife is sick, we have an invalid daughter, and have saved nothing, and my denomination can give no assistance in this emergency."

He then proffered a request which need not be repeated. He has since abandoned a profession for which he seemed to have much adaptability.

The itinerant preacher, as long as he retains a fair measure of efficiency, is certain of employment. He may be concerned as to *where* he will be employed, but as to the fact there can be no doubt.

3. The itinerancy keeps preachers at their best mentally and physically. Occasional change quickens interest, affords relief for frayed nerves, adds zest to the day's tasks, interrupts routine, and lifts one out of the ruts.

Twenty-five years had passed since the class had graduated. Eighteen of the thirty-nine graduates had come back to renew the fellowship of former years. One, tall, straight as an arrow, keen of mind and eloquent of tongue, had long since "strayed" into the settled pastorate.

"By the way, X——, where are you living now?"

"O, at the same old place," with deprecatory tone and relaxed expression.

"Is it not true that you have been there a long time?"

"Yes, seventeen years. More than long enough."

"Why don't you move? You are still a young man. Your denomination has many churches in this section. Openings must be occurring constantly. Have you never candidated?"

"Yes, but I am over fifty years of age, and that

is a handicap I cannot overcome. Strong churches want young men who are coming up, not aging men who are going down, and who, if called, *may be on their hands in a few years.*"

The questioner then felt free to tell his friend how he had recommended him to the chairman of a pulpit committee just the year previously, and was met with the immediate question, "How old is he?" The reluctant confession that he must be in the neighborhood of fifty years of age caused an immediate slackening of interest.

"I guess I will have to stay where I am until the end of the chapter," said the "settled" pastor with a gentle sigh of resignation.

But he ought not. For the work's sake, and his own sake, he ought not!

The preacher needs the incentive of a new situation; the intellectual freedom of a new beginning; the inspiration of new faces; relief from embarrassing circumstances accumulated during the years; the opportunity to do some things differently; and the chance to avoid administrative blunders into which all fall.

If our friend were in the itinerancy, a suggestion to the authorities would have opened the way for his removal long since. And would not his ministry, under the happier circumstances of the itinerancy, take on a militancy, his preaching fresh mental elasticity, his administration new

vigor, and his retirement from the pulpit be postponed for a decade?

The Itinerancy a "School of the Prophets"

Early American Methodism produced many giants—clear thinkers, profound theologians, great administrators, keen debaters, finished pulpit orators; while backwoods preachers with amazing descriptive and hortatory gifts seemed to come like magic from the earth, the woods, the sky. What produced them? The itinerancy. Who taught them? The itinerancy. Who made them "masters of assemblies"? The itinerancy. The itinerancy kept them reading, thinking, preaching, traveling, and that atmosphere of perpetual alertness was conducive to mental growth. They devoured the literature of the church. They were encouraged and corrected by the presiding elders, thrilled emotionally and quickened spiritually by the great camp meetings; while the debates, addresses, love feasts, sermons, and fellowship of the Annual Conference, where they came in contact with the leading minds of the church, completed the cycle of influences that transformed so many of them from ordinary into extraordinary men.

The itinerancy has never lost its power to develop men. If the young man who puts himself into the hands of the itinerancy has a measure of

natural adaptability, and will give himself unresistingly to this wonderful system, breathing its atmosphere, learning its language, catching its spirit, cultivating its ideals, opening his soul to the sweep of its moods and tenses, he will grow to a larger manhood and do a greater work usually than would be possible in any other system.

The Itinerancy Gives Every Man His Chance

An itinerant wrote a letter in which occurred these peculiar sentences: "I am stuck way back here with no opportunity of ever being seen or heard. Since you are to change this spring, I would like very much to have you either recommend me to your pulpit committee, or give me an opportunity to preach in your church."

Many years have passed, and he is still "stuck." He was right as to the fact, mistaken as to the cause, and *in error as to the remedy.*

It is strange how quickly the world will find out the man who can do something. He can neither hide nor be hidden! If a preacher, he need not ask his brethren to lift the lid from his candle. If incompetent, the world will learn the truth much sooner than he had hoped. Nor need such a preacher seek favor upon credentials filched of facts—the world will know they do not tell the truth.

The itinerancy affords peculiar opportunities

for discovery and recognition. An unfortunate environment is often responsible for failure. The young man is quickly rescued and the entire Conference searched for a suitable church. He is not compelled to remain in an uncongenial atmosphere until failure becomes pronounced or he is driven in despair from the ministry.

It would be easy to find men in the ministry who deem themselves cruelly undervalued by both churches and authorities. But those who must listen to their voluble complaints know better. These men have all had a second or third opportunity, until it has been reluctantly recognized that they were incapable of larger service.

Overindulgence with incompetency is one of the serious faults of the itinerancy. Officials are sometimes unwarrantably lenient or unduly optimistic. Often the preacher's interpretation of his failure, even if successive, is accepted, while every effort is made, by kindly counsel and study of his characteristics, to make the proper adjustment. It must not be forgotten that the itinerancy is operated by itinerants, and that no class of men understand each other better, have a keener appreciation of mutual difficulties, or could be more insistent that justice should be measured to all.

The Itinerancy Protects Mature Men

Superficial observers have sometimes con-

demned the itinerancy on the score of injustice to aging men. A septuagenarian may occasionally be found in the active service of a nonitinerant church, but the many men consigned to permanent retirement in middle life must not be forgotten. Every Annual Conference has a large proportion of mature men, who are annually appointed with satisfaction to the church and themselves.

Recall the plight of the man who could not expect a "call," since he had, in an incautious moment, crossed the dreaded half-century mark! His name is legion. Unless satisfactorily located prior to that period, the future is forbidding indeed. Dislocation after forty-five or fifty years of age generally means permanent retirement, or such service as he does not care to undertake. Examine the minutes of an Annual Conference. See how evenly the appointments of men run from forty-five to sixty-five years of age. There will be exceptions, but always capable of explanation. Every man is not only continuously employed but usually it is at a stable salary.

Makes an Independent Ministry

A shackled pulpit is a national menace. If any man is free, it should be the prophet of God. The itinerancy was born in a militant atmosphere, it rears fighters and expects its ministers to be in

bondage only to the truth. The Methodist Church is the mother of moral radicalism in modern life.

Promotes Denominational Unity

The constant exchange of pastors in an Annual Conference and, indeed, throughout the entire connection, enhances its solidarity. It cannot easily divide into sections, gradually differing in spirit, doctrines, and methods. Methodism is the same everywhere, the itinerancy reducing regional peculiarities to the minimum.

Methodism is one body, not a church composed of separate congregations. Necessity compels local organization, but each unit is linked to the living whole. The need of one is the concern of all. Is there anything Methodistic in which all Methodists are not interested? And the fellowship of Methodist preachers, is it not without parallel? The cordial greeting and freedom of approach, the exchange of friendly inquiries and innocent badinage, is it not delightful? The uniform tendency to help one another in difficult undertakings, such as church-building, debt-paying, and evangelistic services—have you noticed its equal elsewhere?

Makes the Circuit System Possible

The early itinerants were known as "circuit riders." Each preacher supplied a "circuit" of

preaching places; "stations" were the exception, circuits the rule. The rapid growth of the church has reversed this condition. The indebtedness of the denomination, and, indeed, of the nation, to a system that made circuits possible, is incalculable. For a century and a half, through her circuit system, Methodism has been the frontier church of the nation.

While the frontier is passing, rural America remains, and its problems are the despair of many denominations. It is becoming almost impossible for a nonitinerant system to live in the open country. The itinerancy does not permit rural churches to die, even when they want to!

The young pastor and his wife had gotten discouraged, and were homesick for the mother country. But they sorely needed the forty dollars in arrears on salary for passage money. The district superintendent made a long journey to investigate the situation.

"We told the former superintendent," said a determined-faced matron, "that we could no longer support a pastor, and did not want one."

"Did you make that fact very plain to him?" was mildly asked.

"Yes, and he would not listen to us. We now tell you the same thing, and if you send a man here next year, you will have to support him yourself."

Six years have passed and they have had a pastor ever since. That little church was the center of a church with four appointments. It would have meant a quadruple death. Only the itinerancy could solve such a problem.

But How Does the Itinerancy Work?

Knowing what it does is not the whole story. How is it worked? Where does its motive power reside? How was this power developed? And how is it controlled?

That is an interesting and inspiring story. The system cannot work itself. There must be concentrated and intelligent power somewhere. It takes a mighty arm to turn the wheel which annually distributes thirty thousand Methodist Episcopal preachers throughout the world; likewise, clarity of vision to put the vast majority in localities where they are desired, and where conditions are suited to their various talents. Let us investigate the *modus operandi.*

CHAPTER III

THE EPISCOPACY

Its Origin

The last days of Wesley were burdened with the solution of two very grave problems—the future government of the Methodist societies in England and America. He had long meditated the question of a successor for the English societies, and had importuned his friend, the saintly Fletcher, to accept the post. But as time passed, Wesley recognized that British Methodism would never suffer any man to take his place, however holy in life or gifted in administration. The solution found for American Methodism was not applicable to England. In this new nation, where new things were common, his real convictions were given expression.

The episcopacy, or general superintendency, as it was originally called, came from the hands of Wesley. The English plan was the best for England, under the circumstances, while the American plan was the best possible under any circumstances, and was the expression of the mature judgment of Wesley. None knew better

the administrative difficulties of an itinerancy, and the necessity for centralized authority. *He* could make the system work; whether another, with less power, could do so, remained to be seen.

Francis Asbury, long in charge of the American work under authority from Wesley, refused the appointment of general superintendent, or bishop, unless it should be ratified by the American preachers. This was an astute decision, prompted by Asbury's unwillingness to leave the position, to which he felt called, in constant jeopardy, subject to the arbitrary will of one man on the other side of the Atlantic; and one who knew little of American conditions, and who, on several occasions, had been critical of the administration of his young superintendent. Election by the preachers would preclude the possibility of dismissal by Wesley. There may have been an even stronger reason for his determination to submit his appointment to the American preachers. He knew the temper of the young republic, and that, while respect for Wesley's judgment and affection for his person and character were very great, his tendency to impose his individual will upon the societies had long been resented. Indeed, it had been asked by what authority Asbury had exercised his rigorous rule. The reply that he had been appointed by Wesley was beginning to mean less and less. A further ap-

pointment by Wesley, and to a higher position, might lead to serious consequences.

The Christmas Conference, held in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, in the year 1784, not only gave American Methodism its apostolic bishop, Francis Asbury, but it gave organic form to the scattered societies, henceforth to be known as the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Foundation of the Itinerancy

One of the greatest, if not *the greatest,* achievement of the Christmas Conference was the perpetuation of the power of appointment in the hands of the general superintendents, or bishops, of the church. To have relegated this supreme function to a committee or Cabinet, or to have made it subject to discussion and revision by the Conference, would have been an irreparable blunder.

The Same To-Day

Many attempts have been made to modify this supreme function of the episcopacy, but without avail. After nearly a century and a half it remains the same—a tribute to the fathers' wisdom, and to the good judgment of the uniformly capable men who have held this high office.

Time Has Brought Other Changes

Elected for life, and originally permitted to

exercise the functions of office as long as they deemed themselves mentally and physically qualified, the General Conference finally assumed the right to retire bishops it considered incapacitated for further service, either by advancing age or infelicities of administration. A legal retiring age now exists, but the right of retirement at any age and for any cause is still exercised. As the number of bishops increased it became necessary to designate official residences, and this has finally developed into the residential area system. But through all the changes of the years the power of appointment has not been taken from the bishops nor modified in the least particular. The bishop is amenable to the General Conference for each appointment, but his right of decision is unchallenged.

An Important Modification

The General Conference of 1916, in defining the duties of a bishop in the matter of fixing the appointments, to the sentence: "He shall appoint preachers to pastoral charges annually," added this significant clause: "after consultation with the superintendents of the districts in which such charges are located."

While this is a change of far-reaching importance, it does not touch the ultimate authority of the bishop. The bishop *must* consult the interested

superintendent concerning any and every appointment, but he *may* follow his own judgment subsequent thereto.

The so-called Cabinet, composed of the presiding bishop and the superintendents of the various districts of an Annual Conference, has never been given legal recognition. The new regulation does not legalize the Cabinet, but prevents the bishop from making *ad interim* appointments, especially transferring men from Conference to Conference, without first consulting the local district superintendents. The *power* of transfer has not been abridged, but it cannot be exercised until those next in authority have been consulted.

In effect, this legislation gives legal recognition to the Cabinet. While the final decision rests with the bishop, he is *compelled* to consult the men intimately acquainted with every local situation. While this has been the almost unbroken custom of bishops since the creation of the presiding eldership, it is now necessitated by the law of the church.

Compelling *all* to do what most did of their own accord should be a hardship to none, and prove a blessing to the church. Fixing the appointments is the most delicate and difficult task in all Methodism. This is the one place where haste, ill temper, partisan administration, or important decisions based upon inaccurate data, would tell

quickly and fatally against the system. A law which compels the bishop to consult the best-informed men in every Annual Conference, but which does not tie his hands, is capable of far-reaching good.

Doubt was expressed as to the constitutionality of this law at the time of its enactment. But it does not limit a bishop's freedom of decision; it simply designates *official consultants who have influence but no power.* If an appointment, prior to its consummation, dare not be submitted to the judgment of the district superintendents, it is very clear that it should not be made.

Decisions of the Cabinet Should Not be by Ballot

It has been seriously proposed to give the district superintendents the right of franchise in the Cabinet, subjecting all of its decisions to the rule of the majority. Such a change would be fraught with great danger:

1. It would destroy the episcopacy. The bishop would have one vote in a Cabinet of from three to twelve members. He would be its ornamental and expensive, but wholly useless, secretary. Having robbed him of ecclesiastical, it might be well to give him police powers, so that he could at least keep the peace between warring factions!

2. The itinerancy would lose a disinterested

referee. Of all members in the Cabinet it is least conceivable that the bishop should be liable to bias. He has neither friends to reward nor enemies to punish. His eye is not upon the approaching election—the Annual Conference has nought to give or withhold. He can derive no personal benefit, it matters not how the appointments are made. And he can easily prevent the slightest manifestation of unfairness, injustice, or arbitrariness.

3. The Cabinet would be controlled by a few adroit minds. Its decisions would be determined by an irresponsible and uncontrollable "collusive mind." The Cabinet would be the registrar of decisions made elsewhere. It is now an open forum where proposed appointments are fully discussed, and where each superintendent must explain and defend every projected appointment. The "collusive mind" could make its proposition, apply the parliamentary cloture, register its vote, and the decision would be both final and legal, however subversive of justice.

4. Preachers would make appointments by pledging the superintendents. Upon the basis of one promise, perhaps given reluctantly, other superintendents could be coerced. Basing expectations upon inconclusive promises would lead the disappointed to bitter crimination. How the Cabinet voted upon a given case would soon be

bruited about. Freedom of action by the superintendents would be seriously abridged.

5. No superintendent could have a constructive policy. His best men could be voted away from him, and the poorest men in the Conference voted upon him. Under such a system district boundaries would practically disappear, the individual responsibility of superintendents would be lessened, and the *esprit de corps* of a district reduced to *nil.* Inefficiency in the superintendency could not be located, for the incompetent could say, "I was outvoted in the Cabinet."

Independence of the Appointing Power

The state carefully protects the independence of the judiciary. The term is measured by the importance of the position. Comparatively brief for the minor judges, it lengthens significantly for the higher officials, while justices of the Supreme Court of the United States are appointed for life. Their support is adequate and their prerogatives are jealously guarded. They are released, so far as it is possible, from obligation to extraneous influences. The issues submitted must be decided without personal bias, partisan prejudice, personal reciprocal effect, or corporate influences.

An itinerancy can attain its best results only when the supreme power is lodged in a free will.

It has been proposed to elect the bishops for a term of years, the briefer the better. Some good things can be said in favor of this proposition. It would make the bishops studious, cautious, approachable, and industrious. It would keep the episcopacy up to date, constantly weeding out incompetents, fossils, and accidents. But let us see:

1. The present law possesses the chief advantages of a quadrennial elective system, with none of its serious defects:

(1) A bishop may retire of his own volition when he reaches the age of seventy years by simply notifying the Board of Bishops in writing.

(2) A bishop is released by law from the duties of his office "at the close of the General Conference nearest his seventy-third birthday."

(3) "A general superintendent *at any age and for any reason deemed sufficient* by the General Conference, may be released by that body from the obligation to travel through the connection at large, and from residential supervision."

What more could be desired? A bishop may retire at a certain age; he must retire at a definite age; or he may be retired "at any age and for any reason deemed sufficient by the General Conference." These provisions make it impossible for the church ever to be dominated by senile incompetency.

The church deals generously with its bishops in activity and retirement. They are given every necessary convenience for the prosecution of their work. But much is demanded. The General Conference exercises great caution in checking up the administration of each bishop. Charges of incompetence or arbitrariness are carefully investigated. It is recognized that the bishop wields great power, is intrusted with vast responsibilities; that the weal of the church, the happiness and usefulness of the ministry, is placed in his hands on the day of his election. But if after being elevated to the episcopacy it is found that he is deficient in temperament, lacking in tact, weak in construction and conciliation, it is probable that he will be relieved of his responsibilities by the next General Conference.

2. While mistakes are always possible, whether the office be elective or appointive, and whether the term be short, long, or for life, yet the possibility of serious error in the system as constituted is reduced to the minimum. Not only is this demonstrated by the fact that no serious blunders have been made in the long period of nearly a century and a half, but it has also been proven by the impossibility of electing any man to the office until he has reached mature age, and has an established character and demonstrated fitness acquired in subordinate positions; the church is

so large, a candidate for the episcopacy must be so generally and favorably known, his vouchers must be so numerous, influential, and insistent, his whole career must respond so satisfactorily to critical investigation, that the possibility of serious error is a remote contingency.

3. The term-system would put the independence of the episcopacy in jeopardy. Every bishop would trim his sails to make port four years hence. He would have a personal interest in the election of delegates to the General Conference, and he would be tempted to promote or keep men in responsible positions in order to secure their election. He would never be a *bishop,* but always a *candidate for the episcopacy!* And of all reprehensible characters—a perpetual candidate. What could be done with those who failed of reelection? Would they be retired bishops or returned preachers? Every demotion would create a radiating center of discontent.

4. The strain of electing bishops is severe enough upon the patience and good nature of a General Conference, but the burden of reelection would prove intolerable. Rumors, both specious and false, would be circulated against incumbents to help aspirants. Every idiosyncrasy of habit and peculiarity of mind would be unduly magnified. The General Conference could never determine the number of new bishops to be elected until

it knew how many had failed of reelection. The election and the reelection would have to occur at different periods during the same Conference. The reelections would have to come early, and then time allowed for investigation and decision concerning the number of new bishops needed, so that the subject would be kept before the Conference throughout its entire length. The friends of influential candidates could easily form combinations to defeat the less prominent or least popular bishops. Indeed, there could not fail to be a pronounced tendency to reelect the smallest possible number in order to promote the election of new men.

5. The church would be in perpetual agitation concerning the reelections. The qualifications of bishops for reelection would be a legitimate subject for discussion. They would be subjected to attack in the public press. Anonymous pamphleteers would doubtless assail the judgment, and even the character, of men who would be in a poor position to defend themselves. Constant agitation, perpetual turmoil, would displace the harmony which quickly follows the temporary flurry incidental to the present system.

6. Such a system would increase the elections in every General Conference to a deplorable extent. Twenty-five bishops up for reelection, and from five to ten new bishops to be elected! It is

unthinkable. It would drive any General Conference to distraction.

There has been a pronounced tendency on the part of the General Conference to reduce the number of elective officers. Elections seriously interfere with the orderly procession of business. Delegates are thinking of offices and officers, when they should be concerned with the weightier matters of legislation. There is now a regrettable tendency to consider the elections the main function of the Conference. Agitation for adjournment begins as soon as the last office has been filled. Delegates grow impatient with discussions and beg for early adjournment.

7. The church could never justify such an episcopacy. It would demean the office and belittle the officer. Pastors are permitted to remain indefinitely; superintendents of districts are granted a term of six years, but it would be saying that in all this great connection there could not be found three dozen men sufficiently stable in mind and character to be intrusted with the high duties of the episcopacy for a longer period than four consecutive years! And that in the face of a history which clearly demonstrates the contrary.

Evolution in Administration

The General Conference, like every other feature of Methodism, was a logical development.

The Christmas Conference of 1784 did not provide for a successor. One step at a time was taken. All power—legislative, administrative, and judicial—remained with the single Annual Conference. The far-scattered circuits made three Annual Conferences necessary in the year 1785. Even the great emergency of the previous year had only brought about seventy-five per cent of the preachers to the Christmas Conference. Travel was slow and difficult, and the precarious condition of the work would not permit the preachers to be away from one to two months each year. Administrative efficiency demanded the division of the work into separate Annual Conferences, though it greatly embarrassed the legislative functions of the church.

It was immediately discovered that the Annual Conferences lacked legislative powers. The Christmas Conference had done little more than begin the work of organization. New legislation became necessary, and this was made possible only by the concurrent action of the three Annual Conferences, meeting at different times and places, and with no opportunity for consultation. Friction and disagreement were the inevitable result. Legislation desired by one Conference was modified or refused by the others. Insubordination and threats of secession became common. Bishop Asbury proposed the "Council," to be composed

of the bishops and presiding elders, to whom should be committed all questions demanding concurrent action; and it was attempted, but the opposition evoked led to its speedy abandonment.

At this critical juncture Dr. Coke fortunately arrived from Europe. He suggested calling a General Conference of all the preachers in the year 1792, to consider the whole situation, and devise means for strengthening the church. The suggestion was accepted, and the Conference called.

The impending crisis brought preachers from the pioneer wilderness of the West, the shores of New England, and the mountains of the South. Much important legislation was enacted, but most important of all, the Conference adjourned to meet four years later. By this simple means the General Conference was created. The General Conference, speaking for the entire church, naturally absorbed the legislative functions of the denomination, while the Annual Conferences were confined to administrative problems.

But the constant expansion of the church created a new difficulty. Since all the preachers were members of the General Conference, the adjacent territory enjoyed an ever-increasing advantage. This became noticeable in the Conference of 1800. The Western and far Southern men could not leave their work from four to five months to attend the General Conference. Power

was held in the centrally located Conferences of the East and near South. Dissatisfaction became acute, and threats of secession were openly made.

When the General Conference of 1808 convened it was discovered that two Conferences out of seven had sent a majority of the delegates. It at once became apparent that a remedy must be found. Attempts at solution were futile, the dominant Conferences refusing to resign their power. In despair the Western delegates prepared to return home. This action, capable of but one interpretation, opened the eyes of the majority to the gravity of the situation, and they acceded to the demand for a delegated General Conference. It was a momentous decision, and meant that power had passed from the entire body of the preachers to a select number.

Since all members of Annual Conferences could never again have membership in future General Conferences, and since all legislative functions were placed in the hands of a minority of the preachers who might be delegates, the question at once arose as to whether a delegated General Conference should have a free hand in legislation, or whether certain constitutional restrictions should be imposed. After much debate the six "Restrictive Rules" were adopted. The third rule carefully protected the episcopacy: "The General Conference shall not change nor alter any part or rule

of our government so as to do away episcopacy, nor destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency."

This action clearly indicates the estimate placed upon "our itinerant general superintendency." Its existence was not to be hazarded in the chance discussions of a future General Conference, in which all the preachers were not to have the right of membership.

During the first forty years of the church's life the bishops were itinerant evangelists. The few Annual Conferences demanded only a fraction of their time. Their strength was given to pioneer preaching, the formation of new circuits, and such simple administrative duties as the scattered work demanded.

The church slowly and cautiously increased the number of bishops. The ministry and membership had grown out of all proportion to the Board of Bishops. The evangelistic function of the episcopacy was necessarily abandoned. A small number of bishops, of mature years, and increasingly burdened with administrative duties, could not devote their time to evangelism. Nor was the need so great. The number of preachers had largely increased, and their qualifications improved.

The organization of the church grew more complex, and the bishops were increasingly with-

drawn from personal contact with churches and preachers. They were called to lead missionary and educational enterprises, dedicate churches, administer trust funds, furnish leadership for the moral issues agitating society, and give additional time to the *ad interim* administration in the Annual Conferences.

The church, always jealous for the old paths, gradually realized that the new situation had to be met with new methods. Heretofore the bishops had chosen their own residences, but as the number multiplied there was an unfortunate tendency to congestion in certain centers, and the General Conference of 1872 designated the cities in which the bishops were to reside.

Twelve years later the tendency toward residential episcopacy became marked and irresistible. The policy of electing missionary bishops for definite portions of the world-field was adopted. In 1900 the General Conference emphasized its appointive power and instructed the bishops to maintain actual residences in the places designated. The same Conference placed Bishop Vincent in charge of the European work for four years, and assigned Bishop Moore for a like period to Eastern Asia.

The implication of this legislation was plain. It meant two things: the subordination of the bishops to the will of the General Conference and

the increasing need of the church for scientific supervision. These demands could not be met by a roving episcopacy, with few definite responsibilities, and little accurate information in emergencies. It was apparent that the bishops, if left to themselves, could never settle the problems of residence and consecutive administration. It became necessary to do for the bishops what they could not do with themselves. It was logical and legal that the electing body should be the directing force.

This legislation, stretching over a period of twenty-eight years, also indicated steady approach to the residential episcopacy. Every change faced that way, and the goal was finally reached in the General Conference of 1912. Quoting from the Discipline of that year:

"In the interval of the Annual Conference sessions each resident bishop shall be held responsible for the administration of the temporal and spiritual interests of the church within those Conferences adjacent to his residence. Thirty days after the adjournment of an Annual Conference the presidency of the Conference shall pass to the bishop resident in the group of which it forms a part, and shall so remain until thirty days before the session of the next ensuing Annual Conference."

The bishops, it was directed, shall "arrange the

Conferences in America in three divisions, and shall assign each bishop for presidential administration to the Annual Conferences of the division within which he has his official residence."

The bishops divided the American Conferences into Eastern, Western, and Central divisions, and these were subdivided into nineteen groups, or "residential areas.

This legislation was not a violation of the third Restrictive Rule, which we again quote: "The General Conference shall not change nor alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away episcopacy, nor destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency," because:

1. Bishops are not elected for localities or residential areas, but to the general superintendency of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Later assignment to an area for a definite period does not change this fact.

2. No bishop is consigned to an area for a longer period than four consecutive years, though succeeding General Conferences may return a bishop to the same area for successive quadrenniums. The will of the General Conference is the only limit. The possibility of continuous supervision through a long term of years is for most of the bishops only a remote contingency, for the vacancies occasioned by death and retirement will make a general rearrangement of official residences

necessary by each succeeding General Conference. But in cases of necessity or unusual fitness, there should always be the possibility of reappointment. The present law does not make it necessary for a bishop to preside over each session of every Annual Conference in his area for four years. The bishops are free to exchange presidencies. This they have done under the new system, and will doubtless so continue whenever it seems desirable.

3. The authority of a bishop is not limited to his residential area. He is a general superintendent, and may exercise the functions of his office whenever and wherever called upon.

The essential mobility of the episcopacy is preserved. With thirty bishops in America the problem of location and a just division of labor is not so simple as when there were two or three bishops. The drastic, but legal action of 1912 was the adequate solution.

Residential Administration Approved by the Church

It was hailed as legal, logical, natural, and necessary. As its first quadrennium drew to a close few dissentient voices were heard, and no serious effort was made in the General Conference of 1916 to repeal the new legislation. Consider some of its advantages:

1. It applies the itinerant principle to the

episcopacy. Why should the bishops choose their residences by seniority—the former method—and the same privilege be denied the preachers? If the preachers could not be trusted voluntarily to select the churches they ought to serve, would not the bishops show equal errancy in judgment? They would, and they did! It must be remembered that bishops are elders in the Church of God, consecrated—*not ordained*—to a distinctive work. They are still Methodist preachers, of the rank and file, and it is logical that their appointments should be "fixed," just like their brethren of humbler degree, *not order.*

2. It permits intelligent distribution of the bishops. Just as "one star differeth from another," so, while a bishop is a bishop, all bishops are not the same bishop. And there is a choice between bishops, just as there must always be a choice in any given group of men. The present method is scientific and *humane.* The General Conference gives this question to the "Committee on Episcopacy." It is carefully considered by a subcommittee on "Assignments." The bishops are invited to appear before this subcommittee and state their desires. Any delegate to the Conference, member or members of the church from the various residential areas, may ask for the retention or removal of the incumbent, or present the name of the bishop desired for the next quadren-

nium. The decision of the subcommittee is subject to revision by the General Committee. Even the decision of the General Committee is not final. It must run the gantlet of the General Conference before becoming the law of the church. Only after having been discussed in the subcommittee and the General Committee, and having received the approval of the General Conference, is the assignment final. Is not serious error thereby rendered impossible, and does it not make for better service than would a system ruled by seniority?

3. It definitely identifies the leaders of the church with the strategic centers of population. The church's finger is kept on the nation's pulse. Each geographical segment has intelligent and systematic leadership. The bishop is strong enough and is there long enough to make his name known and his influence felt.

Methodism is no longer a society, locating its modest chapels in alleys and side streets; standing in the shadows with downcast eyes and apologetic mien, while the endless procession of human events, with its banners and bands, its songs and its sobs, its pilgrims with crosses and its armies with cannon, its laughing boys and girls, and its age-enfeebled men and women, its bridal parades and its funeral trains, goes marching by. No, indeed! Methodism has come out of the alleys,

away from the back streets, and has taken its stand on the great highways of life. Methodism has a message for the world, a mission to the ages!

To do this great work the church must occupy strategic centers with its greatest men. They must see clearly, think accurately, and speak authoritatively. They must know how to interpret the mind of the church to the world, and how to relate the church to all the great movements of the race. These foremost sons of the church must stand at the crowded cross roads of life, where the currents of human thought and passion run the swiftest and leap the highest, and turn them toward the cross.

4. The residential area assigns each bishop to local responsibilities. He is definitely located for a quadrennium. He cannot maintain an ecclesiastical residence in one place and an actual residence elsewhere. He must become a part of the life of his area, familiar with its limitations, problems, and opportunities; he must give his time and strength to willing service within his official jurisdiction, and render an account of his stewardship to the succeeding General Conference.

The assumption of increasing local responsibilities is inevitable. Bishops are multiplying more rapidly than Annual Conferences, reducing the time demanded for technical administration, and making larger areal service possible.

The present system leaves much to be desired so far as the outlying sections of an area are concerned. It is natural for the bishop to become closely identified with the work nearest his residence. But is this just to the remoter churches? Those who need the bishop the least see him the most; while those who probably need him the most see him the least.

If a district superintendent were privileged to determine the manner of his supervision, would it be done as systematically and thoroughly as under the careful plan of the Discipline? He *may* visit every church four times or three times each year, but he *must* visit each church twice every year: *every church*—not only the immediately accessible, but the remotely inaccessible. If left to himself, would not the locality in which he resides receive the major portion of his time? It is not suggested that the bishop be held to such minute supervision, but the next logical step in residential administration is a just apportionment of his time to the various sections of his area.

Local responsibilities should keep the bishops from becoming professional lecturers. The church has always been proud of their great pulpit and platform gifts, and has given them the largest liberty in the employment of time not utilized by official duties; but there is increasing conviction that a bishop cannot roam the continent at the

behest of a "bureau" without leaving his home fields untilled. A residential area is large enough and important enough to absorb the energies of one man, however great.

5. The residential area will bring the bishops into frequent contact with their official confreres, the superintendents of districts, and the men who are to become such. Perhaps the most delicate and difficult work committed to the bishops is that in connection with district supervision. They have complete control of this great arm of the church, determining the number of districts and their boundaries in every Annual Conference and selecting their superintendents. Upon the intelligent and fearless exercise of that power much of the prosperity of the church depends.

What can a strange bishop do with a Cabinet of strangers? Hasty judgments are necessarily superficial and rarely accurate. Such a bishop will not know how to estimate the advice of his superintendents; will be unable to detect the tincture of selfishness, if it exists; will not understand the underlying reasons for the recommendations; cannot tell whether the critical appointments are wise or otherwise; and, worst of all, will not know what changes are needed in the Cabinet. When the statute of limitation makes new superintendents necessary their selection will be but drawing the bow at a venture.

Residential supervision gives the bishops the necessary information to break up the pernicious term idea as applied to the district superintendency. When the church had a pastoral limit of two, three, or five years, no preacher ever considered that the first appointment was for the entire term of two, three, or five years. Each appointment was for a single year. But that idea, so excellent in the pastorate, has never been applied to the district superintendency (the presiding eldership). It is taken for granted that the district superintendent is appointed for a "term," once four and now six years. His reappointment is a mere formality. This has been a grave misfortune to the church, and has kept many men in a position which they were ill qualified to fill. If the stranger bishop sensed the truth, he probably would not know what to do. For fear of making another mistake, he would repeat the blunder of his predecessors. Under the residential plan the bishops should know whether their superintendents are worthy of reappointment.

6. The residential area will enable the bishops to participate intelligently in the discussions of the Cabinet. Bishops have been compelled to depend too largely upon the judgment or whim of the superintendents. The bishop did not know enough about the majority of cases discussed in the Cabinet to have an independent opinion. It

was impossible for him to acquire this information in four or five days.

The bishop who attempted to make independent adjustments was usually mistaken. There were subtle factors which he did not see—obvious truths were often the superficial facts. The residential bishop will not be so generally dependent upon subordinates. He cannot know his area without knowing his preachers, and information absorbed is always much more reliable than information imparted.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENCY

METHODISM was not built from blue prints, drawn to scale by a great ecclesiastical architect, but grew as the tree grows: first the seed, then the seedling, next the trunk, then the branches. Methodism was not thought out, but grew out of the germinal seed. There was no effort to coerce Providence to think its way, but providential indications were fearlessly followed, however strange the pathway.

The rapid growth of the church demanded auxiliary supervision. While Bishop Asbury remained intimately acquainted with every preacher, every church, including much of its membership, every backwoods preaching place and crossroads appointment, he might station the preachers without assistance. But presently the church grew beyond his knowledge. Preachers multiplied by the score and members by the thousand. There were preachers he did not know, churches he had never seen, and remote appointments he could never visit. Administration became complicated and uncertain. The happy solution of the sacra-

mental controversy led to the ordination of twelve men, who were instructed to administer the sacraments within certain designated areas. This resulted in the presiding eldership, now the district superintendency.

No part of the economy of the church has occasioned greater controversy, been so imperfectly understood, or made larger contributions to the efficiency of the system. Those interested in the utility of the superintendency will find it discussed elsewhere.[1]

While the present aim is an exposition of the superintendency, rather than a discussion of its achievements or defense of its existence, it is well to listen for a moment to what Dr. Abel Stevens, Methodism's greatest historian, and one of the keenest expositors of her economy, has to say of the district superintendency.[2]

"We have no hesitancy in saying that *no other function of the system—not excepting the episcopacy itself—is capable of greater usefulness, or could be sacrificed with greater peril.* The episcopacy could not possibly proceed without it; but the presiding eldership might possibly operate the system without the episcopacy, though with

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[1]The District Superintendent, Asset or Liability? James A. Hensey. The Methodist Book Concern, 1915. Chapter III, page 42.

[2]Church Polity, Abel Stevens, D.D. Carlton & Porter. Chapter VI, p. 188.

clumsy inefficiency—the episcopacy exerts great and salutary influence through the church by its itinerant preaching and counsel; but the influence of the presiding eldership is on a scale more effective, because more systematic." The *italics* are Dr. Stevens's.

Weigh well those amazing words: "The episcopacy could not possibly proceed without it." Have the bishops, or any one of them, ever suggested that they did not need the district superintendency? Have they, or any one of them, belittled the information brought into the Cabinet by their subordinates; or, has it ever been asserted by the bishops, or any one of them, that the appointments could have been made with greater celerity or safety if they had not been fettered by meddlesome superintendents; or, have the bishops, or any one of them, ever asserted privately or publicly that they had been ignorantly advised or intentionally deceived by the members of their various Cabinets?

If it were possible for the bishops to operate the itinerancy without the district superintendents, would they not long since have made that discovery and announced it to the world? Dr. Stevens frankly confessed that "the episcopacy could not possibly proceed without" the superintendency; but he thought the superintendents might operate the system without the episcopacy, though

with decreased efficiency. And he was right. Though superintendents have the necessary information to operate the system, that information must be collected by one mind, collated by one judgment, and the decisions rendered by one will. District superintendents could no more manage the system indefinitely without bishops, than could opposing attorneys-at-law settle their cases without judge or jury.

The utility of the district superintendency has been recognized since its introduction, and there has never been a general disposition on the part of the church to consider its abandonment. The principal contention has been over the mode of selection rather than any serious question of the value of the office.

An elective presiding eldership, long a subject of ardent debate throughout the church, was finally adopted by the General Conference of 1820, by the decisive majority of sixty-one to twenty-five. The new law provided for the nomination of elders by the presiding bishop, and election by the Annual Conference. The presiding elders were also made the advisory council of the bishop in stationing the preachers, though in the Discipline for eight years these provisions were never put into operation. Joshua Soule, who had been elected bishop, refused ordination on the ground of the unconstitutionality of the new law. His

resignation was accepted, and the Conference remained unmoved until the venerable McKendree, the senior bishop of the church, came before the Conference with a formal protest against the new measures, as being contrary to the Restrictive Rules, and subversive of an efficient itinerancy. His words made a profound impression. Refusing to reconsider its action, the Conference finally adopted a motion to suspend the operation of the law for four years. The General Conference of 1824 continued the suspension, and it was finally repealed by the Conference of 1828.

This same controversy, but in milder form, has occasionally run its course since that time. The present system has given such long and satisfactory service that the adoption of an elective system is an extreme improbability. Let us consider some of the advantages of the present system:

1. It locates responsibility. One individual, and one only, is accountable for the successful operation of the itinerancy in every Annual Conference—the resident bishop. The whole system is placed in his hands. He may consult many, he must consult a select number, the superintendents of districts, and he may disregard the wishes of all, *but he cannot escape responsibility.* His administration is not embarrassed by unnecessary checks, nor his judgment thwarted by combina-

tions in the Cabinet or elsewhere. He has great power, it is true, but an efficient itinerancy is impossible without centralized power, and it had better be in a responsible individual than an irresponsible Cabinet. This responsibility ceases when an Annual Conference is given power to surround the bishop with authoritative advisers, who have power to impose their will upon him.

2. It promotes the selection and retention of capable superintendents. Men are not voted into positions for which they have been adroitly candidating, but are carefully selected to meet grave responsibilities. A mistake in selection may be quickly corrected, but an election must be for a definite term from which there can be no escape. Bishops know the type of men needed for the superintendency, and their knowledge of the preachers in their area should make certain the selection of efficient men.

Acute dissatisfaction with the superintendency has usually been traced to the *officer* rather than the *office*. Many believers in the office have not hesitated to charge the bishops with carelessness in the selection of superintendents. The bishops should regard the confidence reposed in them as a high honor and a grave responsibility. No other duty is fraught with such consequences to the church. That their selections for the superintendency are made hastily, carelessly, dictated by

selfishness, or controlled by ulterior motives, cannot be admitted or even suspected. The church has jealously guarded their right to freedom of choice, and has permitted no impediment, minor or major, to divert their mature judgment. Is it too much for the church to expect that the bishops will put into the superintendency not only the best men easily available, *but the best men,* whether easily available or not?

It is much easier for the wrong man to be elected than for him to be accidentally selected. Many considerations enter into an election, only one into a selection—*fitness.*

3. The present system reduces friction, over selection, to the minimum. It is inconceivable that the selection of six or eight men out of the two, three, or four hundred preachers of an Annual Conference should not provoke discussion, some difference of opinion, and, however and by whomsoever chosen, occasion some friction. No method could give universal satisfaction, as there must always be disappointed aspirants and their friends. Therefore, a system which leaves little opportunity for the formation of parties, hostile groups, or antagonistic partisans; which does not encourage electioneering, the circulation of grievous rumors, to be followed by reckless charges against the successful, and which leaves no bitterness in the hearts of defeated candidates—in

short, that system which gives the least opportunity for the manifestation of certain weaknesses incidental to humanity, should be prized by the church.

Standing in the blazing light shed upon this question by more than one hundred and thirty years of actual history, supplemented by observation and experience extending over a fifth of that period, it may be freely asserted that the church *has always had that kind of a system*—a system which prevents instead of provoking criticism, which diminishes instead of creating friction, which keeps brethren united instead of dividing them into hostile groups or warring factions.

It is evident that the bishops follow the same method in selecting men for districts that they do in appointing pastors: the obvious men, deemed the fittest, and the most generally desired, are put into the superintendency. To say that the bishops have never gone contrary to the wishes of an Annual Conference, that they have never been influenced by personal friendships, nor allowed distant colleagues to control their actions, would be ridiculous. But to say that these have been the occasional discrepancies, inevitable in any man-directed enterprise, is the simple truth.

Consider the inevitable divisions created in an Annual Conference by an elective system. Unanimity of choice would be rare. Whether selected

from a designated number nominated by the Annual Conference, or elected from a designated number selected by the bishop, or elected by direct vote of the Conference, there would be many candidates for each district. Each would be surrounded by his friends, busy in advocating his claims, and questioning those of his rivals.

Inquiry and discussion are inevitable in elections. Discussion easily degenerates into undue laudation of one candidate and depreciation of others. Preferences easily change to partisanship, and lead to electioneering. Ecclesiastical politicians would be quickly developed. Men apt at combinations would find an inviting field. Campaigns would be launched months in advance; the Conference would be threaded back and forth by electioneering itinerants; alliances would be formed by different sections, promises and understandings would be inevitable, and every election would leave its aftermath of discord.

And the harvest, would it not be dreadful? The "spoils" system in the church—the successful candidate surrounded by his partisans, claiming credit, and insinuating emoluments for themselves —claims which the beneficiary could not disallow! His administration would be embarrassed by the debts he would be expected to pay. The defeated candidates would be critical, if not belligerent. Some, located in the same district, would be cen-

ters of discontent. Distrust would be mutual, and all would be getting ready for the next battle of ballots!

4. The present system gives the church an independent superintendency. A few friends may have interceded, but the number is always negligible, and possible beneficiaries are reduced to the minimum. In many cases there is no intermediary —the bishop makes a direct, independent choice. A superintendency weighted with prior obligations would be intolerable.

Individual grievances are unavoidable. Be the superintendent never so careful and efficient, there will always be disappointment and dissatisfaction in individual cases. One preacher insists that he has been held back long enough; another fixes his eye upon definite advancement and demands it as a right; still another demands restoration to a mythical "grade," while a fourth declares that he has stood aside long enough while inferior men have moved to the front. What would an elected superintendent do in these emergencies? Unless a superman there is only one thing he could do: give the malcontents the best he had instead of the best they deserved—a reversal of the present order.

The bishop who selects a superintendent for office cannot, by any stretch of imagination, become a claimant upon his bounty. The superin-

tendent of a district need not fear disappointed place-seekers. The bishop will soon accurately estimate his worth. A few sessions of the Cabinet will show whether he considers the office a splendid opportunity to help his friends and punish his foes, or whether he realizes that Providence has exalted him to a position of gravest importance, where he will be called to handle the most delicate interests of the Kingdom, and where only clear thinking and fearless decisions, unmixed with selfness, can be tolerated. If district superintendents feared preachers less and bishops more, it would be great gain to the church. It must be conceded that if the present appointive system does not give the church an independent superintendency, it is forever impossible.

Importance of Choosing Right Men for the Superintendency

It is a recognized principle that responsibility demands authority. Unless the master mechanic, superintendent, or foreman has a free hand in the selection of subordinates, he cannot be held responsible for the failure which he did not have the power to avert. The same principle is true of all enterprises, whether military, civil, manufacturing, or religious.

As has been emphasized, if there are careless,

incapable, or unworthy superintendents of districts in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the responsibility must be traced directly to the bishops. The whole matter of selection and retention is left with them. *That they should be held to the strictest accountability* is both right and reasonable.

Principles in Selection

1. The fact that he is appointing a man who, in all probability, will hold the office for six years, should cause the bishop to exercise extreme caution. It will help but little for him to take refuge behind the statement: "It must be understood that this appointment to the district superintendency is for one year. This brother must not consider that he is appointed for a term longer than twelve months." The good bishop may mean exactly what he says, *but it will not turn out that way.* "This brother" is there for six years. The man knows it, so does the Conference, *and so does the bishop*—not because the bishop cannot help himself, but because he will not!

It is too hard, so long as the unfortunate time limit on the district superintendency remains, to remove a man, and too easy to reappoint him for it ever to be otherwise. The superintendent will claim the right of reappointment. His predecessors have enjoyed the same privilege since the

days when the office was young. Why should he be discriminated against? Incompetency may be known but cannot easily be proven. He will have apologists and defenders. Those most conversant with the facts may be the least inclined to speak. Sympathy is easily created for the imperiled. Removal means ruction. He only has two or three more years to serve, why not give him the benefit of the doubt?

The only solution is the removal of the present time limit.[3] It is recognized that the bishop may cut the Gordian knot if he will, but it is a fair presumption that he will not. This consideration renders the selection of superintendents of districts extra hazardous, and should increase the demand for greater caution.

2. A bishop should not resign his right of choice. Many will be willing to discharge this duty for him. Influential laymen interested in ministerial friends and ministerial aspirants—all should have free access to the bishop, who should welcome a full statement of their claims—then *he* should make the decision. It is unfortunate for an Annual Conference to reach the conclusion that a bishop is incapable of independent action; that one or two individuals, lay or clerical, are really

[3]Those interested in this phase of the subject will find it fully discussed in The District Superintendent, Asset or Liability? James A. Hensey. The Methodist Book Concern, 1915. Chapters iv-x, pp. 98-182.

permitted to decide the incumbency of districts. Personal friendship should not jeopardize the bishop's freedom of action. If he permits himself to become the registrar of other men's opinions, suspicion and fear will be bred in the hearts of those who should implicitly trust him.

3. Neither should he be fettered by promises or serious understandings prior to the session of the Annual Conference. An appointment that seems easy and desirable in the distance is often impossible and undesirable when one faces all the facts. Hopeful aspirants easily magnify the most conservative statements. While the utmost freedom of expression should be encouraged on the part of all who approach him, no definite statements, positive promises, or fugitive intimations should fall from his lips.

Later events or information may make it desirable for the bishop to change his mind. It is not always possible, even one week before the assembling of an Annual Conference, to know just what should be done. Changes may occur in that critical period which will make prior plans impossible, and the whole situation may have changed when it comes before the Cabinet.

The bishop may find it necessary to change his mind. What, then, will he do with his "definite statements, positive promises, or fugitive intimations"? They must be conveniently forgotten,

openly broken, or consummated against his better judgment. The first is impossible, the second unthinkable, the third regrettable.

The bishop's problem is twofold: getting right men for the districts, and satisfying the unselected. If there are no "broken vows and disappointments thickly scattered all the way," the latter will be simple of solution.

What would be thought of a judge who gave "definite statements, positive promises, or fugitive intimations" concerning his decision in impending actions? Neither judge nor jurors ought to know what they will do until the evidence, all of it, has been presented and the pleas made.

The issues involved in the selection of a district superintendent are of the utmost gravity. The bishop who gossips about an impending decision, or intimates a practically impossible appointment, or encourages different aspirants for the same position, lacks both discretion and candor.

4. Reasonable heed should be given to the wishes of churches and preachers in the selection of district superintendents, but the occasional effort of a district to influence an impending choice by ballot has been uniformly frowned upon. It is well. What is directly denied should not be indirectly permitted. If, in an occasional emergency, an informal ballot should be requested by the bishop, and the same should be taken in his

presence and placed in his hands without scrutiny, no objection could be urged.

The general consensus of opinion usually points in the right direction. Several facts should be remembered by the bishop: the preachers should have a superintendent in whose judgment, character, and administrative capacity they will have confidence. Most preachers and their families are helpless in the hands of a district superintendent. "The hopes and fears of all the years" are largely in the keeping of the judgment of this one man. Suppose they have little confidence in his judgment, and less in his administrative ability? Suppose they know him to be a man of strong prejudices, an intellectual slattern, without administrative deftness, or strength in emergencies? Or —far more serious—suppose they think him capable of moral vacillancy? The preachers can never respond to the leadership of such a man. It is also true that the churches quickly discover incapacity in a superintendent. They will not be satisfied to leave their interests in his hands, and great opportunities for service are therefore lost during such an administration.

The bishop should carefully weigh the serious recommendations of laity and clergy. As the custodians of sacred interests, and as individuals whose vital affairs are in issue, they have the right to be heard, and it is altogether probable

that they have information which the bishop needs.

Changing Functions of the District Superintendency

As the church has grown in numbers and complexity of organization the superintendency has undergone significant changes. The Rev. J. T. Crane, D.D., says: "In the year 1814, when the whole number of communicants in the church was 211,000, there were 398 circuits and stations, and forty-nine presiding elders' districts. These districts comprised, on the average, eight circuits and stations and twelve preachers each. These figures show, more conclusively than any mere statement to that effect could do it, that the chief work of a presiding elder was that of an evangelist. The Mississippi Conference, for example, contained in 1820 only eleven charges and fourteen preachers, and yet was divided into three districts, in one of which there were only two circuits and three preachers. To make it the sole business of one man to oversee the labors of two or three others would seem to be a criminal waste of the church's resources. It is evident that the presiding elder's duties were not merely, or even mainly, supervisory, but that he was expected to be at work all the time, helping his preachers at any point where there were special indications of

success, conducting camp meetings, and exploring new fields. The preachers were many of them young, poorly prepared for the position which they occupied, and not a few of them failures in it."[4]

Of the forty-nine districts into which the church was divided in 1814, two of them were without a single ordained elder, and four more had only one each. During the first half century of the church, fully fifty per cent of the preachers located after a brief career. These incessant lapses created vacancies that had to be filled with new and untrained men. The maturity, the executive ability, and the pulpit power of the ministry were largely commandeered for the eldership, where they could do the most good. These men officially explained and defended the doctrines of the church.

But these conditions have passed. The frequent and bitter doctrinal controversies have ceased. The old-fashioned quarterly meeting, occupying two days, beginning with a sermon by the presiding elder on Saturday morning; the Quarterly Conference in the afternoon; another sermon, probably by the elder, in the evening; a love feast one hour and a half in length on Sunday morning, followed with a sermon by the elder of the same length, closing with the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, has long since passed

[4] Methodism and Its Methods, Nelson & Phillips, 1876.

away. Everything was done deliberately. The people had come long distances and were loath to separate, even when the hour came; the elder had no other engagement.

To-day this leisurely Quarterly Conference is not even a golden memory with venerable Methodists—only a legend of bygone days. The great circuits, covering from one to six counties, have been divided and subdivided into smaller groups and stations. Instead of devoting two days to one Quarterly Conference, and still leaving every third Sunday vacant, the superintendent often holds from three to eight Conferences in one week, without a vacant Sabbath during the year, and even then must occasionally employ substitutes to do a part of the work. Instead of districts having from three to twelve charges, they now range from thirty-five to one hundred.

During recent years there has been a marked tendency to reduce the number of districts and increase their size. Certain reasons have led to this change: the rapid improvement in traveling facilities, steam railways, the trolley, and the automobile (will a distant generation wonder why the aeroplane was not included?); and the good roads—macadam, concrete, asphalt, and brick, in every part of the country; the passing of the lengthy Quarterly Conference, giving the superintendent more time at his disposal; and the desire

of the bishops to select the strongest men in the Annual Conferences for the superintendency, necessitating an increased compensation, possible only in a larger unit.

The old time quarterly meeting and district supervision have not passed without cause. Suitable in their day, they would be inapplicable to modern conditions. The original elder had no supervisory powers. His sole duty was to administer the sacraments "and perform all other rites prescribed by our liturgy." But two years later, in 1786, he was directed to "exercise within his own district, during the absence of the superintendents (bishops), all the powers invested in them for the government of the church." This gave him vice-episcopal powers, and insured the perpetuation of the office. Quarterly meetings were originally held by preachers in charge of circuits, but in 1792 the elder was directed to hold them, and "to call together at each quarterly meeting, all the traveling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders of the circuits, to hear complaints and receive appeals."

This was the first legal definition of the powers of the Quarterly Conference. Subsequent legislation has enlarged these powers from time to time, until it has become the supreme executive body of the local church or circuit. All the business of the local church is either transacted in or re-

viewed by the Quarterly Conference. Ministers generally are ordained and do not depend upon the superintendent for the administration of the sacraments; while the high standard of stability in the ministry and of efficiency in the pulpit renders the frequent and prolonged visits of the superintendent unnecessary.

Type of Men Needed for District Administration

Each district, like every church, has an individuality which demands recognition. A district is not simply a unit over which any capable preacher may be placed any more than a church is a unit to which any member of the Conference may be fittingly appointed. Preachers, churches, and districts, because of differing individualities, must have different treatment.

It is obvious that no man should be put into the superintendency to "accommodate" the appointments; that is, to make certain adjustments with references to churches and preachers possible. While the superintendency is an appointment, it is nevertheless of such unusual significance as to demand separate treatment. The bishop who jumbles together men of equal standing and haphazardly selects one to be the superintendent of a district, will probably make a seri-

ous mistake. Many men capable of large service in the pastorate would be both unhappy and ineffective in the superintendency.

Neither should the office be made a convenience to accommodate men unacceptable in the pastorate. The genius for local maladministration will be serious when applied to a district. Infelicities of temper and errancy of judgment will have wider scope and freer rein. A man with such an equipment should find his natural level in the pastorate, rather than be given artificial protection by lowering the efficiency of a great administrative office.

If by any misadventure the Conference politician gets into the office, he should either be removed at the earliest opportunity or relegated permanently to the list of undesirables at the end of his term. The superintendent who keeps reminding the men advanced under his administration, "Remember, I put you here"; or who says to those who leave his district for better places, "I saw that you were taken care of in the Cabinet, do not forget me"; or who seeks out the younger men in the Conference and tells them what good things he hears about them, and how they ought to have larger recognition, and that he intends to provide for them at the earliest possible moment —such a man is taking advantage of his position for ulterior ends, and the best interests of the

church demand that he be speedily returned to the obscurity whence he was mistakenly lifted.

Qualifications Needed for District Administration

1. The superintendent should not be an administrative experiment. He is "the applied end of the episcopacy." He is the field-director of the system. He should understand its implications and applications, just what the system is capable of doing, and how.

He must be an expert in "ways and means." Helping to make the appointments is only the beginning of his work. New churches will need to be built. Maybe the pastor is without practical experience, and the local officiary has never faced such a task. They will turn to the superintendent for assistance. He should quickly diagnose the situation and point the road to victory. The pastors will have confusing administrative problems. Suppose they find him indifferent or incapable? There will be delicate adjustments growing out of the removal of pastors and the securing of new ones. What if the superintendent is whimsical in preferences, headstrong, or vacillating? He will need to lead great church-building, debt-paying, and denominational campaigns for the benevolences, religious periodicals, educational and eleemosynary institutions. If he has aversion

instead of inclination for such work, the interests of the church will be in jeopardy.

2. Superintendents of districts should be mature men. They need not be elderly or aged men, but the church cannot experiment with the man whose faith, judgment, character, aptitudes, and capacity are still in the experimental stage. The opportunities for miss-service are too great, and the responsibilities too vast, to be imperiled by moral or intellectual immaturity. The former title "presiding elder" emphasized, in the public mind, the *age* of the incumbent. "Elder," an officer, and "elderly," a condition, were confounded. Presiding elders were generally expected to be grizzled veterans.

There can be no valid objection to aged men serving the church in this or any other capacity, and some of the greatest superintendents the church has ever had have been advanced in years. It all depends upon the man. Some middle-aged men are children in speech and adolescents in judgment, while elderly men are occasionally of pathetic intellectual fatuity. Maturity should mean "demonstrated capacity for growth," instead of the number of years one has lived. Some men are old at twenty—their "capacity for growth" has been exhausted; while others are young at seventy—their "capacity for growth" is capacious.

Until a preacher has been tried out in various types of appointments, has shown mastery in emergencies, skill in conquering difficult situations, masterfulness in handling trying problems and people, demonstrated his loyalty to the polity and doctrinal standards of the church, and has learned how to "endure hardness as a good" itinerant, he had better not be put into the superintendency.

3. The superintendent should be judicial in temperament. Some men are naturally impulsive, and "jump at" conclusions, concerning the accuracy of which they are rarely in doubt. Such a man will make decisions in haste and repent at leisure. His best thoughts will be afterthoughts —when it is too late. When silence is golden his speech will be leaden. When there should be a padlock on his lips, the front door will be unlatched. When the judicious man, not knowing what to say, says nothing, he will say much that hurts because he does not know how to say the little that heals.

His estimate of the preachers in his district will be tragic. He will form quick attachments and strong aversions. He will be indifferent to many and partial to a few. No administration of the office can be successful when preachers and churches question the judgment and fairness of the superintendent. The man who sees but one

side should be kept on the outside of the superintendency.

4. The superintendency demands men who will think cautiously, speak carefully, decide definitely, *and take the consequences.* The man without intellectual finality, who is now here, then there, and later nowhere; who travels in a circle, and at the end of the interview fetches up at the beginning, and brings one all exhausted to the starting point, with nothing decided, will be curiously out of place in the superintendency.

Yes, and he should quietly, without mock heroics, take the consequences. The superintendent who spends more time shifting responsibility than achieving results will have little of the latter and much of the former. The superintendent who hesitates because he cannot quite figure out how to place the responsibility elsewhere is a blunder and should not be tolerated.

Many times the superintendent will have to decide quickly, finally, abiding the consequences; admitting his error if mistaken, explaining the processes by which it was reached if necessary, and defending its justice if attacked. Decisions must not be held in abeyance while he deftly weighs the question, "How will this affect me?" His sole duty is to the interests committed to his charge, the helpless churches and preachers dependent upon his skill, judgment, and character;

his sole responsibility to the God whose cause should lie nearest his heart.

5. As a preacher the superintendent should be above the average of his district. Certain communities will mistakenly measure his value by his public gifts. The capable administrator is often discounted because he is not a great preacher.

It was a supply appointment back over the hills. The superintendent held the Quarterly Conference Saturday night, preaching Sabbath morning and administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

"The next time the superintendent comes," it was suggested to the pastor, "you preach the sermon and let him administer the Lord's Supper!"

The congregation knew the difference between a sermon and a colorless essay, monotonously read from a yellow manuscript.

What must have been the estimate of that superintendent in the influential churches, and among the leading preachers of his large district? Did the office take on new dignity and power, and exhibit its capacity for great service in the hands of such a man? Could the churches respect his judgment, or the preachers have confidence in his administrative capacity? There was limping and hesitancy throughout the district.

While the superintendent need not be the peer

of every preacher on the district, he should not be suggestively inferior to the best. His coming should be eagerly anticipated rather than patiently endured. The preachers do not want a superintendent for whose sermons they must apologize. The best traditions of the office should be maintained. With the wealth of talent in the church of to-day the bishops are not limited to the choice of men who are poor preachers for the superintendency.

Incomplete List

It is not supposed that all the "desirable qualifications" have been mentioned; nor is it assumed that those considered have been adequately treated. It is a delicate subject, but that it needs discussion there can be no question. The church believes that the matter of selection should remain with the bishops. To say the least, it is the lesser of two evils, though the church sometimes gazes in astonishment at the selected.

The bishops rarely have freedom of choice in the appointment of pastors. Many minds must be consulted—laymen, pastors, superintendents. But in the selection of a district superintendent he is sole arbiter. No official committees threaten, and no hostile wills bar the way. Intimidators are imperiously waved aside by the church. None can molest the bishop nor make him afraid. His selec-

tions for the superintendency should show the episcopacy at its best. Scarcely ever has an Annual Conference been held but that the presiding bishop has deprecated the tendency on the part of churches and preachers to interfere with the appointments, insisting that better results could have been achieved if the whole matter had been left in the hands of the authorities. Well, the bishops have opportunity, in the unfettered selection of superintendents of districts, to demonstrate their thesis!

CHAPTER V

THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENCY

(CONTINUED)

Little Done to Help the Superintendent

A preacher is suddenly thrust into the superintendency. How shall he begin and where? He is a man of intelligence, and desires to acquaint himself with the literature upon the subject. He sends to the Book Concern, which has been publishing defenses and elucidations of the itinerancy for over a century and a quarter, for a list of its publications upon the office and duties of the district superintendency.

If he were to ask for a catalogue of publications upon the ministry, its inception, preparation, duties, and the solution of its problems, it would have to be sent by freight. Hundreds of books have been published to teach preachers, young and old, the intricacies of their profession. The entire field has been traversed many times, so that one may read until wearied, and learn until surfeited. In addition, there are preparatory schools, colleges, and theological seminaries, provided at great cost and maintained at enormous

expense, by the church, where young minds are drilled and kneaded into shape for the ministry.

Of all that human patience in learning and human skill in teaching can do to give the church an efficient ministry, nothing remains undone.

How much does the church do for the district superintendent? Is there a school of instruction to which he may go, or an extensive literature to which he may turn? An office that has borne such an honorable part in making the history of a great church, that has given the episcopacy some of its greatest men, the educational and administrative offices within the church many of their shining ornaments, and has had such a large place in the general achievements of the itinerancy—surely, such an office would have defenders many and expositors not a few.

There have been defenders not a few and expositors none, if by exposition is understood an explanation of how the system works, rather than of what it accomplishes. Sundry individuals have set in order the achievements of the office, and have defended it as integral and necessary in an efficient itinerancy, but none has undertaken the severe task of telling the superintendent how his work should be done. There have been but two small publications, and they have been frank defenses of the office rather than expositions of its duties.

Pastors are a constant inspiration to each other. Their problems are discussed in ministerial gatherings and district associations. The ground is gone over afresh every few years. But the duties of the district superintendent are never discussed anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances. The superintendency seems to be in a class by itself. Men go into it and come out of it, and nobody ever says anything about it. Its problems are delicate and complex, dealing in the most intimate way with the vital aspects of the itinerancy. Is it not curious that it should have evoked little or no constructive discussion?

Suggestions as to Administration—Must Know His Preachers

It is fundamental to successful administration that the superintendent should know the mental gifts, moral stability, doctrinal soundness, dialectical skill, capacity for industry, social qualities, pastoral fidelity, temperamental characteristics, skill under difficulties, and reserve strength for sustained enthusiasm on the part of each pastor, surely on his own district, measurably in the whole Conference. These facts cannot be gathered in a psychological clinic; they must be gotten quietly, through natural channels of contact and communication, without recourse to pad and pencil or

use of statistical tables. Pastors and their families must not be made to feel that they are on exhibition before the superintendent, or that he is weighing their worth to the church every time he crosses their threshold or enters their community; and it is deemed inadvisable for him to make open, widespread or persistent inquiries of the officials and members of the church.

If an official or member of the church criticizes the pastor, of course the superintendent should probe with a few judicious queries, just enough to learn the real situation, and then make as strong a defense of the pastor as the circumstances permit, and counsel moderation. If the pastor is commended, the superintendent should encourage the fullest expression of appreciation, gathering as much information about that particular pastor's special lines of efficiency as possible. Such a conversation will do the parishioner good, and give the superintendent needed information.

The superintendent should take advantage of the many opportunities for prolonged conversation with his pastors, and they should be encouraged to talk about their work, habits of study, methods of sermonizing, pastoral work, and all the endless items connected with the active administration of a parish. By these simple, natural methods, he will soon acquire a fund of useful information about every preacher on his district.

But collecting data about men is one thing, while collating it into definite conclusions upon which quick, final, and important conclusions must be based, is another and far more important matter. The collector may not know how to systematize his information or judge its value. His deductions may be confused or unreliable.

However, it cannot be said too often or too strongly: *This is the supreme task of the superintendent.* If he fails here, spreading dismay in the ranks of the preachers and fear in the churches, in vain will be the display of ability elsewhere.

Justice to the preachers demands the proper appraisal of their value. Most of these men are practically helpless in his hands, some entirely so. Their contentment in the ministry, their happiness in life, and their usefulness to the Kingdom await the annual decision of the superintendent. They have a right to expect what they deserve, no more, and certainly no less. That some will expect and even demand what they do not deserve, or do not merit at this time, will probably be true. He must differentiate between the demand and the desert. But this is impossible unless he has an accurate estimate of each man's present capability and capacity for further growth.

Justice to the church demands that he shall have accurate information about the preachers.

They look to him for reliable information. If he attempts to abuse the confidence reposed in him, future negotiations will be conducted without his knowledge, and his more worthy successors will be held in suspicion. The hesitancy to consult district superintendents is frequently charged to past alleged breaches of faith.

It would be both foolish and criminal for the superintendent to exceed the bounds of propriety in the recommendation of men; foolish, because churches will quickly discover the disparity between laudation and fact; criminal, because preachers will be humiliated and churches angered.

It is apparent that the superintendent will be constantly confronted with two dangers, especially if he does not easily and accurately measure men, namely, overestimation, and undervaluation. Tragedy lies in either extreme. And it is always easy to overestimate one's friends and undervalue one's foes. (It must be understood in this connection, and throughout this work where similar language is employed, that "foe" is not used in the sense of enemy; it simply means men incapable of mutual attraction.)

How many hearts have been broken by overvaluation! To see a lad waddling around in his father's boots may be amusing, or a pert little miss trailing her mother's skirts interesting, but

to see a grown man stretching to heights beyond his reach, smothered with problems he cannot solve, surrounded with tasks beyond his ability, is it not pathetic? The more he attempts, the less he finishes; the greater his exertions, the more evident his failure; the harder he tries, the less he satisfies.

To advance every preacher as rapidly as possible, and just as far as his talents warrant—just that far, *and no farther*—is one of the serious tasks of the superintendency. The superintendent must know where to stop. Judgment must not be dominated by sympathy or personal preference. It is his duty to discover where every man belongs *this year*. Maybe three years later some will belong nearer the front. But present justice should not wait upon future probability. "Each preacher his just deserts *this year*," should be his motto.

Undervaluation is always a possibility. It may be traceable to several causes. Some men develop slowly. Their gifts are moderate, and they do not crash noisily to the front, with blaring trumpets and flaring banners. But back in the forgotten places they are slowly growing, developing qualities of mind, graces of heart, and strength of character. Every district in Methodism contains some men who have outgrown their former selves, and need reappraisement. Others have never had a real opportunity to demonstrate their worth.

Their appointments have been one succession of misfits. If the superintendent is convinced that conditions have been largely responsible for scanty results, these men should be given larger tasks. Still others may be suffering the consequences of early administrative errors. Their reputation for errancy of judgment should be revised, for they are stronger and wiser men. Their height should be measured again.

It is not intimated that every preacher on the outskirts should be on the "inskirts." But it is insisted that no system is error proof. Inequities are the inevitable accompaniment of human judgment, be it never so carefully exercised. All systems, in spite of checks, balances, and correctives, grievously err at sundry times and in divers ways. The itinerancy is no exception. And of all the evils of which an appointive system is capable, undervaluation is the most grievous. To give a man more than he deserves is bad enough, but to give him less, and keep it up for a series of years, is a tragedy.

Neither is it intimated that the errors of overestimation or undervaluation are frequently made. This discussion deals with possibilities, occasionally realized, and aims to point the road to safety.

The Superintendent Must Know His Churches

This is the corollary of the truth just empha-

sized. Knowing churches and preachers are the two halves of the one whole. But the halves must be patiently fitted together. This is the duty of bishop and superintendent.

The superintendent will find the study of his churches absorbingly interesting. They will differ as radically in temperament as the preachers. Some will be phlegmatic and others asthmatic. Some will be eager for service and others would prefer war to work—like individuals in civil life. Some will be easily gratified and others never satisfied. Some will be naturally optimistic, and others preferably pessimistic. Some will be amenable to reason and others an unreasoning menace. Some will be docile from principle and others infantile from practice. While characteristics are often traceable to location or environment, individuals in the various official boards will usually be responsible.

That is to say, individuals make churches, and a few strong individualities determine the characteristics of every church. Whether the membership is large or small, a few masterful minds operate the switchboard. The superintendent must establish friendly relations with these individuals at the earliest moment.

The superintendent must keep his finger upon the ruling pulse in every church. It would be the height of folly for him to ignore those gifted with

expression and decision in the various officiaries with which he has to deal.

Ignorance is one of the most prolific sources of discord among mortals. We easily tread upon the prejudices, stir the antipathies, and run counter to the peculiarities of those we do not know. A stranger will demand an explanation; a friend will request it. A friend will see our side of a difficult situation; a stranger will see what he is looking for. The larger interests of the church and the success of his administration demand that the superintendent shall have a wide circle of friends in the district.

In advising the bishop concerning the distribution of preachers intimate and exact knowledge is necessary. Some churches are never a problem. Any industrious and fairly efficient man will do. There are no ancient feuds, peculiar temperaments, or doctrinal vagaries. But in other cases the greatest caution must be exercised. Any man, though gifted and reliable, will not do. There are particular types and temperaments to please or appease. The itinerancy is built for such emergencies. If the superintendent knows churches and preachers, how to make adjustments, and how to advocate them in the Cabinet, the system will reach its highest efficiency.

The superintendent must not estrange his churches, nor create, in the several Quarterly Con-

ferences of his district, an atmosphere hostile to his administration. His personal and official influence will be lessened in such a community. Any trust reposed in the superintendent must be sacredly kept. Most churches will rely upon the promise of the superintendent, and will not deem it necessary to have a representative at the Conference to see that it is neither forgotten nor violated. No explanation, however voluble or eloquent, will satisfy those who have once been deceived.

"Calls" and "Invitations"

Theoretically, the itinerancy is managed entirely from within. After consultation with the superintendents the bishop appoints the preachers. The district superintendent is the official representative of churches and preachers. Both have access to him, and to the bishop through him. In theory the matter ends here. It is presumed that the bishop and superintendents, knowing the gifts and graces of the preachers, the perils and prospects of the churches, will make the most equitable adjustments possible. The Annual Conference is usually in session five or six days, including the Sabbath, and perhaps the Cabinet had one or two meetings before the session opened. The Cabinet meets frequently and at length, having time for discussion, and the readjustment of

tentative appointments. They are gradually whipped into shape, and when completed are supposed to represent the mature judgment of men conversant with all the facts, who have considered every case from every possible angle, and whose single aim has been the glory of God and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Such has been the theory from the beginning. Probably from eighty to ninety per cent of the appointments are made in exact harmony with the provisions of the Discipline, the entire matter being left in the hands of bishops and superintendents. But all theories, however efficient, are subject to modifications in practice. It is not presumed that preachers or churches either could or ought to be indifferent in a matter of such vital moment to both.

The history of the itinerancy shows that they never have been. One not acquainted with the system in operation might conclude that it cared for the preachers at the expense of the churches; that, being entirely operated by preachers, it would be natural for the ministry to have first consideration. But the opposite is true. The ministry is given reasonable protection. It is recognized that men cannot be carelessly bandied about and the system live. But when it comes to a matter of preference the church usually has the right of way. The cause is greater than the man.

The itinerancy aims at justice to both, but the personal preferences and ambitions of the preachers cannot be permitted to imperil the church.

Any seeming contradiction of this statement is usually traceable to ignorance or accident in administration, against which no system can be proof.

But suppose the preacher is not satisfied with the conclusions of his superintendent, or the final decision of the bishop? What recourse does he have? None at all. The decision is final. Threats are futile. If he accepts the decision silently, and goes at his task quietly and earnestly—even though his heart may be heavy—the coming months will usually justify the wisdom of the Cabinet.

The constant growth of the church, and the ever-increasing concentration of the population, made large and strong churches inevitable. The modest chapels of the early days have been gradually replaced by stately ecclesiastical edifices. The early circuits, vast in extent, with several preachers and infrequent services, had to be abandoned. These large congregations met keen competition from the other denominations. They needed pastors with conspicuous ability. The local supply of such men is always limited. The denomination was searched for great men, or young men of great promise. The transfer system developed.

But the habit of one generally becomes the custom of many, and churches of lesser degree have gradually assumed the same prerogative, though confining their choice to the membership of the local Annual Conference.

Traces of this tendency are found in the earliest history of the church. Direct negotiations, though constantly frowned upon as subversive of the itinerancy, have not been unknown since the days of Francis Asbury. Perhaps the custom has grown more pronounced in recent years, but it has not assumed alarming proportions. In the hands of capable superintendents of districts it becomes negligible.

Of course, if this were universally practiced, the itinerancy would be at an end. Confusion, strife, and uncertainty would succeed the present orderly succession of events. If generally practiced, the system would be robbed of its highest efficiency, and its existence imperiled. If the decision of a committee, without legal sanction, must be final, with no power of review by the Cabinet, or consideration by the bishop, intelligent supervision would be at an end.

The custom of churches, not content to leave their interests in the hands of legal authorities, varies. Some Quarterly Conferences will ask the superintendent to name a half dozen available preachers, and a selection will be made. The

process may be reversed, the Quarterly Conference naming a list of acceptable preachers, the final decision being left with the bishop. A committee is occasionally sent to the Annual Conference either to select a preacher, confer with the Cabinet, or secure the one previously selected. Sometimes a committee with power will be appointed several weeks, and even months, in advance of an Annual Conference, who will hear and interview prominent or promising preachers with a "call" in view.

Danger lies in the last method. No provision exists which permits any individual, body, or committee to supersede the authority of the bishop. No serious objection could be urged against a "request" for a certain preacher, but a "demand" is another matter. The custom probably began as a polite request, which has grown by usage into something quite other and stronger.

And the attitude of the district superintendent? If he has his district well in hand, such situations will be few. Let a few items be mentioned:

1. Incompetency in the superintendency increases this evil. A strong superintendent, in whose judgment the churches have confidence, *and on whose word they have learned to rely,* will generally be able to direct the choice of a Quarterly Conference or committee. If the bishops would carefully study the situation which they so

generally deplore, they would find an inaccurate superintendency often responsible. When a church deems a superintendent unable to appreciate its real need, or questions his ability to speak with clearness and authority in the Cabinet, independent action will be the outcome. With strong preachers and wise administrators in the superintendency this evil should largely disappear.

2. The superintendent should not hesitate to talk the matter over fully and freely with any Quarterly Conference, official board, or committee representing either body. He must not create an atmosphere of distrust. It is natural and commendable that these laymen should be interested in such an important event as a change in pastors. An attitude of indifference or dull acquiescence would be a greater peril. Unless the situation is abnormal, a frank discussion will usually result in leaving the matter entirely with the authorities. In such a conversation the superintendent should call attention to the itinerancy, what the system does, how it works, its advantages and difficulties, and then relate the whole matter to the question at issue. Personal questions about ministers had better not be discussed in a Quarterly Conference or official board, but the superintendent could express himself freely to a committee.

3. The superintendent should never go into a

critical Quarterly Conference or meet a committee appointed for the purpose of hearing or interviewing prospective pastors, without having a definite plan in his own mind—indeed, several of them. He cannot lead others to a light which he has not seen. And his plan must not be chimerical. This will be his greatest danger. His influence should not be frittered away by suggesting impossibilities. He must not try to tire the committee out by sending it after unavailable men, or by asking consideration for a long list of impracticables. The very best way is for the superintendent to think his way through to a definite conclusion, take the committee into his confidence, and endeavor to have his decision accepted.

Standing upon the letter of the law and refusing to discuss the matter, except in a casual way, with either Quarterly Conferences or committees, will prove a poor plan. Denouncing all committees as extra-judicial, and all expressions of official opinion as un-Methodistic, will only increase the evil. Good motives are always a poor substitute for bad judgment. He should be brotherly and considerate to the last degree.

4. His word given to a Quarterly Conference, official board, or committee should be as good as the bond of a king. Definite statements or promises should be made with great caution, but once made, *should be observed to the letter.* Some-

thing more than doubtful adroitness should characterize an administration, or the future will be darkened with suspicion.

Consulting the Quarterly Conference

The entire work of the church is reviewed by the Quarterly Conference. Every item of possible importance is included, but no official inquiry is made concerning the pastor, his industry, usefulness, or desire concerning retention or removal. To do so would precipitate needless and occasionally acrimonious discussion. Opportunity would be given small men to air petty grievances, vent small jealousies, and magnify minor defects.

Under the significant question, "Is there any other business?" this subject may be considered. But this is accepting the inevitable rather than inviting it. Only in rare instances should the superintendent encourage its introduction. If he is burdened with an unacceptable preacher who either cannot or will not recognize the opinion of the church concerning his retention, and insists upon remaining in the face of serious opposition, the Conference should be led to take action, but never by the public request of the superintendent. In all other cases the subject should either be taken up with a small committee, or a few of the leading members of a Quarterly Conference. By this simple method better results will be achieved,

and at much less cost to the peace of the church and happiness of the pastor.

An occasional superintendent, apparently more anxious to escape responsibility than to preserve the system or promote harmony, has sown the seeds of future discord by asking, "Well, what about next year?" That man belongs to the "church military," and by the end of his term most of the churches on his district will have qualified for the regular army.

A Rock of Offense

Administrative dilettanteism should be avoided. Supervision does not mean inquisition. That in a superintendent is disrelished. Annoying inquiry into petty details of administration should be avoided. The superintendent can easily degenerate into a busybody or a perpetual scold. Pastors must not have their freedom of action impaired. The interior situation should be intuitively sensed rather than mechanically acquired.

This superintendent had been on the district a single year. He considered himself to the manner born. His Quarterly Conferences were grand-jury inquisitions. Officials squirmed and preachers winced. The endless (and needless) details unearthed were patiently recorded. The preachers were instructed to report statedly, and in person, at his downtown office. He lasted until Confer-

ence. After the smoke had cleared away, leaving him ensconced in the pastorate once more, he asked one of the pastors on his former district, an ex-superintendent, why he had been so urgent for his removal. "Because," was the reply, "you are a pettifogger." Little disposition will be found on the part of either churches or pastors to conceal essential facts, but both may be annoyed by insistence upon trifling details.

An Unsafe Standard

The superintendent should not expect every preacher to be an inferior edition of himself, nor think that everything should be done as he used to do it, only not quite so well! It must not be assumed that there is only one way to manage a church—*his* way—a way adapted to his personality and gifts. Perhaps there are a hundred other ways just as good; ways that grow logically out of local situations, and are particularly adapted to the talents of the men who originate them. The venturesome preacher should not be frowned out of countenance. "This is *my* way, walk therein, or walk the plank," would be a poor district motto. There are splendid men in the other denominations who "walked the plank" rather than submit to ignorant and selfish dictation. Intellectual initiative is one of the finest gifts of God to man. All things are possible to

him who retains it, and all doors are closed when it is lost. Foolish experimentation should be discouraged, but new departures—when no law is contravened and no custom outraged—should be encouraged. Even an occasional "great adventure" for the Kingdom should be assisted rather than resisted.

Encouraging Young Preachers

The superintendent should watch with special solicitude over the undergraduates in his district. Much depends upon getting started right. Blunders in administration, of far-reaching importance, may be easily made. Some men take naturally to the ministry, and easily fall into its exacting ways. Its requirements are *sensed* rather than gotten from books, living teachers, or dearly bought experience. Others learn slowly. Experience is substituted for intuition. Such men need counsel, not censure, though they will probably mistake the former for the latter.

Indifference or hostility will easily divert such men from the ministry. They should be helped by the conversations of the superintendent. He should seek opportunities for fellowship; and without inquisitiveness or a trace of censoriousness, go over their administration—including some personal habits—and point out the better way. Being human, little appreciation may be

expected, but in after years his counsel will be gratefully recalled.

Indeed, the privilege of intimate fellowship and counsel with his preachers is one of the delights of the superintendency, and the source of much profit to the church. Its value may not be tabulated, but that it is real and considerable, most Methodist preachers will admit. Pastors should not hesitate to take the superintendent fully into their confidence. They have more to fear from what the superintendent does not know or only half knows, than from what he fully understands.

Justice to All

The superintendent must dissociate his administrative acts from personal bias. He must hold himself to absolute fairness toward the men he may not like. Likes and dislikes are often peculiar and even foolish. The superintendent should remember that, just as those who may not hold him in high esteem do not, in his judgment, have sufficient cause, so *his* aversions may be without justification. Preachers are to be judged by their efficiency, rather than by their personal attractiveness to a superintendent. He should mete that justice to these men which he probably once eagerly desired for himself, and may have occasion to covet again at no distant day.

The superintendent must beware of undue par-

tiality to personal friends. They may be so unwise as to expect "personal" consideration. That it may be difficult for him not to accede to their wishes will permit of little question, and that his administration may be wrecked upon this treacherous coast is a possibility. In being true to himself and his office the superintendent need not be untrue to his friends. He should not punish his friends, *but he must not favor them.*

If his friends should not be punished because they are his friends, neither does their friendship merit reward. Neither rewards nor punishments should be meted to friends or foes. Both should find their normal place in his administration. His friends should not be unwarrantably advanced, nor unjustly held back to escape criticism, nor demoted to prove impartiality. If he follows the manifest indications of Providence, not only will he enjoy immediate self-justification, but time will vindicate his decisions.

Variety in Administration

So much of the superintendent's time is taken in routine administration, that there is not much opportunity for individuality in other lines of endeavor. The Discipline provides certain obligations that will consume the greater part of the year. Though routine in nature, these duties are of vast significance to the church. Their char-

acter cannot be changed, nor the designated mode of procedure improved.

The pastor is given large liberty in the management of his church. He is asked for results. They may be achieved in one way or another; the church is not particular.

But a large measure of liberty is now granted the superintendent. The Discipline, in permitting the omission of the second and third Quarterly Conferences, recognizes their unimportance. They are without administrative significance in most parts of the church; they are relics of past conditions and are destined to ultimate elimination. The second and third Conferences are frequently combined. It is well to make the Sabbath midyear visitation, even though the Quarterly Conference is omitted. This time should be devoted to the remoter sections of the district.

The church grew about the idea of *Quarterly* Conferences, and always associated the coming of the "elder" with their advent. In the larger communities the abandonment of two unnecessary Conferences is a relief. But rural Methodism will often charge the superintendent with indifference if one or both be omitted. The "elder" was paid for services rendered—the sermon just preached—and why should he be paid if he does not come? The idea of supporting an executive officer, whose duties make the itinerancy possible,

is new and unacceptable. In this transitional period superintendents must be reasonable in the application of the permission granted by the Discipline.

Beginning Promptly

The first Quarterly Conference should be held as early in the year as possible. It will be difficult to lift the churches to a higher standard of support after two or three months of the year have passed. This may not apply to churches where the new obligations are provided for in advance, but it is applicable to much of the village and most of the rural work. Little will be done in many of these churches until the superintendent comes. They are worthy of his careful attention and patient assistance. Indeed, if he is a wise administrator, he will give less time to the larger churches, where he is needed the least, and more time to the struggling fields, where he is needed the most.

Time for Holding the Quarterly Conference

This item must be carefully studied. On some circuits any week day, afternoon or evening, will do, while in other localities the Conference must be held on the Sabbath—if a fair attendance is desired. Some circuits will gather at any one of the appointments, while others will calmly

ignore the whole matter, even the local appointment in which it is held evincing a lukewarm interest. These facts should be quickly learned and the next bulletin built accordingly.

The first Quarterly Conferences should, if possible, be finished within two months after the close of the Annual Conference. This will leave from three to four months for the second and third Quarterly Conferences combined; or, if they have been definitely abandoned, the superintendent may either systematically visit the churches on the Sabbath or conduct special campaigns with or without the assistance of the preachers of the district. The latter plan is strongly recommended, especially when the campaign is district wide, and a variety of talent employed. The late summer and early fall is the ideal time for such work, especially in rural sections. Traveling is good, and all the out-door conditions favorable to attendance.

Special Campaigns

The district might be covered with a series of rural church conferences, beginning Tuesday and closing on Friday. The various items of interest entering into rural religious work could be discussed. A few subjects are suggested: "Methodism and the Rural Church," "Are the Methods of Methodism Adapted to the Solution of Present-

Day Rural Problems?" "The Rural Church a Community Center," "The Relation of the Rural Church to National Welfare," "Should the Rural Church Have a World-Vision?" Appropriate subjects can be multiplied indefinitely.

The conference should be held in the most centrally located church of the circuit, and a systematic effort made to promote attendance. The superintendent might send a note of invitation to every official member, urging the attendance of himself and family. The conference should begin at 10 A. M. The afternoon session might close with a love feast and brief sermon by the pastor. One or two subjects could be discussed at the evening session, and the day brought to a profitable close with a stereopticon lecture. A community dinner and supper, free of charge, should be served. The same program might be used for the entire campaign, with a change of speakers every two weeks. Such gatherings will inspire the churches, broaden the visiting clergymen, strengthen the bonds of unity throughout the district, and give the superintendent an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with preachers and people.

The following year a similar campaign for the educational and benevolent interests of the church might be conducted. Every church in the district should be visited. An all-day convention

will be found profitable for the larger towns and smaller cities, while a series of evening banquets could reach the larger churches in the populous centers.

A district campaign for the church periodicals would be found profitable. If the program is carefully prepared and vigorously prosecuted, it will yield surprising results. This time not only every charge but every appointment in every charge, however small or remote, should be included. If the district has fifty or sixty charges, the campaign will take from three to four months. Not only should every appointment have a public meeting, but every absentee family should be visited. About one half the subscriptions will be gotten in this way. The follow-up work should be done by the pastor, assisted by the superintendent and visiting ministers. A whole day need not be given to a single appointment, morning and afternoon usually sufficing in one locality, while the evening service is held elsewhere. The inspiring story of the origin, progress, and power of Methodism should be told at these meetings. Subjects akin to the following might be used: "Providential Preparation for Methodism," "Providential Polity of Methodism," and the "Providential Progress of Methodism." The superintendent might follow with a brief address on the literature of the church, emphasizing its variety, importance,

and high standard; making clear the severe competition to which it is subjected, and pleading for immediate subscriptions. Short-term subscriptions should be avoided. They are of little value, having expired before the subscriber has gotten interested in the stranger on the library table. If a fair subscription bonus is offered, a definite period of two years should be fixed. Such a campaign will quadruple the list of subscribers to the official Advocate. During this campaign the superintendent should use the Sabbaths in visiting the larger churches of the district, presenting the argument for the periodicals, and receiving subscriptions. He will find much fallow ground, and will often secure from fifty to one hundred subscribers in a single service.

District campaigns will be capable of unlimited extension. If an educational institution needs endowment, the total sum can be divided equitably between the districts, subdivided between the churches (though the latter course is not always either desirable or necessary), and secured by districtwide campaigns, either simultaneously or consecutively, preferably the latter. If a hospital endowment, or an addition to the Retired Ministers' Fund is sought, success lies in the same direction. A wandering agent, making an isolated appeal to an unwilling audience, with an uninterested pastor sitting impatiently by, will secure

pennies where a district campaign, widely advertised, and carrying a corps of trained workers to all the churches, will quickly complete a large and difficult task.

The organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church makes the prosecution of such work comparatively easy. The churches are contiguous. They are found wherever folks live. By the crossroads, in the valleys, on the hilltops, "in the wildwood," where city throngs crowd the thoroughfares of life, in congested slums, basking on village streets or reposing under stately elms on the aristocratic square—in these places Methodism has built her altars on which the ancient faith glows with undimmed luster. In most sections two or three churches can be visited in a single day. The loyalty and hospitality of everywhere Methodists is a notable asset. A close bond of sympathy has always united ministry and laity. As early itinerants traveled their long, lonely circuits they sang, and truly:

"No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness."

What pathetic wanderers they were! Many of them never sat at their own fireside, knew the love of wife, heard the happy shouts of children welcoming them home, or felt the eager clasp of loving arms about their shoulders. Marriage

usually meant location, but some continued their work though absent from their families one, two, three, or even six months at a time. Their lonely hearts would have broken had it not been for the eagerness with which they were welcomed in the humble cottages of the people. May hospitality never become a tradition in Methodism!

The commingling of ministry and laity has been an asset to the church. It has kept the ministry in touch with the living world, preserving it from becoming theoretical and professional, and has established mutual bonds of esteem and affection. Modern life tends to isolation. The necessity for exchange of labor and protection, so common in new countries, no longer exists. We have little interest in those we do not know, have not helped, or who have not helped us. The district campaign will be an excellent corrective for these regrettable tendencies.

The access of the superintendent to all the churches of his district is an item of great importance. He can go anywhere, at any time, for any kind of a meeting he wishes to hold. His program is not open for either approval or reversal by preachers or churches. The campaign outlined would be impossible in a nonitinerant denomination. Each church would have to be separately consulted. Local indifference and prejudice would have to be met and overcome. In some

cases preachers would hesitate, and in others churches would refuse, but in Methodism the superintendent sends his program, *and the work begins!* A few churches and communities may be unsympathetic, and sporadic opposition may occasionally appear, but it will be both impotent and unusual.

A series of rural conferences built around a three or four days' visit by the resident bishop will be found inspiring. In many sections of the country the automobile will enable the bishop to reach from two to four conferences, strategically grouped, each day. The people of the open country will come from far and near for the privilege of seeing and hearing a bishop—a privilege which many have never enjoyed.

The financial systems of the village and rural churches should receive special attention. Many will be burdened with the hit-or-miss (mainly the latter) plan of the elder day. While admitting its inadequacy, they will strenuously object to a better way. The district should adopt a definite day for the every-member canvass, and a strong effort be made to swing all the churches into line. Each church should be required to report the result, and a district bulletin issued. The number of participating churches may be gradually increased, and the tendency to drop back into the old way lessened. The superintendent could

arrange an itinerary of the nonparticipating churches immediately after the close of the Annual Conference, taking along a supply of envelopes, and after inducing favorable action by the Quarterly Conference, presenting it to the public congregation and securing subscriptions to the budget and benevolences. Six weeks or two months devoted to such an effort will yield good results. Not all the churches may be brought into line, but there will be improvement.

The district is a providential unit for comprehensive and concentrated action. An Annual Conference is too large. One superintendent could not make his influence felt in such an area. He would not come into personal contact often enough, or long enough, to definitely influence either churches or preachers. While a district is large enough to give a movement momentum, at the same time it is small enough to keep the superintendent in touch with every local situation.

The superintendent should have a distinct annual program. He should not try to do everything in one year, but one thing in every year. The routine work must not be neglected. The first and fourth Quarterly Conferences are indispensable. Fanciful fads and impossible programs should be eschewed, but each year should mark a distinct effort and record an actual achievement. An annual program will be good for the preachers,

better for the people, and best for the superintendent; it will increase fellowship among the preachers, help the laity to appreciate the opportuneness and strength of the itinerancy, keep the superintendent from falling into slovenly intellectual habits, and his administration from degenerating into routineism.

Leader of His District

The superintendent's capacity for leadership should have weighed heavily in his selection. Thinkers and doers, or, at least, *men who will dare,* are demanded in this office.

It has sometimes been said that superintendents are conservative because they fear the preachers. One might think, remembering the influence of superintendents over the immediate future of most of their men, that the shoe would be on the other foot. Have preachers ever complained that superintendents were too energetic, had too large a vision of the opportunities of their office, or too sensitive a conscience concerning its responsibilities? Has not the opposite been true? It has been said that they were without vision or conscience, that they were mostly interested in quarterage, that their work was light and their sense of obligation slight; but it has been rarely charged that they attempted more than they could do, or did more than they should attempt.

The Methodist preacher is amenable to leadership. He is not a wayside lounger nor a drowsy dreamer under a moody sky. He is a man of action, and has heard the command, "Son, go work in my vineyard to-day." He has laid aside the superfluities of life, and is like an athlete stripped for action, toe upon mark, eye upon course, muscles like tense whip-cords, waiting for the word of command. He looks to his leader, the district superintendent, for leadership.

CHAPTER VI

THE CABINET

Its Origin

Administrative necessities created the Cabinet, but it is without name or legal sanction. This development was wholly unanticipated by the Christmas Conference of 1784, when twelve of its members were ordained to the office of elder and instructed to administer the sacraments in designated areas. This was supposed to be only a happy solution of the sacramental controversy, which had disturbed the peace of the church. The denomination was rapidly outgrowing the administrative possibilities of one man, however able, industrious, or well informed as to general conditions. New men, without training or experience, were constantly entering the work. They needed more frequent contact with some one in authority than was possible with one bishop, who slowly and laboriously, over primitive roads and bridle paths, included a continent in his itinerary. And the multiplying thousands of members, in far-scattered communities and isolated appointments, many without early religious training, and most of them with only infrequent religious privileges,

sadly needed the information and inspiration brought by an officer of the church, while the bishop, no longer able to reach every church or maintain intimate acquaintance with every preacher, was increasingly embarrassed in making the annual appointments. These difficulties would grow more serious with the lapse of time. Soon after the elders began their work of administering the sacraments it was recognized that the providential solution had been found. The bishop at first simply availed himself of the valuable information they possessed. The informal conversation speedily assumed regularity, and was soon given the unofficial title which it bears to-day, "the Cabinet."

Powers of the Cabinet

There are none. As previously indicated, the General Conference of 1916 gave the Cabinet quasi-legal standing by providing that the bishops "shall appoint preachers to pastoral charges annually *after consultation with the superintendents of the districts in which such charges may be located.*" While this makes consultation necessary, the manner and measure is not defined. It may be much or little; accidental, occasional, or at definite periods. *And it is only "consultation."* The bishop's right to fix the appointments is not abridged.

THE CABINET

The Cabinet has only advisory and consultative powers. The bishop convenes the Cabinet at his pleasure; consults it at his discretion; determines the order of procedure; seeks such information as he deems necessary or the superintendents desire to impart, and renders his decision.

Influence of Superintendents in the Cabinet

It is very great, much greater than one without experience would anticipate. The episcopacy can never regain that intimate contact with individual churches and preachers which it lost in the days of Francis Asbury. It would require five hundred bishops! The church has twenty-five effective general superintendents, or bishops, and ten missionary superintendents, or bishops.

It is evident that if these thirty-five men had unaided to make an annual distribution of twenty thousand preachers (bishops and preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, not included), with all the necessary delicate adjustments and preservation of sacred interests, much would have to be guessed at, and valuable data taken for granted. The bishops would be at the mercy of private advisers, without authority or responsibility.

In a matter of such grave importance as fixing the appointments nothing should be either

"guessed at" or "taken for granted." Information of the most reliable nature, up to date, and unassailable in whole or part, is demanded. The bishop cannot travel extensively throughout an Annual Conference to see if his appointments have been wisely made. *He must know before they are made.* And he does. The list as finally read is neither a happy guess nor a leap in the dark. But if the bishop had been forced to depend upon his own lucubrations, the partisan representations of preachers and churches, the stray hints from occasional tongues, or the choice bits of misinformation floating through a gossipy atmosphere, he could never be sure that his most serious decisions were even measurably correct.

The influence of superintendents in the Cabinet is based upon the information they possess. If the bishop has confidence in their powers of observation and deduction, his task is greatly simplified. But if suspicious of their ability, candor, or unselfishness, his problems are seriously complicated. He cannot easily go back of the information vouchsafed by the superintendents. He must follow the advice of the men officially empowered to collect and impart this information to him.

Controlling the Personnel of the Cabinet

Consecutive supervision enables each resident bishop to surround himself with capable and con-

genial superintendents. Custom should not protect incompetents and obstructionists. The law permits a bishop to reconstruct his Cabinet at will; and when convinced of its necessity he should not hesitate to do so. If an exchange of superintendents seems desirable, or if complications within the Cabinet or Conference point to an entirely new list of official advisers, the remedy is in his hands. If he has lost confidence in the judgment or industry of any one member, that man should be removed. If there is a noisy controversialist, who would relieve the other superintendents of their duties, he should be dismissed. When the bishop calls the districts he should know that men of probity, candor, and character; that men incapable of dissimulation, who would rather lose a right arm than jeopardize the sacred interests committed to their charge; that the clearest minds, truest hearts, and keenest wits in the Conference, are answering for the men and churches. Toleration is a virtue when there is no remedy, but it is gross carelessness when a way of escape lies close to one's hand. The bishops, intelligent enough to know the truth, should be brave enough to obey the truth.

Possible Peril in Centralized Authority

The authority of the bishop in the Cabinet is absolute. Such power would be dangerous in the

hands of one unfamiliar with the system. Classroom information will not do; it must be adze-hewn during long years of buffeting with the realities of the itinerancy. The bishop must maintain that delicate intellectual poise and accuracy of judgment through the sessions of the Cabinet, and in his consultations with preachers and churches concerning the appointments, which certainly would be impossible did he not know instinctively the limitations and possibilities of the system.

But something more than knowledge is necessary to make one man the safe depository of such extraordinary powers. Election to the episcopacy changes neither capacity nor characteristics. Ordination to the office does not include the readjustment of one's faculties for particular duties. It will be conceded that fixing the appointments requires a particular type of mind, which even a bishop may not possess. A man may be an eloquent preacher, a daring administrator, a popular lecturer, a multifarious author, gifted in many languages, versed in philosophy and science, and still be a blundering tyro in the curiously complicated task of making the appointments in an Annual Conference. Should not some attention be given this phase of the subject when a candidate is suggested for the office of bishop in the Church of God?

THE CABINET

The Bishop in the Cabinet

The year's work is at an end. The bishop has finished his last itinerary, the superintendents have completed their schedules, the pastors have closed their various activities, and all are hastening to the place of rendezvous. To-night the Cabinet will meet, and to-morrow the Annual Conference will open. The bishop is the predominating personality in the assembling hosts. His office is one of great prestige, and he will not only preside over the business sessions of the Conference, and be the official interpreter of the law of the church, but to him will be committed the sole responsibility of deciding where these men shall labor the following year. What should be his attitude toward the preachers in this emergency?

1. Approachable. In spite of title and life position he is still a Methodist preacher. Once he was a lowly private in the ranks. Once he knew the dreads and doubts, the vague hopes and happy expectations of these men crowding in from mountain and valley, plain and river. Once he felt anxious to know just what the superintendent would say, and how the bishop would decide. *Let him remember those days!* He cannot have that patience which will enable him to deal justly with these men if he fails to recall that where they now are he once was. It is human to "forget the pit

whence one was digged." The bishop should be brother to the humblest member of the Conference; not patronizing, but easy of approach, natural in manner, and human in his sympathies.

A bishop returned to hold the Conference from which he had been elevated to the episcopacy. His introductory remarks included the following: "I was once Brother X——, but now it must be remembered that I am a bishop of the church." Hands off, and stand off—no other interpretation was possible. The bishop's address received little applause—a few did their best in the chilly atmosphere—but his old friends were sadly grieved. His presidency was not enjoyed, his early departure anticipated, and late return desired. Some years later another bishop, elected from the same Conference, returned as its presiding officer. His introductory remarks closed as follows: "I have always felt that there was no place like home, and this morning I am more deeply sensible of this truth than ever before. Here are the men with whom I spent my youth, the companions of my early struggles, sharers in the highest joys and deepest sorrows of my life. My brothers of the years gone and to come, this is one of the happiest hours of my life. To live for one whole week in the bosom of this delightful fellowship will be a foretaste of heaven." These simple words from the great heart that had not forgotten the common

toils and fears of the past found instant response in every soul, and insured for him the enthusiastic confidence of the entire Conference.

It is granted that the episcopacy has exhibited little official hauteur. But there need be none. The men in the ranks can only be content when their interests are in the hands of a brother. They will not be ruled by a repellent ecclesiastic, but they will go anywhere or attempt anything for a brother-bishop.

2. Accessible. There is nothing like "talking it over with headquarters." The bishop should not allow his official advisers, social engagements, or routine duties to absorb all his time. A very generous portion should be set aside for consultation with the members of the Conference and representatives of the churches who may desire to see him. Some preachers may not be satisfied with the representation they expect from the superintendent—a nameless dread that he may not be entirely impartial. Others may think themselves victims of unjust classification. They have struck a dead level and their ministry is beginning to sag. Such men have a right to the time and attention of the bishop. Still others may feel that the bishop has only a partial view of some recent administrative act, particularly trying experience, or reason for failure to accomplish a designated task. He should have the right to present his side.

The bishop can brighten many a leaden sky, lift many a burden from weary shoulders, and comfort many an aching heart with a quiet soul-to-soul talk. An explanation by the bishop will sound differently, and will have a different effect from that even of the district superintendent. Not that subordinate authorities are untrustworthy, but one likes to know that one's case is understood at the top; and that one's fate is decided by the supreme judicatory after a full and fair understanding of all the facts.

Accessibility should be cultivated by the bishop because of the light shed upon his own problems. He knows little of the actual conditions upon which important decisions will have to be based. He may know what everybody knows—the obvious things—but he may not know what the superintendent knows, or what all know who know all the facts. In private conversations with the parties involved, lay and clerical, he will not only have an opportunity to verify the information otherwise acquired, but will be able to pursue independent lines of investigation, and will sense those interior truths which will enable him to make the proper decisions. For his own satisfaction, critical cases, involving the peace of churches and usefulness of preachers, should not be decided until he has exhausted every means for securing information, accidental, official, offered, and self-sought.

Critical decisions generally hinge upon the estimate of men. This is the primary cause for anxiety, contention, and discontent in an Annual Conference.

In a nonitinerant system the congregation decides the matter, and that is an end to it. The dissatisfied have no redress. The church must abide its decision, at least for a season, while the ministers not called must suffer in silence.

But in an itinerancy decision rests with the bishop, based upon his estimate of the preachers, and this estimate is the result of what he knows and has been told. If he knows nothing, he is at the mercy of what he has been told—and so is the man about whom he has been told.

The bishop should be quick and accurate in his judgment of human nature. His interviews with men should be illuminating. He should look for those traces of ill temper, inaccuracy of statement, errancy of judgment, temperamental petulance, carelessness in dress or speech about which he may have heard.

3. Inquiring. The bishop should insist upon knowing the facts, all of them. There is a certain comity among district superintendents which will prevent them, except in emergencies, from interfering with each other's plans. The bishop cannot expect a weak or inaccurate superintendent to be checked by his colleagues. They do not have the

authority. It would create discord and provoke retaliation. Many a mistake has been made, and injustice even has been perpetrated, because the other superintendents did not like to interfere. The moment a promotion or demotion is suggested the bishop should lay down his pencil and take up his probe. The continuation of an apparently superior man in an inferior position should provoke inquiry. The reasons for proposed changes should be patiently sought. It would help if the bishop would ask the judgment of the other superintendents. But he must be impartial. The judgment of one cannot be submitted to all unless it is done with all.

Every appointment has four sides: the church's side, the preacher's side, the bishop's side, and the superintendent's side. If possible, the bishop should see all sides before rendering a decision. Responsibility for the appointment belongs to him. Pleading extenuation through ignorance indicts his intelligence. He is given time and opportunity to learn the facts, all of them; and if he knows only a part, and is satisfied to proceed largely upon what he does not know, his administration will be faulty.

4. Deliberative. The bishop need not be a victim of the "haste that makes waste." He will be acquainted with the difficult cases prior to the Annual Conference. By correspondence, personal

visitation, and by interviews with preachers and laymen, he may so thoroughly acquaint himself with the facts that his decision will stand the severest criticism.

The bishop's hands should not be tied with prior promises. He should enter the Cabinet a free man. Otherwise its deliberations will be a farce. The Cabinet should be a forum for discussion, investigation, and decision, rather than the place where previous promises are consummated. The bishop may have strong opinions, even ardent desires, and he may have indicated his willingness to do certain things "if the way opened," but the whole matter should rest there. His "strong opinions" may be erroneous, his "ardent desires" impracticable, and his promises may involve him in difficulties. To carry them out may mean injustice to others; to violate them will break faith with those who have relied upon his word. Instead of assuming the right of supreme decision—which right he undoubtedly has—it would be better to say, "I will be pleased to lay this view of the case before the Cabinet, and if it seems desirable and possible, I will be glad to advocate its acceptance."

Indeed, the law declares that the bishop "shall appoint the preachers to pastoral charges annually *after* consultation with the superintendents of districts in which such charges may be

located." Private promises prior to an Annual Conference, unless the superintendent is also consulted, are of doubtful legality. The law evidently means "all pastoral charges" and "all preachers" appointed before, during, or after the session of an Annual Conference; it evidently means any appointment, made at any time, for any cause, in any way—the superintendent of *that district must be consulted.* That is all, and quite enough. The bishop may not agree with the superintendent. That is a privilege which he should doubtless exercise at times. But the intent of the law will have been achieved, namely, consultation, deliberation.

5. Dependable. The bishop's opinion should be held in solution as long as possible. Asking much and answering little should be his policy. Even when his duty is clear there should be no premature announcement. His given word should never be broken. Nor should his announced decision be changed without a full and frank statement to all the parties involved. If later and fuller information compels a redecision, he must be accorded that privilege, but only after the exact status has been duly explained to those involved. The bishop's judgment may be questioned—a common lot —but the honor of the church demands the integrity of his word.

6. Independent. The bishop must form no

alliances with prominent preachers or place himself under obligation to influential laymen, so that his liberty of action in the Cabinet will be circumscribed. The bishop's official duties will bring him into frequent contact with these men, and friendly relations are both desirable and inevitable. *But no responsibilities should be assumed that extend into the Cabinet.* There the bishop should meet all upon terms of equality, and be *free* to judge every case upon its merits, bound by neither ties, promises, nor obligations to heed one and deny the other.

The Superintendent in the Cabinet

The new superintendent finds himself confronted with novel and fearsome responsibilities. Heretofore he has awaited the decisions of this body with anxiety, occasionally mixed with dread. He has seen white-faced men go in and out of the room in which the sessions of the Cabinet were held; he has heard the ebb and flow of rumors, and he has had a vague idea of the importance of the work and the way it was done; but now he suddenly finds himself faced with its problems and awed with its responsibilities. His dismay is increased by finding the extent to which the bishop relies upon his judgment. How can he who has always been sent, undertake the task of sending?

He finds himself, for the first time in his life, in the predicament of having to decide between his brethren. He must have definite opinions of their gifts, graces, and usefulness. Their talents must be weighed, their usefulness critically examined. How can he do this with the friends who have walked by his side down the years? But he must! The bishop waits his decision, based upon judgment and not preference. Anxious days and sleepless nights are before him. But let us follow him into the Cabinet.

1. The superintendent will find himself the official spokesman for his district. Many times has he traveled its length and breadth during the year. He has gotten acquainted with preachers and parsonages, churches and officials. He has mingled with its social, industrial, and religious life, and will "speak as one having authority." He should have a definite opinion of the usefulness of every preacher, the opportunities for development in every church. He is the district's official custodian. The bishop will not appoint a single preacher in this territory without his knowledge, nor, in all probability, without his consent. If the other superintendents should make suggestions concerning his district, the bishop will immediately refer them to him. In order to accommodate the general plan it may be necessary finally to acquiesce in several appointments that do not

fully meet his approval, but only after prolonged discussion in which he has had an opportunity to participate.

The bishop will not only recognize his authority but will prevent its usurpation by the other members of the Cabinet. But the superintendent must "speak up" for his district. Shifting indecision will be fatal. While he hesitates the best preachers will be located, and he will be loaded with discards. No undue advantage may be taken, but he cannot expect men of decision to wait indefinitely while he twirls his thumbs, or studies the pattern in the carpet.

2. He should go into the Cabinet with a thoroughly digested plan for his district. The possibilities and probabilities should be carefully weighed in connection with every church and pastor. He should be able to answer the bishop promptly concerning the necessary or desirable changes.

The superintendent's plan should be largely confined to his own district. Speculation as to what he can do on the other districts will be alluring but futile. His colleagues must not be expected to cash his checks. They in their turn will be found with problems which he should not be asked to solve. It is useless to expect what cannot be given. As the discussion goes on, possibilities in other districts may develop, but pre-Conference

plans should be built upon the lines of one's own territory.

If the superintendent has been able to negotiate a definite exchange with a colleague, that is another matter. But the *hope* that he will do so should not induce unwarranted expectations.

3. Previous promises should not impede his freedom of action. Just as the bishop should come to the Conference a free man, so the superintendent should enter the Cabinet with hands untied. If he is bound up in advance to a number of difficult, perhaps impossible decisions, not only will his freedom of action in exchange be abridged but his colleagues will question his judgment.

The superintendent must establish a reputation for trustworthiness. Any confidence reposed in him must be observed to the letter. If the whole matter of selecting a pastor is left with him, as it generally will be, his understanding with a particular Quarterly Conference should be as sacred as if written upon parchment in letters of gold, and signed before a court of archangels. It ought not to be necessary to send a committee to the Annual Conference to see that he keeps his word. *But let him do in the Cabinet exactly as he has said he would do in the Quarterly Conference.* Woe unto him and his successors if he does otherwise! He has added another church to the ranks of those who have a waning confidence in ecclesi-

astical officials, and who will deem it necessary hereafter to take measures for self-protection. It will be a very easy matter, in the hurry and press of Cabinet work, when decisions must be made quickly, and the whole situation bristles with difficulties, to permit what he would not choose. *But he must not.* A wrong decision quickly made, or made under pressure, is no more right than a wrong decision deliberately made. It may have greater justification, but cannot give greater satisfaction.

The preachers must feel, all of them, that their interests are safe in the hands of their superintendent. It is a question of capacity rather than integrity. Preachers dread a weak or vacillating superintendent. This man is the custodian of their dearest interests. But suppose he is inferior in strategy or unreliable in conclusions? There will be anxiety in the heart of every preacher. He must avoid harshness with some preachers and leniency with others. There must be no freak, emotional, or on-the-spur-of-the-moment appointments. His administration must show poise, discrimination, and deliberation. Then the hearts of his preachers will safely trust in him.

The superintendent will soon learn that certain appointments can be clearly forecasted. There is no good reason why he should not take the preachers into his confidence, stating the situation as it

is and the probable outcome. But the contingencies and difficulties should always be emphasized, for they are ever present, and have an unfortunate habit of intruding when least expected or desired. The fewer conversations of this character the better. A twofold danger is always present: the superintendent may be oversanguine and the hearer overoptimistic. One is led to overemphasis and the other to overexpectation. The first way leads to disappointment, and the second to charges of broken faith. Both are perilous and should be avoided. But his definite word given to any pastor should be final, and its reiteration unnecessary. The heavens may fall—they sometimes do—and he will be absolved. Minus this rare contingency, his word should be like the laws of a certain ancient state. A speculator in margins is a pathetic failure in the Cabinet. Itinerants cannot be shaken in a dice box and thrown on the table. Nor are they pawns on a chess board to be sacrificed at will. The eye of the superintendent must be single, the hand steady, the purpose constant, and the conscience clear.

The superintendent should avoid vagueness as a policy. There is no reason why either churches or preachers should be long held by tenterhooks of anxiety. Vagueness and evasiveness breed suspicion, and suspicion undermines the foundation of that mutual confidence on which the itinerancy

rests. The great work of appointment-making should not be surrounded with an air of mystery. The problem is simple. Here are some churches, and there are some preachers. The churches differ in strength, the preachers in capacity. The Cabinet achieves the fittest fit. Difficult? Yes, but not mysterious. Adjustments proceed upon sane, logical grounds, and the outcome will be found in essential harmony with the facts.

The superintendent of a large district with many important churches must be careful lest he encourage two or three men to expect the same pastorate. Unless there is definite probability of appointment to that particular church, he should never broach the matter. It will be less serious to have it suggested by one who may desire the appointment. Then he may talk freely, but should not arouse unwarranted expectations. But if he should deliberately, without prompting, ask two or three preachers how they would like a certain pastorate, always mentioning the same church, and then allow the Annual Conference to pass without further reference to the subject, it will be difficult to acquit him of ulterior motives.

4. The superintendent should have a plan which will enable him, if possible, to maintain the *status quo* with respect to every preacher. Men should not be allowed to slip without cause. If there are incorrigibles, who will neither heed present advice

nor be taught by the sad mistakes of the past, they should be permitted to find their proper level. The church is not an infirmary for ministerial incompetents or intractables. There is work to do: foundations to dig, loads to carry, and walls to build; there are souls to save, cities to purify, and civilizations to reconstruct. These are tasks that call for men. The fewer camp followers the better. The superintendent who tolerates such men should be cashiered and dismissed.

But we repeat: men should not be allowed to slip without cause. One Conference will find a superintendent with many openings, and promotions will be easy, while another Conference will find all avenues of advancement closed, and he will have to stand in the breach to prevent serious demotions. In this emergency he should not hesitate to take the Cabinet into his confidence. But he cannot expect demotions on other districts, or the serious disarrangement of vital plans to accommodate him. However, the entire Cabinet will frequently cooperate in a series of readjustments to relieve a tense situation, or prevent an impending tragedy. This is done more frequently than might be expected. But it cannot be counted upon with certainty in a given case. Nor is it always successful when sincerely attempted. The superintendent's tentative plan, to be safe, had better be confined to his own district. There he under-

stands the situation, and his authority is recognized. Beyond there is an unknown land with lurking dangers and hidden pitfalls of which he may not know.

The superintendent is justly held responsible for the appointment given to any one of his men transferred to another district. The superintendent should not only know where he is going, but his vigilance should not be relaxed until he has gone. The new superintendent may not have a very keen sense of responsibility for the comparative stranger, and in the final adjustment may shift him to an inferior position. The original agreement should be exacted or the man returned.

5. Reasonable promotions should be planned. Promotions, like "offenses, must come, but woe unto him by whom" the promotion "cometh"! It must be remembered that there is little selection in promotion. Promotions are logical adjustments, not the arbitrary bestowal of favors. A promotion is nothing more than the recognition of merit, a fact difficult of appreciation by one without "merit." No adequate explanation can be made to the unpromoted. But this is the superintendent's burden.

Promising young men should not be started too high. Their future ministry will be enhanced by a reasonable apprenticeship in obscurity. They may need the country even more than the country

needs them. Before they start out to modernize the church and reconstruct society they should have an opportunity to try out some of their theories on the folk who live down close to nature. Knowledge may be gotten in the classroom, but wisdom is begotten of experience. Genius often flowers into greatness as one works upward through the various ranks of service. None can know the church so well, or believe her doctrines so thoroughly, or appreciate her polity so fully as those who have rendered her service in the various types of communities into which her activities extend.

Neither should young men, however severe their necessities, be encouraged to bargain for place, or speculate upon the likelihood of quick promotion. Their necessities ought to be limited, and their luxuries need be few. Their greatest problem is giving rather than getting. It is better to want little and give much, than to demand much and have little to give! And it is a sad fact that those who give the least often expect the most. Less speculation and more cultivation would be a good rule for the young preacher.

It was a beautiful summer evening. The superintendent had gone home with the preacher for supper. Some chairs were taken out under the trees, away from the house and children, where the preacher "opened his heart," as he phrased it.

The previous year on another charge had not been very satisfactory. The young preacher had been without training or experience. Many of the duties and privileges of the ministry had been poorly understood. A change became necessary. He had been well received at the new charge and was in high favor with the people.

"You can see," said the preacher, "how well everything is getting along here. I want to ask about the future. What are my prospects for promotion?"

If a hand had been suddenly thrust from behind the neighboring maple and cuffed the superintendent, his surprise could not have been greater.

"Why, my brother," he finally managed to stammer, "no Methodist preacher ever asks his superintendent that question. At least, I have never heard it."

"Well, you see I have a family to support, and feel that I must know," was the reply.

"But how can I answer that question?" said the superintendent. "Your income in the ministry will depend entirely upon your earning capacity, and as to that I do not know, and will not venture a guess."

"Yes," persisted the preacher, "but you can see how well things are going here, and why should you not be willing to form an opinion on that basis?"

"My brother," replied the superintendent, quietly, "it is not the first Quarterly Conference of the first year, but the fourth Quarterly Conference of the fifth year that tells the story. If these people are just as anxious to have you back at the close of the third, fourth, or fifth year as they are to keep you just now, your future is assured."

It is a bad omen for a young man to sit down at the beginning of his ministry and demand a forecasting of his future prospects. He needs less horoscope and more horse sense, less day-dreaming and more ditch-digging.

"What are my prospects for promotion!" Shades of Wesley and the long line of heroes who, like ancient worthies, "counted not their lives dear unto themselves," but toiled on in obscurity and poverty, traveling long circuits in bleak weather, wearing themselves out gladly and all too quickly in service prompted by love!

Nevertheless, superintendents should watch their young men closely for signs of unusual promise. They should be encouraged to deserve promotion, not expect it. Their hopes should not be blasted and their spirits crushed or embittered by unfortunate appointments. They are the hope of the church—a valuable asset which should not be wasted by carelessness, stunted by neglect, or lost through misjudgment. And if they are des-

tined to reach the higher places, they should expect to pass through the intermediate grades. Their ultimate ministry will be the richer and stronger.

There will also be middle-aged men who may have been overlooked by previous administrations, or who may have slowly reached the maturity of their powers. Their increasing efficiency demands recognition. Their long apprenticeship and proven efficiency in difficult fields is worthy of just reward. Some will have reached their maximum growth. They are either incapable of further growth or are neglecting the only means by which it may be achieved—patient and thorough self-culture. Some have gone as far as they wish, others as far as they can, still others as far as they have had opportunity. The first should be left where they are; additional opportunities would be wasted on the second, while the third is deserving of sympathetic treatment. It is the joy of the superintendent to discover and recognize their worth.

6. The superintendent must utilize the vacancies on his district to advance worthy men. That he will have such a list is inevitable. Every district has "a waiting list." Betimes others have "stepped in" while they have continued to wait. Waiting overtime for one's turn grows wearisome. The itinerancy, as in no other system of minis-

terial supply, is built to give every man his just deserts, but it depends upon the superintendency to see that it is done.

If the superintendent does not plan, swiftly and surely, to fill every attractive vacancy on his district, he may be sure that some other astute superintendent will quietly proceed to appropriate it. He need not go into the Cabinet and beg the privilege of providing for his own. Should it be necessary for him to take a preacher from another district to fill a vacancy, it should be his right to "fill in behind" the preacher he takes. This will open a line of promotions for his men.

If there is a simple exchange between two districts, no promotion is possible beyond the men involved. When a preacher comes from a small church to a larger one on another district, no other opportunities for advancement are open on either district. But when there is an actual vacancy occasioned by death, retirement, or transfer, the superintendent should plan, not only to advance his own men, but as many of them as possible. If he takes a man from a small field for a larger one, he has closed the possibility of other promotions. Whenever possible he should advance a man from an intermediate position, again making it possible to promote from two to five worthy preachers.

It does not always follow that because one of

his men has received a promotion in another district he should accept a transfer for the vacancy. Maybe the proper man cannot be offered, or the other superintendent can adjust his work without this church, or the crowded condition of his own district may demand the retention of the opening. He should not be compelled to take an inferior man simply because one of his superior men has been desired elsewhere. Should he do that, his district will have suffered a double loss: an asset will have been exchanged for a liability.

7. The last sentence in the previous paragraph hints at a grave danger of which the new superintendent should beware: the case with which he may exchange superior for inferior men. Amiable superintendents have done this to the lasting injury of their work.

A poor judge of men is a tragedy in the superintendency. The man who has been saying "Yes" to everybody and everything, and who has cultivated the inability to differentiate between men, should be continued in the pastorate, where stern decisions affecting the welfare of churches, preachers, and families need not be made. His accommodating disposition will soon be discovered by his colleagues. They all have flotsam which they would like to anchor in some other harbor.

A certain proportion of his men have always

done poorly, and there is little probability that they will ever do better. He will find it useless either to worry them with exhortations or exasperate them with denunciations. He should be as helpful as possible, appreciating the little he can commend, and quietly urging greater endeavor in certain directions, but their reconstruction along broader and better lines is an impossibility. No influx of such men from other districts should be allowed.

The superintendent must be careful that the personnel of his district, even in the higher range of appointments, does not gradually deteriorate. He must beware of talented but peculiar men, with mental twists and doctrinal quirks, denominational grievances and violent prejudices, whose natural element is strife, and who never seem to be so happy as when making others unhappy. To have one or two such men on a district is bad enough, but to have them gradually assembled on one district, lowering its efficiency for years to come, is a calamity.

The superintendent's success will be measured by the capacity of his preachers. *He* cannot be the pastor of from thirty-five to one hundred churches; *he* cannot direct the countless activities and perform the multitudinous services demanded throughout the district; *he* cannot be everywhere, all the time, inspiring the preachers and counsel-

ing the churches. These duties, delicate in nature and vast in significance, must be turned over to his preachers. And the results can always be measured in advance. Efficiency never begets failure, and incompetency is never the mother of success.

The superintendent has a threefold task:

1. How to utilize, to the best possible advantage, the ministerial talent found in his district.

2. How to prevent, except "in the natural course of human events," the increase of unacceptable or incompetent preachers.

3. How to develop his backward preachers, and increase the number of useful and accomplished men.

These results can be achieved without exploiting one's colleagues, or doing violence to the rights of any preacher, and such a superintendent may leave his district unreduced in strength and unimpaired in personnel.

Districts Equal in Strength

There should be no division into city and rural districts, large and small or weak and strong districts. One or two districts should not dominate an Annual Conference—unless the geographical situation is an absolute bar to equitable readjustment. When several of the districts grow top-

heavy, the lines should be changed, and the same action should be taken in the case of even one district developing that condition. As a general principle of administration, the bishops should preserve parity of strength in the districts. If this is not done, the power of the Cabinet will largely be in the hands of one or two men. The superintendents on the smaller districts will be at a sad disadvantage. Their young men cannot be advanced, and exchanges will be found difficult because preachers from the larger districts, knowing well the limitations of the smaller ones, will avoid them. The superintendent of a small district will soon understand the aptness of that scripture, "and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." He will be a humble suppliant at the door of his more fortunate brethren. He may pick up a few crumbs occasionally, but they will be gratuities. The superintendents should, so far as possible, be kept on an equal footing, and one with inferior opportunities must be held to inferior responsibility.

Transfers and Calls

Time introduces changes. They generally begin as slight deviations from the normal, scarcely visible, creating little comment or opposition. But a breached wall is never self-healing, and the

breach may quickly grow to alarming size. Time has brought several modifications to the itinerancy—modifications by custom rather than law. These changes have been decried as dangerous, and, if persisted in, destructive. Remonstrances and resolutions have been frequent and formidable, and it might have been supposed that the itinerancy was in imminent peril of its life. That there has been dissatisfaction and some confusion is granted, but that the danger has been exaggerated is asserted. Never has the itinerancy been more firmly rooted in the faith and affection of the church than at the present time. All the great controversies that raged about it have been settled, and in its favor. Its vast superiority over every other system of ministerial supply has been clearly demonstrated. Its past is written large in the religious history of the world, its present achievements are not questioned, and its future glory is assured.

Modifications in practice are generally necessary in all great undertakings. A theory is rarely capable of exact and continuous application. The theory may have suited the situation perfectly in the beginning, but the "beginning" does not last, and the situation is in constant flux. He who bemoans every slightest departure as profanation of the sacred original should go back to the apron of fig leaves. While principles never change, the

modes of their application must change with the moods and needs of the race.

The rigid application of the original formula may have produced, in the process of time, necessity for modification in practice. This is true of the itinerancy. Rigid application of one-man power was necessary in the beginning, and produced splendid results. But the very immensity of these results produced modifications in practice. If the church had remained a little handful, distributed in a few local communities, with its modest chapels in alleys and back streets, changes would not have been necessary. But with its cathedral spires piercing the clouds in a thousand cities; with its network of churches and preachers threading the highways and byways of a planet's life, modifications in practice, if not in law, were inevitable. That these modifications have been so few in number and mild in form, is occasion for endless wonder.

The intelligent reader is acquainted with the origin and evolution of the itinerancy. That absolute power in stationing the preachers which Wesley had in England, Francis Asbury also exercised in America, first by appointment from Wesley and later by election of the Christmas Conference.

This absolute power in law the bishops have always retained. Its serious abridgment, long

threatened but never achieved, has finally settled into universal acquiescence. The law proceeds upon the assumption that the appointments are made as follows: after acquiring available information from superintendents, preachers, and churches, and after discussing the matter at length with his official advisers, the superintendents of districts, the bishop personally decides where each preacher shall be stationed the succeeding year. While law and fact are usually in harmony, time has developed exceptions worthy of notice.

There is the question of "transfers." When it became necessary, because of the widening activities of the church, to divide the ministry into several Annual Conferences, new complications arose. Legislation for the whole body became difficult, eventuating in the General Conference. The erection of Conference boundaries confined preachers to certain areas. To pass from Conference to Conference it became necessary to be "transferred." But this contingency did not assume significance until many years later.

It is the theory of the system that the appointments in any given Conference shall be filled by the members of that Conference. This is reasonable and necessary. The local ministry has developed its local constituency, and is justly entitled to the honors and emoluments attached

thereto. It cannot be rashly dispossessed without friction. The authorities in an Annual Conference must always see that there are enough preachers for the appointments—just enough, neither less nor more. If men were hastily jumbled about between the Conferences, this equilibrium would be disturbed. Conference boundaries need not be insurmountable barriers, but they must be respected or the church will be thrown into confusion.

When the churches were all small, and there were no strategic appointments in great cities, and no hazardous building or administrative problems demanding separate treatment, the local ministry was adequate to all demands. But with the advent of great churches, with large and able constituencies, subjected to serious competition, an entirely new situation was created.

It was found that these churches could not always be supplied by the membership of the local Conference. The legal pastorate was brief, and no exceptions were permitted. The possibilities of an Annual Conference for a certain type of appointments were quickly exhausted. Often there was no church of equal strength to accommodate the retiring pastor. Two tendencies grew out of the situation: ministers of conspicuous gifts, in neighboring or distant Conferences, were "invited" to these pulpits. These invitations were

always subjected, as they are now, to revision and decision by the bishops presiding over the Conferences concerned. The second tendency was one of transfer between the preachers who had gotten into this special class.

Necessity created this situation and, as in other respects, the itinerancy shaped itself to the emergency. But the transfer of a prominent preacher into a Conference for a temporary pastorate occasionally levies a heavy tax upon the system. When the time comes to transfer a "transfer," no transfer church may be open, or, if open, it may have other plans. The church which transferred the "transfer" into the Conference may insist upon another "transfer," quietly leaving the Conference to care for its ejected pastor. This works a double injustice to the local Conference: not only is this pulpit permanently closed to its members, but an extra preacher for whom no church exists is thrust upon the Conference. He cannot be given an inferior position, and grave injustice may be inflicted upon several worthy men who will either be kept back or crowded down to provide for the "left over." While exchanging preachers between Conferences can never be abandoned—the necessity which created it growing more pronounced—certain principles should be observed:

1. The number of transfer churches should be

kept at the minimum. Recognizing the principle but abridging the practice should be the rule. Whim and caprice should not be taken for necessity. Custom is contagious. The little ape the big. If one church demands special treatment, and is accorded extra-legal consideration, why not its neighbor?

2. The principle of exchange should be observed. If one comes, one should go. This may not always be practicable, but it should be the custom, and variations should be the exception. The bishops should be careful to emphasize this principle and Annual Conferences should urge its observance.

3. Transfer churches should recognize their responsibility in the premises. *Insistence upon the right of choice should mean responsibility for a choice.* No "dumping" process should be permitted while another committee fares blithely forth with a "call" in hand. If a little rigor were applied here, the evil would largely abate. Being compelled to stand by one's decision makes one considerate.

4. A just consideration of local possibilities should be insisted upon. Going farther often means faring worse. Local possibilities are overlooked or unfairly discounted. Distance lends enchantment—especially in the ministry. A church will often insist upon a distant preacher

about whom it has only fragmentary information, imagination fabricating the lacking details.

5. The bishops and district superintendents should interest themselves in the solution of this problem. Immediate and united action upon the occasion of a vacancy would often produce satisfactory results. Intervention will be too late after an unfortunate decision has been made. Spoken at the right time, the bishop's word of caution or exhortation will have great weight. The superintendents should keep in close touch with such cases.

Local "Calls" and "Invitations"

The second modification in practice is that of local churches extending "calls" to ministers within the bounds of the same Conference. This evil, if such it may be considered, has been of slow growth and has not assumed dangerous proportions, though it has "vexed the church" not a little. Of course, if universally adopted, or even generally practiced, it would render the itinerancy inoperative. The itinerancy demands freedom of action, freedom to stretch itself, swing its arms, and turn upon its heel; freedom to sift, shift, and adjust until a just disposition has been reached; a disposition based upon justice to all—churches and preachers—without fear of the strong or indifference toward the weak. But if

the Cabinet should find that one half or two thirds of the churches of an Annual Conference had entered into definite agreements with a like number of preachers, violently thrusting out worthy men of high character and long service, without consideration of where they were to go or how they were to be provided for, the itinerancy would soon be found nowhere except in history.

Fulmination would be futile. Long study has been given to this question: whether, if the appointing power were never harassed with "calls" and "invitations," but were permitted each year to station the preachers without suggestion or insistence from any source or sources except those recognized by the Discipline, a higher standard of satisfaction and efficiency would be attained?

It would be a pleasure to answer affirmatively. A regrettable but very emphatic negative affords no pleasure, but is necessary. Watching the system work from the outside, and seeing it work from the inside, makes any other conclusion impossible. The itinerancy is run by preachers, but it is run for the church *and preachers,* not for preachers *and the church!* Who will say that if the system were left entirely in the hands of preachers, without suggestion or importunity from without, the tendency to consider the preachers first could be successfully resisted?

The preachers are worthy of profound consideration. These men, who have consecrated their lives to the service of their fellows, who come and go at the nod and beck of the church, and are doomed to poverty and an uncertain livelihood all their days, cannot be pushed aside like dumb cattle. They have rights to be recognized and necessities to be met. Their contentment and efficiency is fundamental to the life of the church. It is to the highest interest of the church that the ministry be protected and provided for.

Nevertheless, it is just as true that the ministry exists for the church and not the church for the ministry. When the church has a ministry to support regardless of its efficiency, men who must have certain positions whether they deserve them or not, who must be privileged to evaluate themselves, and rated accordingly, weakness and torpor will succeed strength and aggression. Consider certain factors:

1. It is not a calamity to have churches interested in so vital a matter. Suppose they had no concern? Suppose they never raised an eyelash or shrugged a shoulder, it mattered not what kind of preachers were sent or taken; or, suppose they sent this message to the Annual Conference: "Do not be anxious about us. We are not particular. Most anybody will do." Suppose a hundred messages like that, from the representative churches

of an Annual Conference were to come to the bishop? The appointments might be easily made, but what would eventually become of those easy-going churches? Serenely indifferent, growth or decadence—either would be welcomed. The fact that churches do care indicates their jealousy for the Kingdom.

2. A large measure of responsibility for the existing situation belongs to the authorities of the church. It is difficult to speak for a denomination whose activities are so extensive. Local practices are variant, but in a populous section, where many of the strongest churches of the denomination are located, these tendencies have been noted:

(1) Instead of dealing directly with a Quarterly Conference, some superintendents have escaped responsibility by asking for the appointment of a committee, whose duty it would be to select a pastor. Selection could not be made without investigation, and this involved journeyings to and fro in the Conference.

(2) When such plenary powers have been given a committee the possibility of direction or control is taken out of the hands of the legally constituted authorities. Such a committee, when appointed, should be directed to cooperate with the superintendent in the selection of a pastor. Its activities should be directed by the superintendent, not by the foolish assertion of authority, but

by virtue of his superior knowledge of the preachers and churches of the entire Conference, and his responsibility for the welfare of all concerned. The superintendent should take such a committee into his confidence at once, speaking plainly of the hazards involved, insisting that the welfare of the whole work be considered; that the itinerancy demands justice to all; that no choice should be made that would blight the future of the retiring pastor, and that the committee and superintendent must work in harmony to produce the best results.

(3) The superintendent should have a plan for immediate presentation to such a committee. He must know in advance just what he will do and how. To let the matter drift will be fatal. The committee will be anxious to get at its work. If the superintendent moves swiftly and strongly, the first interview will often settle the whole matter, his recommendation being accepted, and the issue left entirely in his hands.

But this will be possible only when the superintendent's plan is feasible. He should be wise enough to attempt nothing else. It will be worse than useless to recommend either impossible or unattainable men—his influence with the committee will be destroyed. This tendency has been a prolific weakness. It sounds well to take a large number of preachers aside, and say, "I recom-

mended you for the pastorate of the Grand Boulevard Church." It makes the brother feel good—and does the superintendent no harm, did you say? Yes, but it does. It does the preacher no good, and it does the superintendent and system vast harm. After several useless itineraries the committee will lose confidence in the judgment or intentions, perhaps both, of the superintendent, and will strike out an independent course of investigation, reaching a decision in which the superintendent has had no part, and which may mean havoc in the Conference if consummated.

The superintendent should not insist upon a committee or Quarterly Conference selecting a man against whom there may be an unfortunate local prejudice. It may be unreasonable or even cruel; but if it cannot be removed by a full and frank defense, the name should be withdrawn. To persist will mean exasperation and an independent choice insisted upon to the point of desperation.

If the superintendent does not have a man who will be acceptable to the church, and yet needs the vacancy to accommodate his work, he may negotiate with a colleague for an acceptable man, with the understanding that he shall have the privilege of "filling in" the vacated pulpit. He will not only save the committee from the possibility of a poor choice, by so much reducing

the efficiency of his working force, but also give deserved promotion to several of his worthy men.

3. The superintendent must always insist upon the tentative nature of all pre-Conference agreements, either between churches and preachers, or between churches, preachers, and himself. He must not usurp the functions of the bishop. If tentative plans are feasible, the bishop no doubt will be glad to accommodate the wishes of all concerned.

4. This evil largely solves itself in the hands of capable superintendents of districts. It grows apace when unseeing, irresolute, place-seeking men occupy the office. Suspicion of capacity or disinterestedness will immediately increase the tendency of the churches to self-assertion.

Is it not clear that the district superintendent is the "key man" in the itinerancy? While ultimate decision rests with the bishop, the entire administration is in the hands of the superintendency. The superintendent is in constant personal contact with churches, Quarterly Conferences, and official boards. He is cognizant, or should be, of all the initiatory steps when a change in pastors is contemplated or decided upon. If the church respects his talents, has confidence in his judgment, and relies upon his word, he can either shape the course of events or have it left entirely in his hands. This is a paramount reason for the

exercise of caution in the selection of superintendents.

Problems of the Cabinet as a Whole

They are many and complicated. But let us step into the Cabinet, that *sanctum sanctorum* of the itinerancy, and watch the system of appointment-making in operation. The bishop will not object if we quietly take our spectral station at his side while he proceeds to call the list of districts. It is understood that the information gleaned will be sacredly guarded. This is one of the unwritten laws enforced upon all, whether visitor or member. Here inviolable confidences are exchanged; the inner lives of churches, communities, and men revealed; the welfare of churches and the destinies of men, aye, and of immortal souls, determined; and it behooves all to speak cautiously, listen patiently, and guard sacredly. So it is understood that you will say nothing, not to one intimate friend, of that which you will hear and see.

The bishop sits at the head of the table with the superintendents grouped on either side. He has a list of the churches and preachers for each district on a large scroll of paper, with wide margin for erasure in the column containing the names of the preachers. The superintendents have duplicate lists, though some may not care

to follow the mutations in the various districts, and will have single lists of their own districts.

The bishop will now go through the list of districts alphabetically, calling the names of the churches, and asking for information in each case. Is a change desired by either church or pastor? If so, is it really desirable, from the standpoint of one or both, that a change should be made this year? Does the situation demand a change regardless of the consequences? What are the wishes of the membership of the church? Has the Quarterly Conference taken action? Is it reasonable?

What becomes of the retiring pastor? Is there a place for him? Yes? That is good. Will he be satisfied? O, you have talked to him about it, and he agrees? That is better, and we will note the exchange between these brethren. Let us go on with the list.

You say this brother ought to move, but you have no definite plan at this time. Very well, talk it over fully with him. Acquaint him with the situation he must face if he returns another year. Also carefully consider probable openings for him in other parts of your district, and we will take up his case later.

Smoldering discontent has broken out into a flame which will make it impossible for this brother to return, did you say? If he has said

that he will not return under any circumstances, we will invite a tragedy by sending him back. You are positive that there is not an opening for him anywhere on your district? Let us see what these other superintendents can do for him.

No, this brother must not be left "in the air." If he cannot be put down either permanently or temporarily at some new place, put him back for the time being where he has been. In the meantime his case will be kept in mind as we study the general plan.

You say this man has been invited to return, and is expected back by his church, but that it will be all right to move him. It will not be the policy of this administration to move such a man, unless, in the exigency of final adjustment, it becomes unavoidable.

And this other brother has left his church under the impression that he desires to return, but he really wishes to move, and is urging you to make a change? Send him back by all means. The man who says one thing and means another, should be compelled to mean what he says.

You say the committee from the first church in ——— will be here on Friday. Tell me about the personnel of the committee. Has it been duly appointed? Is it composed of representative, careful men? Are they loyal Methodists? Does it represent the sentiment of the church? Has

the committee made a choice? You say the whole situation is uncertain? We had better defer consideration until after Friday.

What, you are not tired already? Sit down on the arm of the bishop's chair. He will not know it, and, if he does, will be too polite to object. The bishop knows that you will not abuse the confidence of the Cabinet. You do not find the Cabinet interesting? It must seem a little prosaic to a nonparticipant. You expected warm discussions and acute differences of opinion? Patience, friend, patience, they may come yet. One district has scarcely been finished. There is no telling what the next one will reveal. You insist upon going? That is too bad, but this is the way the appointments are made.

And this *is* the way. The Cabinet goes at its work in this prosaic, plodding way. It knows nothing of legerdemain nor waits for brilliant intuitions. Days are spent in critical investigation, citation of needs, balancing of opposing claims, consideration of possible consequences, in order that the final decision may be just and merciful to both churches and preachers.

But what are some of the special problems that must be worked out in this patient and painstaking manner?

1. Every preacher must have a church and every church must have a preacher. Do you not

recall how the bishop refused to leave a preacher "in the air"? Why? They might forget to take him down! Every member of the Conference must have a church. This is the irreducible obligation of the system to its itinerants. No preacher ever goes to the Annual Conference tormented with the fear that he may be the "one too many." There are never too many; no, not once, and not one! There may be just enough, or a few short, but never too many.

As the last Cabinet session draws to a close, the bishop asks all the superintendents separately: "Are all your preachers provided for?" "Are you sure that every church has a preacher?" None of the churches is overlooked, and none of the preachers forgotten. While this is the commonplace achievement of the system, it is of superlative importance. The itinerancy abhors a vacuum. The panic in a Methodist church temporarily without a pastor is amusing. It is in a worse mood than a child with the whooping cough. Unless the suspense can be relieved at once, fragile nerves will break. The organizations within the church will all die, and its societies disband in three weeks—if one were to listen to panic-stricken alarmists. As a matter of fact, nothing of the kind will happen. Why this unseemly anxiety? The good people are not used to it! They have always had such careful

and *continuous* pastoral supervision that everything seems dependent upon it.

2. Not only must every preacher have a church and every church have a preacher, but every church must have the preacher it wants and every preacher must have the church he wants—in so far as it is possible. Exactly this—in so far as it is possible. The Cabinet does its very best to satisfy both churches and preachers. It spends weary hours trying to please everybody. That this is impossible does not prevent the attempt. Every request will be carefully investigated and every known wish considered. Nothing will be done hastily or arbitrarily. The Cabinet will grant any number of interviews desired by individual laymen, committees, or churches. All who wish to consult the bishop in private may do so. The superintendents are constantly accessible. No *camera obscura* methods are employed. If the bishop and his advisers do not know the truth before the appointments are finally drilled into shape, it is nonobtainable.

3. But the Cabinet still faces a far more difficult problem: Every church should have the preacher it needs, and every preacher should have the church he deserves. With most of us there is wide variation between wishes and needs, desires and deserts. In such matters the Cabinet must differentiate.

While the Cabinet wishes to please everyone, and aims so to do, yet the requests of the churches and the desires of the preachers are, of necessity, subjected to critical review. Some of these choices have been hastily made, upon inaccurate data, and would prove disastrous if granted; the desires of certain preachers may be reasonable but impossible, and others are both unreasonable and impossible.

It is the grave problem of the Cabinet, therefore, not to do what others may wish done, or even what it may desire to do, *but what ought to be done.* The Cabinet, in order to do its work successfully, must know more about the preachers than do the churches, and more about the churches than do the preachers. Without this accurate and exhaustive information its conclusions would be perilous. In order to dissuade a church bent upon a wrong course of action the Cabinet must have all the facts; and when a preacher prefers an impossible request, the Cabinet must be able to tell him the truth, *the whole truth.*

The church has exhausted its skill in the collection and concentration of this information. The Cabinet cannot be ignorant of essential facts and escape culpability. For an entire year these superintendents have been engaged in the sole task of collecting information relating to the

churches and preachers under discussion. They have not been blind or deaf; they should not now be speechless. If they have been dull observers, and are stupid reporters, their positions should be vacated. The bishop should be able to call upon any one of them in a given case, assured that he will receive "the truth, the whole truth, *and nothing but the truth.*"

In other words, the Cabinet is the clearing house for the calls, invitations, desires, expectations, hopes, and necessities of both churches and preachers. The Cabinet does more than winnow the wheat from the chaff—it judges between wheat and chaff. It is not a sieve shaken in the wind, but a judicial procedure for discovering the truth.

The utility of the Cabinet will be destroyed if the right of review and decision is taken from it. If it is to have no opportunity to use its expensively acquired information, it might as well be abandoned. If the appointments cannot be made by those who are charged with the welfare of all the churches, and who are responsible for the operation of the entire system; if every church is to grab for the best regardless of the consequences, and every preacher is to clamor for position regardless of the common weal; if there is no right save might, with the strongest always dominant, and the loudest always being

heard; if dispassionate review is not to be permitted, and exact justice is not to be measured, then unquestionably the system is doomed to ultimate extinction.

The supreme obligation of the Cabinet is the welfare of the work. While the interests of church and ministry are interwoven, it must be conceded that first consideration belongs to the church. The Cabinet proceeds upon this assumption. Churches and men are patiently fitted together. Misalliances are avoided. No effort is made to finish the work quickly and get it out of the way.

But the second item, to give every preacher the church he deserves, is a much more complicated problem. The adjudication of deserts is difficult and always disappointing. Every year the ranks must be filled up, which is equivalent to saying that promotions are inevitable. But who are to be promoted, and upon what principle?

There is one safe criterion—demonstrated worth. No other standard would be tolerated by either churches or preachers. The man who has grown into something larger than he has been, deserves something larger than he has had, while the man who suffers from lingering inefficiency gets little and deserves less. These are self-evident truths.

But here is trouble for the Cabinet, since both

classes are always overcrowded. There are never enough openings for those who deserve advancement, while demotion is a sad experience for both the demoted and the demoter.

And so the Cabinet wrestles with its job. If only half the men who deserve promotion can be accommodated, how is the selection to be made? A new line of discussion is now opened which may take the Cabinet far afield. Evidently, preference must be given those who have waited the longest, or whose particular situation may demand immediate consideration.

Promotion is not always possible to those judged worthy. The best intentions of the Cabinet frequently come to grief. It has a clear sense of duty, but lacks opportunity. Openings cannot be "made in the Cabinet." If this is attempted, vexation and ruin will follow. They must be logical sequences. Only then will they be legitimate, without harm to churches or preachers, and fall out to the furtherance of the gospel. Preachers cannot be forced to make way for other preachers. Churches and salaries cannot be created out of the dust of the ground. The Cabinet can give only what it has. This seems reasonable, and will be accepted as conclusive, except by the brother who deserves promotion—or thinks he does—and finds it not. He rarely appreciates the sweet reasonableness of it all.

His obtuseness is human enough to be understood by every son of man—a species of mental strabismus common to us all.

All of which does not make it any easier for the Cabinet, or for the one whose hopes must once more be held in abeyance. And so the Cabinet continues the work of adjustment, explanation, reconciliation with churches and preachers, maintaining a judicial attitude, avoiding prejudice or partiality, trying for five or six long days and nights to give to the churches the preachers they need, and the preachers the churches they deserve.

4. The Cabinet must see that justice is meted to every member of the Annual Conference. This proposition is fundamental to the life of the system.

Have you ever considered the helplessness of the average Methodist preacher, or, indeed, of any Protestant clergyman? A church can appoint a committee to select a pastor, but a preacher cannot go on a tour of inspection to select a church. He may be turned out, but can never turn in—unless invited. He may be chosen, but can never choose. His wares cannot be advertised, nor his talents exploited. He is the servant of all, coming when called, going when sent, and doing as directed. He has never been judged, but is always being judged. His next lodging place

will be determined by what he did *last year,* not twenty years ago.

The Cabinet is the preacher's one safeguard against injustice and tyranny. Without it he would be a helpless menial, afraid of his shadow, and without one hand raised for his protection.

The Cabinet should give the Methodist Episcopal Church the most independent ministry in the world. The Cabinet not only stands between the itinerant herald of the truth and its natural enemies, but its timid or false friends. The itinerant who preaches the truth in love suffers no ill. He cannot be thrust out and pushed down by an unworthy constituency. Nor need he be dominated by one or two influential individuals whose ideas of public morality may be the reflection of their own habits. He is appointed to declare "the whole counsel of God"—always in love—but to declare it. Not once, or twice, nor thrice, but ever. Whether men will accept the message and honor the messenger, or deny the truth and stone the preacher, the Cabinet will see that justice is done.

Take the problem of ministerial "calls" or "invitations." The outlook of the committee and all of its problems are local in nature. However worthy, they are yet local, with little or no consideration of the general welfare. An itinerancy demands the wider outlook. The committee finds

an acceptable preacher, extends an invitation in the name of the local church, and notifies the Bishop. All very simple. Very! But has anyone thought of the retiring pastor? What will become of him? O, the Cabinet will look after his interests. Again, very simple. Very! Possibly the Cabinet can; very probably the Cabinet cannot. The wreckage will be salvaged, if possible. The tragic truth is, it is often impossible—under the circumstances just described.

The Cabinet must see that justice is done to the mature men of the Conference. Youth is always at a premium in the ministry. The churches call for dashing, impetuous leadership, motived by the boundless optimism of youth.

But every church cannot have a boy captain at the wheel, unless, indeed, time can be turned backward or made to stand still. Since neither is possible, the inevitable must be faced. It is alleged that maturity brings caution, the subsidence of animal spirits, and the unconscious loss of aggressive leadership. Suppose it is true—which is not admitted—what then?

Preachers cannot help growing old, and neither can they die at the convenience of the churches. Since they will live—some an unconscionably long time—what would *you* advise being done? Retire them at forty-five? Their talents are just reaching maturity. Advance the limit ten years? But

where is the physician, lawyer, banker, merchant, mechanic, or laborer, still mentally alert and physically strong, who will be satisfied to quit at fifty-five, and spend the rest of his years in idleness? The preachers' commission has not been revoked, and the thought of stopping is repellent. He is keenly conscious of the world's moral poverty and spiritual wretchedness, and of the gospel's sufficiency to heal the festering sores of the race. Quit? No! While the day lasts he must toil on. Getting old? Nonsense! Age is measured by vision, not years—vision of privilege, duty, opportunity. Some of the oldest preachers in the church are the youngest in years, while some of the youngest in efficiency are the oldest in years. These men look to the Cabinet for protection, and not in vain. If they were recklessly sacrificed, the itinerancy would suffer irreparable injury.

The Cabinet is also charged with the serious duty of caring for the middle-grade men. They are among the most industrious and useful in the ministry. For a century and a half their unheralded deeds have been filling the continent with churches, and heaven with redeemed spirits. Not often flattered with "calls" and "invitations," they are yet worthy the profound gratitude of the church, and should receive such protection as an appreciative Cabinet can render. These modest lights in the itinerant sky, burning steadily if not

brilliantly through the years, guiding many a belated traveler hurrying toward the Judgment, deserve sympathetic treatment from those who understand their needs and appreciate their worth.

Importance of the Cabinet to the Itinerancy

It is the Cabinet's task to keep the itinerancy in operation. A work too intricate, delicate, and important to be performed by one mind, however acute or well informed, or by amateurs, however large their number. Bungling in the Cabinet would soon destroy the itinerancy. Unrest would seize the churches if their interests were poorly or selfishly handled. Confusion and dismay would succeed the present order and prosperity if the churches could not depend upon continuous and efficient pastoral oversight. If the Cabinet did not dispense essential justice, the ministry would dwindle away. Men would not submit to ignorant coercion or unjust dictation. There was much trouble when salaries were equalized by the law of the church. Localities differed if stipend did not. But to-day, with salaries running the gamut from mere subsistence to comfortable support, the itinerancy would not last a quadrennium if the preachers did not know that appointments were made on the basis of merit. The suspicion of favoritism or unjust discrimination

awakens instant revolt. The bishop who forces appointments not warranted by facts, or who thrusts men out without due and sufficient cause, meets with stern opposition. The superintendent who is lax in administration, careless in his judgment of men, reckless in promises, recommendations, or promotions, instantly loses favor, and should be quickly retired.

The appointments as finally read will be a composite of many views. *In this single fact lies their safety.* The bishop will not have had his way in every particular, not all the churches will have had their wishes granted, and not one of the superintendents will have written his entire will into the appointments. Out of the crucible of all desires, judgments, and conclusions a finer product will come than would have been possible if one iron will had determined everything.

CHAPTER VII

THE ITINERANT IN THE ITINERANCY

Apostolic in Doctrine and Method

After rehearsing the story of the origin and accomplishments of the itinerancy, and investigating the mode of its operation, it might be well to make some inquiries about the itinerant. While it is desirable to know how the activities of the itinerancy are directed, yet the study would be incomplete were the chief actor in the drama, the itinerant, omitted from consideration. The itinerant is fundamental to the itinerancy. The development of the system would have been impossible if men had not been found to meet its peculiar and exacting requirements.

Is the itinerant preacher a distinct type? When compared with the general clergy of his day the early Methodist preacher stood in a class by himself. Time has modified these significant variations. Methodism not only changed the theology of the Protestant world, but elevated the standard of life and service in the ministry.

Most clergymen in the days of John Wesley

and Francis Asbury were painstakingly educated for the ministry. They had looked forward to holy orders for many years. The ministry was a profession, to be selected either by the individual or by parental authority. But the early Methodist preacher, like Amos, had been called from the plow; or, like Peter, from his nets; or, like Matthew, from the receipt of custom; or, like Saul of Tarsus, from the ranks of the persecutors. Like these ancient worthies, while engaged in occupations to which they had expected to devote their lives, the divine call came. Under these circumstances a technical education was out of the question. They were too old, the country was new, schools were few and far apart; the lost sheep were perishing in the wilderness; everywhere "fields were white unto harvest," and always the pathetic cry for reapers was heard; new communities by the hundreds and thousands were springing up, many of them without the Sabbath day, the Bible, or the molding touch of the gospel preacher. The nation was like clay on the potter's wheel—plastic to-day, shapen to-morrow. What was done must be undertaken at once.

Is it too much to say that Providence was equal to the emergency? Men of amazing capability seemed to come from everywhere. Eloquent preachers, great administrators, keen debaters,

"sons of thunder" and "sons of consolation"; the sweetest singers the church has ever known; teachers, poets, and theologians, keen of eye, clear of brain, warm of heart, clean in life, and conquering in spirit; astute in business, unafraid of the powers of darkness, and uncompromising in the proclamation of the great commission. Ah, how fecund those "crude" times were in great men! Whence they came, how they grew, those "tall men, sun crowned," is a question that only Omniscience can answer. But that they came by the tens, hundreds, and even thousands, the annals of early Methodism abundantly testify. They came, not from the colleges of man but from the Greater University of the Quickened Conscience and Redeemed Life, where the ear of the soul catches, not the prattle of the speculator but the Voice of the Eternal; and the eye sees, not the vanity of man, but the glory of God! Bigger men there may be in the itinerancy of to-day, men of broader vision, better-trained faculties, and profounder knowledge, *but not greater men.*

The present situation is essentially different. Then Methodism was a Great Adventure; to-day it is one of the secure assets of the religious world. Then an uneducated ministry might appeal to an uneducated constituency, but to-day an uneducated ministry has no message for an educated constituency. Methodism early recog-

nized this problem, and with characteristic zeal has sought its solution. Much of her energy has been devoted to the production of a thoroughly equipped ministry. But Methodism will ignore one of the most significant lessons of her heroic past should the employment of technically uneducated men be made impossible. As time goes on, conditions will inevitably decrease the number of men of this class, but the doors should never be locked against the possibility of their entrance.

It is not enough to say that the ministry is a profession, and that every profession requires technical training. It is a CALLING! The time should never come when *called* men cannot be employed because without professional training. If John Wesley had pursued that course, he would never have lighted a fire that has warmed the world.

The Methodist Episcopal Church in America was built by called men: men called from the shop, the plow, the store, the forge, and the office; men called as surely as the prophets and apostles of old, though generally ignorant of technical training in the sciences, or even in divinity. They had been anointed by the Spirit of the living God, even though human hands had not been laid upon their heads. They spake with authority, though unskilled in intellectual subtleties.

All hail, ye great men of Methodism's apostolic age! Across the century is sent grateful greeting! Whence came that stature so tall, those sympathies so broad, those undertakings so daring, those deeds so incredible, that learning so profound, those sacrifices so pathetic, those self-denials so willing, those sufferings so keen, that poverty so dreadful, that love so deep, that faith so boundless, that testimony so clear, and that death so triumphant? Whence, if not from the Indwelling Presence which ye so clearly preached and truly witnessed to a world lost in trespasses and sins?

The early Methodist preacher did not dwell in a world of abstract speculation. His activities were based upon personal experience. His message had not come from books; no, not even from The Book, but out of the deep recesses of his own soul, emphasized and confirmed, indeed, by the testimonies of the Lord, which are "sure and steadfast." He went everywhere crying,

> "What we have *felt and seen*
> With confidence we tell;
> And publish to the sons of men
> The signs infallible."

They were "twice-born" men, with a vivid consciousness of the travails and glories of the second birth. They were not theorizers about

religion, but personal witnesses to the facts of self-consciousness. This emphasis upon personal experience made the Methodist preacher a modern John the Baptist. If he did not lead multitudes into the wilderness, like his ancient prototype, he led them out of the wilderness of moral darkness and spiritual apostasy. Yes, and he followed the lost sheep into the wilderness, preaching a simple, scriptural, and apostolic gospel; telling them, in the home-spun language of their daily lives, the sweet story of Him who had died for all, and of whose power to save he had incontestable evidence in his own soul. It is difficult to realize at this distant day the power wielded by this new type of preacher, who buttressed the written Word with the flaming testimony of his own spirit.

Other preachers were delivering long homilies on ethical subjects, splitting microscopical theological hairs, or preaching an interpretation of the gospel repugnant to the moral conscience of the race, and gradually losing ground before an ever increasingly defiant atheism. Early Methodism not only stemmed the tides of unbelief, but put the armies of the aliens to flight, and stopped the mouths of many lions.

The Methodist preacher dare not lose the note of personal testimony out of his ministry. He is a living witness to a definite fact and a glorious

possibility—his own conversion and the possible conversion of every soul—not a deducter of truths from certain intellectual premises, however logically constructed. The message based upon personal experience has a compelling force, a resistless contagion, a sweet reasonableness, unknown to theoretical logic, however cogent, and rhetoric, however faultless. There will be deep, dark places in his own ministry when theory and speculation will not answer; times when he will be taken up on "an exceeding high mountain" and offered many kingdoms; dreadful hours when he will stand on the precipice of uncertainty, while the cold winds of doubt blow out of the bleak northland, and black clouds of unbelief hang low above his head; times when his frail barque will scud before the oncoming tempest, and whispering demons bid him throw chart and compass overboard. Unless he *knows* "him whom he has believed, and is persuaded that" no night, however long, can hide His face, and no experience, however bitter, can dim the consciousness of His love—well, it is summed up in the words: Heaven pity him if he does not *know!*

And his people, how sorely they will need to know that he knows! There will be vague uncertainty, a nebulous hesitancy, which brave words and loud-spoken phrases will not hide if, after all, he is only a guesser about religion. How

can he who knows not the way to the sheepfold guide imperiled souls thither? Some will be frail, like the reed shaken in the wind; others will stand at the perplexing crossroads, not knowing which way to turn; still others will be overwhelmed by life's inexplicable calamities for which reason can find neither justification nor excuse; and what can he who knows not that he knows say? Yes, pity the blind shepherd, but how grievous the fate of the sheep committed to his care!

Evangelistic Emphasis

The early Methodist preacher was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand." To him the world was lying in the arms of the wicked one. On every side souls were sinking into hopeless night. They needed a Saviour, not at the distant day of death, but now; they needed to repent, not at a more convenient season, but now. They came as the ambassadors of the Great King, whose patience had long been despised, and who now "*commanded* men everywhere to repent."

The primitive Methodist preacher was not a lackadaisical temporizer, a frivolous fritterer of time, talent, and opportunity, but a mighty insister upon the fundamentals of repentance, faith, and righteousness. His life was devoted to a

serious purpose. He had not entered the ministry because it was an honorable profession, and would give continuous and respectable employment. It was a life of endless toil, danger, and privation, to which he had been *called*—not chosen or thrust into by parental authority or injudicious friends. A call which he had probably accepted with great reluctance, and even with fear and trembling. He was a man of one idea, but a greater has never stirred the soul to action: *to break the shackles that bind men to their evil natures!*

The modern Methodist preacher may have more ideas in his mental quiver, but he can have no higher motive. Evil is none the less real, and sinners none the less plentiful, while the gospel is still the "power of God unto the salvation of every one that believeth." The Bible has not changed its mind about the exceeding sinfulness of sin, nor reversed its judgment of the effects of sin upon individuals and nations. If man is not a sinner in need of a Saviour, and if Jesus Christ is not a Saviour able to save every sinner, then is Christianity without foundation and the church without a mission. That day "whose low descending sun" marks the exit of evangelistic preaching from the pulpits of Methodism will also toll the knell of its unity, spirituality, and propulsive power.

A Believer in Christian Fundamentals

The primitive Methodist preacher believed in God the Creator, the invisible but universal King, by whose sovereign will the stars shone, the winds blew, the tides ebbed, the flowers in the meadow blossomed, the birds in the woodland sang, the seasons passed in orderly procession, and under whose sleepless superintendence all life had its beginning, continuance, and consummation.

He believed in Jesus Christ, the divine Son of the divine Father, who tasted death for every sinner, in every clime, on every planet, in every part of an illimitable universe.

He believed in the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the adorable Trinity, "the light that lighteth every man," inditer of the written Word, convicter of the conscience of man, and witnesser of redemption to the pardoned soul.

He believed in the Bible, as containing the law of God and the record of his love, inspired in its utterances, infallible in its conclusions concerning the origin and destiny of the race, and incapable of error in its moral postulates of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

How fiercely he believed in the repentability of all men! How scornfully he rejected the misshapen idea of a limited atonement! He stood for the possible moral recovery and spiritual re-

generation—immediate and complete—of the long time and deepest-dyed sinner on the planet. The door of mercy opened by the wounded hand nailed to the cross would never close until the shadows fell on the evening of time's last day! Can we wonder that he was gladly heard by those who had grown weary in mind, cold in heart, and wayward in life as they listened to labored speculations justifying the goodness of a God who had foredoomed the greater part of his creation to destruction?

And how militant was his faith in the efficacy of the gospel! His soul had found the bed-rock of final conviction. The note of uncertainty was never struck in his message. His grammar might slip and his rhetoric fault; he might know little of science and less of philosophy; he might hesitate in etiquette, or be ignorant of social conventionalities, but about the capacity and efficiency of the "fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness" he was certain beyond all peradventure of doubt.

One generation of anæmic preachers whose creed is largely composed of negatives, and Methodist militancy will be a memory. The church did gloriously when its preachers had little but faith, but will suffer inglorious defeat when they have everything but faith. Without wealth, social prestige, or grasping the sword of civil power, its

legions crossed rivers, climbed mountains, subdued cities, sailed seas, challenged hoary superstitions, and built a spiritual empire coextensive with the race. But time will witness the ruin of this achievement if the foundation upon which it was built disintegrates—FAITH.

Related Religion to the Daily Life

Religion was valueless, in their estimation, unless expressed in terms of daily life. Good works were the result, not the cause of salvation. Repentance was useless unless it issued in a clean life. Religion was not cold intellectuality, but a vital emotion, transforming the moral inclinations and setting the heart throbbing with the joy and power of a new creation. Religion did not consist in certain formulas, vocal intonations, physical genuflections, or in credal denials or affirmations, but in doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly with one's God, and in keeping oneself unspotted from the world. *Religion regulated the life as well as saved the soul;* but a well-regulated life was the fruit, not the source of salvation. Methodism insists to-day, as ever in the past, on the worthlessness of creed unrooted in life.

Believed in the Itinerancy

The ceaseless toil and heavy sacrifices demanded of the early Methodist preacher were

possible upon no other assumption. His journeys were long, accommodations rude, congregations small, his reception often uncertain, his fare poor, and his compensation inadequate. But he believed in the itinerancy, in the moral and spiritual truths for which it stood. He saw the immense possibilities of achievement in the new system of ministerial supply and control. The itinerancy, in spite of bitter opposition, was covering the continent with a network of contiguous churches. It was blessing isolated communities with systematic religious privileges, and promised to become the dominating religious force in the New World.

His faith has become fact, his vision a glorious reality. Indeed, the fact must have proved greater than the faith, the reality more glorious than the vision. It is hardly possible that he anticipated the amazing development of these latter years, but that he was part of a movement pregnant with vast moral and spiritual possibilities he firmly believed.

The faith of the past is the reality of the present. That which the father believed the son possesses. But is he a worthy son of a noble sire? Often appreciation dies with possession. The great days are often the meager days of obscurity; poverty, and struggle. Is this true of Methodism and of Methodist preachers? We think not.

Why should the itinerant of to-day be less partial to his peculiar system? Has time developed weaknesses unsuspected in the beginning? Are there administrative defects that grow more pronounced as the church becomes larger and its management more complex? Those acquainted with present-day conditions must answer in the negative. Time has revealed strength instead of unexpected weaknesses, and the itinerancy has never been more firmly established in the hearts of its constituency, lay and clerical, than to-day. Is its retention a debatable question with the average Methodist preacher? Ask the first one you meet. He may have problems, but how to get rid of the itinerancy is not one of them. Would he exchange a system that promises continuous employment during the workday of life for one that may presently leave him without roof over his head or salary in his pocket?

The itinerant is in the itinerancy because he believes in the system, and desires to spend his life in its service. He is not under compulsion. He can go elsewhere, but prefers to remain where he is. He has learned that if the system asks much of the faithful worker in the ranks, it gives more, and that he who does his best will have little occasion to worry and no cause for regret.

The First Year

Of all the years of one's ministry the most profitable—in the retrospect! Let it be assumed that the young man has not attempted to bargain with the superintendent, nor dictate to the bishop just where his labors shall begin. For once, and once only, the right of disposal belongs entirely to the "powers that be." Additional factors will enter into all future appointments.

Already the superintendent has a mental appraisement of this young man's value. He has probably made careful inquiries, by correspondence or interviews, concerning his equipment, experience, temperament, and adaptability. His information and impressions are laid before the Cabinet. Probably additional facts are elicited, especially if he chances to be a native of the Conference, and a suitable opening is found. The Cabinet may enjoy greater freedom in making the first appointment, but it could not exercise greater care. If he is a young man of promise, the various superintendents will be anxious for his services, and he may be given to the one with the largest opportunity, unless the superintendent from whose district he hails has special claims upon his services, or there is a particularly needy field to which he may have been promised.

It will be noticed that judgment begins before

the young man receives his first appointment, and that his judges are his future colleagues. A decision based upon what they can see, have heard, or actually know, is rendered, and the young man hears his name read in the list of appointments for the first time.

This young man will soon observe certain facts in connection with the personnel of the Conference.

1. Some of the preachers maintain a stationary position in the Conference. If there is any variation in location or salary, it is so slight as to be scarcely noticeable. The Conference minutes will show that for twenty or thirty years they have moved on a certain level.

2. Some preachers are slowly but surely advancing. There are no quick and striking advances, nor are there any sudden and disastrous retreats. There is gradual progression in character and support.

3. Other preachers will soon be found in the front ranks. There has been no intermediate period of growth or advancement. Their many talents have won quick and permanent recognition.

4. There will also be a small class of variants, whose appointments show suggestive fluctuations. There have been promotions and demotions. Evidently, they have been tried out in various types

of appointments, and some of the "trials" have proven disastrous. This shows that they have not been victims of ill will or hasty conclusions. These men, long protected and endured by the itinerancy, are usually its severest critics.

There may be other divisions or subdivisions, but these will be the main classes found in every Annual Conference.

How Does it Happen?

Why do variations exist? It might be answered that there are different types of churches —rural, village, town, and city churches—and that each requires particular consideration. This is true as to condition, but inadequate as to explanation. It might also be answered that any company of one hundred or two hundred men will differ radically in ability, adaptability, and consecration. Some will belong in the large churches, and others in the small churches. But why is this true? Why can it be said that some belong in the country and others in the city? Your finger is now on the pulse of one of the problems of the ages. Man's capacity for variety, is it not infinite? The birds of a species will all build their nests in one way, showing little variety in taste or skill. All life, man alone excepted, runs in certain fixed grooves, deep and unchangeable.

Human beings, in taste, temperament, and capacity, will differ as widely as the poles.

What the Preachers Say About It

If our young preacher will ask the members of the Conference about it, he will receive a variety of answers. One will say it is all a matter of chance. Some are born to luck. The first appointment was a "fortunate accident," affording exceptional opportunities for achievement and recognition, and so the good fortune has continued. Another will say it is the result of favoritism. Certain men, it will be averred, have been the "pets" of bishops and superintendents. Their failures have been winked at and glaring shortcomings overlooked. Still another thinks that it is owing to the skill of certain men with the authorities. They are adepts in the art of flattery, and know how to please those who can help them. If the bishop says, "Thumbs up," it is "thumbs up"; and if the superintendent says, "Thumbs down," why, it is "thumbs down"! And yet another will say that it is because certain preachers are excellent manipulators of appointments. They understand the gentle art of getting "calls," or being "called back." They are adepts in personal publicity. Perhaps he will also meet the brother who insists that it is all a matter of trading. Given the first appointment, some men

will swap churches like others do horses; and, as in the latter case, some men will soon have thoroughbreds and others spavined derelicts.

How much truth will there be in these explanations? Very little, if any. An occasional accident along one of the lines suggested may have occurred. Such discrepancies are unavoidable. But to magnify an accident or a discrepancy into a principle is ridiculous. The men who have just been interviewed could be easily described, but what would be the use? The substantial, reliable men, whose achievements are on record, and whose deeds are building the Conference, will have another story to tell. Acquaint them with the substance of the above interviews and they will name the interviewed. The men who hold these opinions are known, and why.

Promotion is Based Upon Merit

It is sincerely hoped that our young friend who has just been received on trial and who has started for his first appointment will never entertain any other idea. If he does, disappointment and defeat will be his inevitable portion. If he will look carefully beneath these specious reasons, he will find them a clumsy disguise for inefficiency. It is human to justify one's failure by discounting another's success, but it gets one nowhere, and the sooner it is abandoned the better.

If the itinerancy had not been based upon justice to the itinerants, it could never have lasted a century and a half. If its awards go by luck, favoritism, cajolery, or to skillful manipulators, the indifference of its sturdy rank and file of devoted men is colossal. No, no, young friend; justice, always justice, and justice only, is the corner stone of the itinerancy. Talk the matter over with your superintendent. Ask him why the men of your district are just where they happen to be. Have him take you into his confidence. He knows the future—barring the unexpected—of every man on the district. He will tell you how this information has been acquired.

The Fundamental Question

It has not yet been broached. Admitting that appointments are based upon merit, it might be asked, Why is there such divergence in merit? This is the *great question!* Answer it, and you have solved the last riddle.

Is merit in the ministry achieveable, or is it wholly a matter of inheritance, education, and training? Must one simply stumble along, doing the day's work, hoping for the best, and taking what comes, with little chance for either higher record or lower register? What think you? Surely, that is not the Christian conception of life. It is fate. Christianity means reason,

choice, the right of free decision, the summoning of one's will, and the hammer blow of personal assertion. We are born with tendencies, not habits; with characteristics, not character. These are not made for us, but by us, and out of them are the issues of life.

It will be great gain to our young probationer, standing at the gateway of his ministry, if he grasps these simple facts. To him is committed the question of fixing his place in the Conference. Not what others do for him, *but what he does for others,* will decide the matter. Place-seekers scheme for position, and generally miss the goal; while character husbands its resources, seeks the progressive development of its faculties, and makes opportunities the highway of achievement.

There are certain factors which determine one's position in an Annual Conference. Let some of them be noted:

The Opinion of One's Fellow Preachers

No class of men have closer fellowship, keener joy in each other's society, a deeper knowledge of each other's worth, or a livelier appreciation of each other's shortcomings! The collective judgment of an Annual Conference concerning one of its members is a wing or a weight. It is a judgment which any man may justly dread, for from it *there is no appeal.*

Methodist preachers appreciate capacity and achievement in their colleagues. They are quick to recognize worth, and the great men in their ministry do not fail of honor. But they have little patience with the man who never ceases to be a problem.

There are so many of them, and they touch elbows so frequently, that there may be an unfortunate tendency to judge hastily and speak carelessly. And there is such real *camaraderie* between the laity and ministry that the latter often speak quite intimately and freely with the laity about their brethren. This should be done with great caution. One sentence, that might mean little or nothing when spoken between ministers, when spoken to a layman—or in his hearing—may open an impassable gulf before the feet of a fellow minister. One should always do in such a case as one would wish to be done by. No deception need be practiced, and neither should pettiness nor jealousy be permitted.

An Annual Conference was to be entertained. The host sent inquiries to the ministers as to their choice of a possible roommate. Fourteen requests came for the same young man. Occasionally two or even three nominations were received for the same individual. But that so many, representing the various types and ages in the Conference, should ask for the same man was food

for thought. Why so many should request the privilege of a week's fellowship with the same young man ceased to be an enigma on acquaintance. This preacher has one valuable asset for his life's work: the good opinion of his fellow ministers—an advantage that will mean much. Many a man has awakened to its value too late, and our young preparatory member will do well if, among his other conquests, he aims for a high place in the esteem of his brethren.

Value of Personal Friendship

While he should make a friend out of every minister in the Conference, *his few personal friends should be selected with great caution.* Personal friendship is one of the ruling factors in every life. Personal friends enjoy too many privileges, and exercise too great control over one's ideas, ideals, and decisions to be carelessly selected. One's personal friendships are often the open-sesame to his character.

It was noticed that two young ministers who had been entertained together at several Annual Conferences, and who were considered associates by the Conference, were not seen in company as aforetime. An acquaintance asked: "Where is your friend—no trouble, I hope?"

"No," was the response, "nothing has happened. We are just as good friends as ever, but he is

peculiar, and is rapidly acquiring a reputation for eccentricities in the Conference. I do not wish to be considered as belonging to that class."

Calculating selfishness, did you say? Nothing of the kind. If his friend had been curable, it would have been different. Such men rarely are, and this one was not, and in a few years he was out of the ministry. One may survive an occasional illness, or outgrow infelicitous expressions or awkward habits, but temperamental quirks and mental twists are carried to the grave.

It is not that our young friend will copy the peculiarities of his querulous friend. He may be too sensible for that. But the time given to such a friend will be wasted. While friendly to all, his personal friends should be selected from those who are his intellectual and spiritual peers. They will be of inestimable value in the years to come. *Their sane counsel may drag him back from many a precipice!* Such friends will grow. Ten years later their worth will probably be recognized far and wide. They will be among the strong men of the denomination. Our young preacher will grow with them. Every hour spent in their society will make him a bigger and better man.

Yes, and he should study to make himself worthy the friendship of worthier men. This is one of the highest values of a great friendship: one does not wish to disappoint one's friend. It

is an intellectual and moral stimulus to have friends one is ashamed to grieve. Cheap friends with low aims, rude manners, lewd speech, and coarse laughter are a positive menace. The meaner one does, the better they are pleased.

And would it not also be well for our young preparatory member to remember that friendship is reciprocal in its nature? Friendship is never an accident, but always an intention. Friendship is a rare flower, of slow growth, requiring a rich soil and frequent cultivation. Its rare fragrance is never caught by the cold, repellent, ironical spirit. One who hungers for friends must not wait to be feted, but respond courteously to such natural opportunities for friendship as may come to him.

Peril in Personal Antagonisms

They should be persistently avoided. All human beings are instinctively conscious of both attraction and repulsion. If some attract strongly, almost irresistibly, others repulse just as emphatically.

But personal dislikes are often foolish, unreasonable, and cruel. Their frequent recurrence pits a disposition with ugly scars. The most disagreeable people in the world are those whose dislikes are quick, outspoken, and unchangeable. The preacher who falls into this sad habit will

soon find himself shunned, his talents discounted, and his usefulness curtailed.

Like produces like. Antagonizing means antagonism, and disliking makes one disliked. As one metes it will be measured. The young preacher must not expect what he does not give. The day may come when he will regret the slightest act of discourtesy done to the humblest member of the Conference. Doing right in the present is doing well for the future.

This young preacher must learn to be big and brotherly in all matters relating to the debates and decisions of the Conference. Even good men do not always see eye to eye. Differences over policies should not degenerate into personal antagonisms. Every man has a right to his opinion, and should enjoy the largest liberty in expression. But after this privilege has been exercised, and the vote taken, *it should end there.* He should be slow to take offense, either in the heat of debate or subsequent thereto. Spoken words often have an unexpected significance. Debate is dangerous pastime for small minds. And if this promising probationer cannot learn how to differ, and differ strongly, with his brethren and keep sweet, he had better keep his seat.

In this Conference are the men with whom his life must be spent. He will touch elbows with

them constantly. Not only are personal antagonisms entirely out of place among Christian ministers—a sad spectacle to men and angels—but when projected through the long years of association in an Annual Conference, they become a scandal to the church and a tragedy in the lives of otherwise good and useful men. Be slow to give offense; be slower to take offense; be *slowest* to show offense. The small man gives offense; the smaller man takes offense; and the *smallest* man shows offense!

Relation to the District Superintendent

The preparatory member has already come in contact with the district superintendent. This officer probably presided over the Quarterly Conference in which he was licensed to preach, and which recommended him for reception on trial in the Annual Conference. The superintendent presented this recommendation to the Annual Conference, and represented the candidate when his name was called. The bishop has probably accepted the judgment of the superintendent concerning his appointment, and from the lips of the superintendent have fallen final words of caution and cheer as he leaves the Conference for his first field of labor.

It will be noticed that the superintendent is

intimately connected with the opening chapter of his ministerial career. And this intimacy must continue until far down the years, as he sits with moist eyes and throbbing heart at the end of his itinerancy, a district superintendent will rise in some Annual Conference and move that he be granted the retired relation. The district superintendent will be a vital factor in his ministry, closely associated with all its far-reaching decisions, struggles, disappointments, and achievements. He may see the bishop occasionally and come in contact with him infrequently. Years may pass without giving him occasion to meet one of the chief pastors of the church. But the superintendent will be a frequent visitor in his home, sensing its atmosphere, orderliness, and spirit. In the Quarterly Conference the superintendent will enter into the inner consciousness of his ministry, his industry, fidelity, and efficiency becoming an open book. It is the superintendent to whom he must look for advice in administrative difficulties. All the delicate questions involved in a change of appointments must be laid before the superintendent. No other one man will exert a more subtle influence upon his career. The itinerancy makes this inevitable. The superintendent's power over his career is more than potential—occasionally it must be exercised in a radical and decisive manner.

Its Significance Should Be Recognized

The significance of this situation must be apparent to the dullest mind. In a very real sense the future of this young man is in the hands of his superintendent. This fact need occasion no alarm. The superintendent understands the situation. Where this young man now stands he once stood. His anxiety and occasional alarm is often recalled with a smile. He remembers the friendly interest of the superintendent, his fatherly advice and sparing criticism, his generous commendation and cautious censure. All he then wished his superintendent might be he aims to be to every young man on his district. The young preacher will not be judged hastily, reprimanded coldly, nor treated harshly. It is probable that the superintendent will become his life long friend, and that out of this delightful district association will grow an intimacy that will deepen in time and ripen in eternity.

Personal Attitude Toward the Superintendent

Let it be natural and cordial. The superintendent should not be embarrassed by obsequious attention or elaborate entertainment. Greet him with the ease and courtesy with which you would welcome any guest to your home. Do not set a standard of effusiveness to which you will not

adhere three weeks after his retirement from office! The superintendent will not expect special consideration. Pay him the respect due his character and station, but eschew eulogistic introductions. Make him your friend and the friend of your family, but avoid the impression that your hospitality is on the basis of compensation!

Prepare for His Coming

Examine the Discipline carefully concerning the business of the Quarterly Conference. The fact that this is often neglected will make your preparedness all the more conspicuous. Give the superintendent a revised roll of the membership of the Conference. Have the names of the trustees, superintendents, and presidents of the various societies recently elected ready for confirmation. The pastor's report should be carefully written, covering the various items of interest throughout the life of the church. The president or superintendent of each society should have a written report.

The pastor's attitude toward the Quarterly Conference will determine the estimate in which it is held by the people. If it is listlessly announced, and little or no preparation made to answer the questions which it will raise, the attendance will be indifferent and the interest dis-

appointing. The entire work of the church should pass in review before the Quarterly Conference two or three times each year. This is the design of the Discipline, and should be the practice of the church. The list of nominations for the various offices and committees should be in triplicate, one copy handed to the secretary, another to the superintendent, and the third kept by the pastor. Items of information and plans of work not specifically called for should be presented under the head of "other business." The treasurer should be at the Conference, and prepared for an interview with the superintendent!

Routine suggestions? Commonplace requirements always observed, did you say? Just accompany your superintendent to the next half dozen Conferences and see what takes place. One long-time preacher looked up in surprise when his report was called for.

"Report," said he, evidently in a bewildered state of mind, "on what?"

"On hog-raising in this community," the superintendent prompted.

After the uproar had ceased the pastor rose to his feet and blandly said, "I report progress!"

The superintendent gently inquired, "in which direction, forward or backward?"

The pastor of about forty members, some of whom averred that he was grossly careless of

pastoral duties, started out boldly to read his report, but after one short paragraph looked up in evident distress of mind and said, "I have had so much to do lately that I have been trying for two weeks to finish this report, but could not find the time to do it."

When the superintendent asks, "Who are confirmed as Sunday school superintendents?" the pastor will sometimes answer, "No changes." The members of the Conference will begin to correct him:

"Was not William Miller elected superintendent over at Eagle Hollow?"

"O, yes," the unabashed preacher replies, "I forgot that change."

And so the agony continues down through the list. Ignorance from the pastor as to what has happened on his own charge, and information from the laity!

But the climax was reached in a Quarterly Conference where the young preacher, six years in the ministry and all his life in the Methodist Church, insisted that the stewards were to be elected by the first Quarterly Conference, and could not be convinced until the superintendent handed him a copy of the Discipline.

"Well," said he, "it is a small matter, anyway."

But it was not a small matter when, at the close of the Conference, he importuned the super-

intendent to know what his prospects were for the coming year.

"A little foggy," the superintendent might well have replied. "But, never mind, that 'is a little matter, anyway!'"

The pastor was the least interested member in that Quarterly Conference. He had no report. No one had a report. Although the preacher was closing his third year, he had no information to volunteer, and none could have been extracted with a pair of forceps. Though he did show considerable enthusiasm over the abandonment of one of the churches of the circuit!

Such a Conference is a painful experience. What can be done either with or for such a preacher? Little can be done with him, and nothing much can be done for him. But can he not be awakened? Well, go around and try it. How can the man who sleeps with his eyes open ever be awakened? What did the Master say about casting pearls? Sometimes, sad to relate, it *is* useless.

Be Loyal to Your District

Maybe you would like to be elsewhere, but you are here, and while here do not become an incumbrance or a nuisance. Affiliate cordially with district movements. They may not need you, but you need them. Attend every meeting of the

District Ministerial Association, or write the superintendent a note of explanation. Take your assigned place on the program. Give particular attention to the composition of your essay or the preparation of your address. Your first appearance before this body may be of great importance to you. The mental yardstick will be applied to your production. Your appearance, voice, subject, treatment, rhetoric, enunciation, and pronunciation will be carefully noted.

You do not care what they think, since your future will not depend upon their judgment? Perhaps not, but one's reputation is made up of many bits of information, conjectures, conclusions, gathered on many occasions and in various ways. And it certainly will be a bad beginning to send forty or fifty men back to their various communities in a critical mood. But your unfortunate attitude intimates a serious fault. *Cynical indifference is one of the deadliest of all ministerial shortcomings.* It generally spells careless preparation for the pulpit, carelessness in pastoral work, downright indifference in administration, and positive failure everywhere regardless of opportunities.

But you will not only have your fellow pastors to please, you will have your superintendent to satisfy. He does not have many opportunities to hear your public deliverances. You will have no

keener or more critical listener in the district audience. This gathering means much to the superintendent, permitting consultation with his entire working force several times each year. The program is largely his handiwork. There district programs are adopted and inaugurated.

Keeping in Touch with Headquarters

Correspondence from the district superintendent should receive immediate attention. Put the quarterly bulletin in a conspicuous and safe place, and let the time for the next Quarterly Conference be carefully noted. Do not let the superintendent find that you have "forgotten all about it." Every circular received from the superintendent should be carefully read, its exact contents understood, and full compliance granted. Drop the superintendent an occasional line about the happenings on your charge. When near his home step in for a friendly chat. Be cheerful and optimistic about your work.

Your Next Appointment

Say little to the superintendent about it. Wait until you have raised two or three crops on your present farm. Nothing wearies a superintendent more than the ill-timed speculations of a young preacher about his next appointment. He cannot tell just now where you ought to be in two or

three years. It all depends on how tall you grow in the meantime, and also on the available openings when the time comes to move. Long-distance expectations should not be cultivated. It is understood that you are anxious about the matter, but so is the superintendent, and the best way to provide for the future is to take care of the present job. The superintendent will broach the matter to you in the fullness of time.

However, when the right time comes, do not hesitate to open your mind fully to the superintendent. This is his problem. Take no radical action about next year without his knowledge, nor, if possible, without his consent. Never make it impossible to return for another year. Going is always possible in the itinerancy, but *the going* is apt to be a little rough when one has to go.

Do not demand definite information from the superintendent. Like the weather man, he can only deal in "probabilities." Openings may occur later in the Conference year—they generally do—but definite assurances cannot be based upon that assumption.

Cultivate staying qualities. Rigidly resist the tendency to restlessness. Conditions may be unsatisfactory, but there is no certainty that they will be better elsewhere. Human beings make conditions, and the same kind of folks are found everywhere. Compel yourself to get along with

peculiar people. Maybe some people are having a hard time getting along with you! But they are not going to move out of the community to get rid of you. Do not think that you must fly to pastures new the moment Sister Grouchy stiffens her back or Brother Sparks emits a few. It is only a matter of habit with them. If you will get over it, they will. Come, now, moral cowardice is never attractive. Turn your foolish fears into joyous laughter; then get down on your knees and thank the Lord for the privilege of staying just where you are and changing flight into steadfastness; then go into the study and write the superintendent the most glowing letter your quickened faculties can dictate; then start in to visit all the shut-ins, the down-and-outs, the physically frail and spiritually discouraged of the flock; then draw up a refreshing draught from the deep wells of salvation, and hold its sparkling contents to the lips of your famishing flock—O, how their eyes will open with glad surprise, their hearts leap with joy!—and right away they will say: "We must not let this young preacher go. We dare not wait for the Quarterly Conference. The official board must act at once, and get his consent to remain."

Make no public reference to the matter of going or staying. Once upon a time a preacher did that. In an address of welcome to a convention

he grew eloquent about his church, and concluded: "These are dangerous things to say in the presence of so many preachers, but I want to warn them that this pulpit will not be vacant for four years and nine months" (the church then had a five-year limit), "and I have so notified my official board." His notification must not have been duly served, for he vacated the pulpit just nine months later! It rarely pays to take undue liberties with an official board. In such a bout the clerical knight will always lose his lance.

Let your work show that you are entitled to stay, *but say nothing about it.* If the church takes favorable action, well and good. But do not court it, and do not tie yourself up so closely that a change will be impossible—unless there is real necessity for your return—it matters not what opportunities the Annual Conference may reveal. Tell the Quarterly Conference that you are a loyal Methodist preacher, and that the disposition of your case must be left in the hands of your ecclesiastical overseer, the presiding bishop.

The Personal Equation

After all, in every realm of human endeavor the personal factor is decisive. There may be contributory causes and considerations, but the man himself, his tendencies, habits, and peculiari-

ties, determine his position in life. One's place in an Annual Conference is fixed in like manner. Conditions over which he has had no control have had little to do with it. He may have other, extensive and eloquent explanations. If one could just trim him up a bit, lopping off eccentricities, ironing out wrinkles, and toning down peculiarities, he might be made to resemble a worth-while preacher. But these "eccentricities," "wrinkles," and "peculiarities" are his particular delight. He would not part with them for a kingdom. They are the "expression of his personality."

Some Men Not Adapted to the Ministry

It may not be a question of education or character, nor an absence of earnest desire to do everything possible to achieve success. An acceptable ministry is not possible to some men who have deemed themselves called to the work. The ministry is a peculiar occupation, requiring intellectual grasp, temperamental poise, and emotional control demanded nowhere else.

Ill Temper a Handicap

The ministry is a poor occupation for a quick-tempered man. He will have countless incentives to exercise his talent. Parishioners with hair-trigger tempers, set off by the slightest whiff of criticism or faintest suggestion of disagreement,

will demand unruffled composure on the part of the pastor, however severe the provocation.

Failure in Small Ministries

An occasional preacher is obsessed with the idea that his pulpit is a throne, forgetting that thrones are made for kings, and that the small man who assumes regal prerogatives is both a joke and a tragedy. A few great preachers may affect indifference toward the countless ministries of the pastorate. The people may endure the neglect of which they are keenly conscious because of the extraordinary sermons to which they listen. To such a man the pulpit is a throne. But he is a king, and his kingdom would be more extensive and abiding if he came oftener in contact with the people on the lower levels of their actual life.

A preacher dare not be ignorant of or indifferent to the sorrows and misfortunes of his people. The arrows that pierce their breasts must enter his heart also. *They must.* Indifference will be fatal. He should sense trouble as the needle does the pole. If he is a natural recluse, living in the atmosphere of intellectual abstraction, he should deliberately cultivate methods of approach to the hearts of his people. They will endure little from him, and he can do little with them or for them, until throned in their affections. Min-

istry in sorrow is never forgotten. It is the pastor's supreme opportunity. Accepted, it is the open-sesame to every heart; neglected, it creates a barrier which can never be removed.

Another man, attentive in trouble, is neglectful of regular pastoral duties. It is easy to find excuses for the things we do not like to do. And the preacher who is determined to remain out of the homes of his people can find many excuses for staying in his own. There are always a few sick folk that the preacher should visit the first Saturday evening, Sabbath afternoon, or Monday morning that he ministers to his new flock. Getting his own house in order is not nearly so important as getting into the homes where there is sickness or bereavement of any character. Every home should be entered before the summer vacation, and its valuable data tabulated. Within six months his reputation as a pastor will be made or marred.

An occasional preacher is an adept in the gentle art of displeasing folks—and keeps his talent bright by exercise! To be foolishly fearless, in his estimation, is to be excessively religious—confounding religion and nonsense! While he should not shun to declare "the whole counsel of God," it should be done at the right time, in the right place, and *in the right way.* He should be sure that it is "the counsel of God," and not

his personal prejudices, or ill-advised suspicions. He cannot do much with his people until they like him, and nothing when they dislike him.

A pastor was conducting an agent of a church paper to the homes of his people. The matter was presented in a few words at the front door. If the subscription was secured, time was taken to write the name and address, the agent expressed his thanks, smiled pleasantly, and departed. If the subscription was refused, the agent frowned, turned abruptly away and entered his carriage. After this disagreeable episode had occurred several times, the pastor said:

"See here, friend, it may be all right for you to turn away impatiently when people do not subscribe, and plainly show the resentment you evidently feel. You never expect to see them again, and whether you insult them or not is a matter of indifference to you. But I shall probably have to live here for years, and cannot afford to alienate them over this matter. I must have time to end each interview amicably, especially when they do not subscribe." He grudgingly assented, but little improvement was noted in his personal conduct.

Little mistakes in grammar, persistent mispronunciations, a commonplace sentence repeated *ad nauseam* will count heavily against a preacher. Trifling? Not at all. Perfection is built of

trifles, and "perfection is no trifle." Does not the Good Book say something about the "little flies that spoil the ointment"? And is it not true that the slightest deflection from the normal always tells heavily against the man who occupies a public position? A talented preacher had driven his congregation almost to distraction over the constant use of the personal pronoun. An exasperated parishioner declared that he had said "I" sixty-seven times in one sermon! The preacher was not egotistical, and would have been mortified by the revelation of his habit. The chief objection offered to another excellent man was his constant use of the phrase "along this line." No man can appear so often before a public congregation, and speak with such frequency and length, without exposure to criticism. These are curable defects. Great men get rid of them; wise men listen to advice or are taught by experience, and improve with the years; but small men cannot see, or seeing, will not heed.

Some preachers are deficient in the courtesies and conventionalities of life. They learn little by observation and contact. Their table manners are execrable. Guests must wait upon themselves or suffer the consequences. Some have not learned that a knife should not be put in one's mouth, or a spoon turned upside down and the bowl licked out, or that a fork should not be thrust across

the table to spear an innocent potato or helpless slice of bread. It is hastily admitted that these offenses against good taste are rare. But that they should ever be committed is both unnecessary and reprehensible.

In other words, a preacher must not only be a Christian—the living embodiment of the word—but he must be a Christian *gentleman.* The crude manners of some of the fathers were deplorable but excusable. If their advantages had been few, those to whom they ministered had been fewer. But backwoods manners must go with backwoods times, or those who cling to them must stay in the backwoods. Observation, to the observing, is a great university, with keen-witted professors, difficult courses, and all too few students. Its curricula are stiff, its "exams" difficult, and its degrees must be earned. Never to matriculate is a misfortune; never to graduate, a crime. But to be an alumnus, ah! that is an honor possible to all, but achieved by few.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERILS OF THE ITINERANCY

Life has its inexorable limitations. However much is possible, much more is impossible. But how foolish to attempt nothing because one cannot do everything! Life is divided between opportunities and barriers. It is also true that every system, however efficient, has its limitations. Doing a thing one way, however wise, is never all-wise. It is not claimed that the itinerancy combines the advantages of all possible systems, and avoids all their errors or weaknesses. The itinerancy developed along independent lines, hewing its own way to greatness, with no thought of copying the advantages or avoiding the defects of other systems. The itinerancy did not originate in compromise and combination—a labored effort at inclusion and exclusion—but boldly struck out an independent course. Much of its power is owing to this fact.

But efficiency and perfection are not synonymous terms. If efficiency were impossible without perfection, much of the work of the world would remain undone. That the itinerancy is

efficient is asserted, that it is perfect is not assumed. Hostile critics have made formidable catalogues of its theoretical weaknesses, but they have generally failed to materialize in practice. Let some of these "perils," alleged and real, be noted.

Promotes Restlessness in the Churches

The itinerancy knows nothing of "settled" pastorates. When used by certain denominations this phraseology has an air of finality—more frequently in the language than the fact! The pastor is "called" for an indefinite period, and "settled" for years, perhaps for life. The contract is final, and both parties settle down to "make the best of it." The futility of criticism stifles its expression. Plans requiring years for consummation can be slowly brought to fruition.

The itinerancy easily voices discontent, however slight. The pastor is appointed for a single year. He may remain indefinitely; he must undergo the ordeal of annual reappointment. Dissent may easily find expression.

This peril, formidable in theory, is negligible in fact. The "settled" pastor—except in isolated survivals—is a legend. Nonitinerating preachers itinerate without an itinerancy! A difficult undertaking.

The average pastorate in the itinerancy is

lengthening, while it is being significantly shortened in certain nonitinerating systems. Indeed, many of the latter churches no longer "install" pastors, but engage supplies for definite periods, or who may be dismissed at any time upon due notice. The efficient itinerant remains until he is pleased to move.

It is undeniable that the itinerancy "speeds up" the itinerant. The fact that he may be removed at the end of the year is not forgotten by the average man, and makes him anxious to deserve the privilege of remaining. The man who must do well to return will do better than the man who remains whether he does well or ill.

Nor is it to be regretted that the churches demand an efficient ministry, and have the power of discipline if it is not realized. Efficiency is demanded in every other sphere of life, why not in the ministry? Why should incompetency be protected where the issues are so grave? Most positions are not gratuities. Why should the ministry be an exception? Churches in the itinerancy are quick to recognize and reward merit, and more should not be required of any system.

Encourages Intellectual Indolence

It is charged that the itinerancy encourages mental sloth; that frequent removals make it possible to use the old sermons, and that when

one has acquired a two, three, or four-years' course he may enjoy an intellectual vacation during the remainder of his ministry; and that he will avoid the patient mental plodding necessary to the man who may remain a lifetime, or must stay until he has a call elsewhere.

There may have been force in this argument when the itinerancy operated under the short-term limit of one, two, or three years, but it is without significance in the itinerancy as at present constituted. The clock no longer protects the mental shirk. Efficiency is the present-day time limit, and it is natural for every man to push it as far into the future as possible.

The capable man in the itinerancy remains just as long as his capable brother in any other system—until he is pleased to move or is desired elsewhere. The mental indolent lives in a moving truck, whatever the system.

Selfishness in Administration

It is sometimes assumed that the itinerancy must succumb to administrative difficulties. Selfishness in the minds of the administrators, even though reduced to the infinitesimal residuum, must ultimately wreck the system. The administration, always remaining in the hands of the ministry, must eventually grow intolerable to the churches. The Cabinet, being entirely composed

of preachers, must always give a partisan decision. This will become unbearable, and cause the disintegration of the system.

It has also been asserted that the average appointment will not be based on merit, but upon favors already received or a lively anticipation of those to come. Those in authority will have friends to reward, enemies to punish, and a machine to build and keep in repair.

All of which is gross slander, existing only in the minds of hostile critics, and unrealized in one hundred and fifty years of itinerant history It is inevitable that an occasional administration should evoke questions and misgivings; or that an ignorant, careless, or selfish administrator should compromise the system. But the attempt of a bishop or district superintendent to abuse the confidence of the church would be instantly thwarted. Such abuse could not be concealed, and the administrator would be quickly checkmated and ejected from his position. And if an entire Cabinet should enter into collusion (an unthinkable contingency) to prostitute its powers to selfish ends, it would not only sow to the winds, but soon reap the whirlwind. The whole process of appointment making is accompanied with too much publicity, and surrounded with too many checks and limitations, for any man or group of men to plan injustice, wreak vengeance, or dis-

pose the preachers so as to perpetuate an unworthy regime. The church must always have great men who will lead her embattled hosts to victory. But leaders necessitate leading men, clear in vision, decisive in opinion, safe in counsel, and influential in dictating decisions. That such men either could or would divert the high powers of the itinerancy to unworthy ends is both cheap slander and impossible in practice.

Too Systematic

The church has been charged with making a fetish of the itinerancy, and is indifferent to its defects. It is iron-clad, hide-bound, a militaristic method, hewing to one line always, untaught by its own failures, and unchanged to meet the varying conditions in society; that it is method mad, and system run to seed, ruling with a rod of iron, and giving genius little opportunity for expression.

None acquainted with the history of the itinerancy can assert ignorance or indifference to its defects on the part of the church. Each General Conference has gone carefully over the entire system, and has not hesitated to make changes when deemed desirable. But the cardinal principle of the itinerancy—the possible annual rotation of all the preachers—has not been disturbed.

Not that all preachers either must or ought to change annually, but that they may do so should the emergency arise, is the pivot of the itinerancy. That system which enables one man to remain in one church a lifetime, and which, at the same time, makes it possible for him to be removed any hour, day, week, month, or year, is little less than inspired. It contains the two greatest possible benefits: variety and safety in administration.

If to be efficient, if to get the utmost out of men of which they are capable is to be militaristic, then the itinerancy must plead guilty. If to keep men at one definite task through the workday of life be method-madness, and if to compel men to hew to the original line be system run to seed, then the itinerancy is the culprit at the bar. And as for ruling men with a rod of iron, none are ruled but the willing, and they soon learn that it is better to be tied up somewhere than to be adrift down the stream.

A Governing Aristocracy

The itinerancy demands too many rulers. Those elected for life form an ecclesiastical hierarchy—an idea detestable to Protestants—while those appointed for briefer periods are sure to abuse their short-lived power. Too few men have too much power. Those who do not have it scheme

to get it, and those who have it plan to keep it; while those who can never have it become sycophants at the feet of those who possess it.

A dreadful picture, is it not? These things were prophesied of the itinerancy in the days of its infancy. How deplorable must be its condition after the lapse of a century and a half! This "ecclesiastical hierarchy" has had time to do its worst, and these official underlings have enjoyed many seasons for hatching their nefarious plots.

Once more history shows that the pen of the hostile prophet is generally dipped in the ink of prejudice. The distressing evils seen by critical theorizers have never been realized. The itinerancy is too democratic, its operation kept too much in the open, and its operators held to too strict and too quick an accounting to permit the growth of prelatical tendencies, or the development of sinister scheming. The chief pastors of the itinerancy, the bishops, have never arrogated prerogatives that were not clearly granted by the constitution and custom of the church. And should they ever be so minded, retribution would be swift and unerring. The itinerancy is not governed by "rulers," but directed by fellow itinerants in the episcopacy and district superintendency. Character and ability inevitably lead certain men to posts of leadership. Differing ideas as to policy, and divergent judgments as to men

fittest to hold the high places of power are the unavoidable sources of disagreement. But the same difficulties exist everywhere, in all churches, and in every organized branch of society.

If the itinerancy were governed by "rulers" each session of an Annual Conference would have its aftermath of rebellious itinerants. Not that every man is satisfied at the close of an Annual Conference, but a commission of unbiased investigators would conclude that essential justice had been accorded to all. Most of them may have desired something different, and even a majority may have deemed themselves worthy of something better, but they have not been shifted about helter-skelter at the whim of an arbitrary hierarchy, or to accommodate the schemes of adroit politicians. Each man is about where you would expect to find him. If this were not true, every Conference would close with an indignation meeting, and the bishops would be kept busy through each year readjusting the appointments, and every year would witness the exodus of some of the finest men in the connection who would no longer submit to the tyranny of irresponsible control.

Elusive Responsibility

Fixing the appointments is a matter of mystery, so the objection runs. No one can tell just

who does it, how it is done, to whom credit belongs, or upon whom censure should descend. In nonitinerant systems responsibility is direct and inescapable. The congregation assumes full responsibility for its decision. But the itinerancy often leaves the matter undecided between the bishop, the district superintendent, the pastor, the Quarterly Conference, or a committee. If the outcome is satisfactory, each will modestly assume credit, but if disastrous, each will point to the other. Though not often given vocal expression, there is unrest among the churches and preachers because of the secretive manner in which the appointments are made.

Well, the appointments cannot be fixed in a town caucus, nor should they be submitted to discussion and revision by an Annual Conference. The Discipline provides a safe and sane method, assuring justice to all, and making the avoidance of responsibility impossible. The bishop may have taken the advice of another officer of the church, the district superintendent, or he may have accepted the judgment of a committee representing the local unit, but in either case the adoption of a recommendation changes it into a personal decision. The bishop who does not know enough about his preachers, superintendents, and churches accurately to gauge the value of their advice cannot escape culpability.

There are many cases where the responsibility really belongs to the local church or the district superintendent. The bishop will reluctantly accept the judgment of the one or the other. In such cases he should be exculpated, the responsibility definitely located, and willingly assumed. Palpable efforts to avoid responsibility are few. Usually the church or the preacher will be told just why it was done, and why it could not have been otherwise. After all, there is something of far greater importance about the appointments than the location of responsibility: the certainty that, in the vast majority of cases, the right thing shall be done. This is the chief glory of the itinerancy.

Nor can it be admitted that making the appointments is surrounded with an air of mystery. While the appointments are not made in open Conference, the preachers know the trend of events in the Cabinet during the process of their incubation. Every preacher is down somewhere all the time. The superintendent will talk to him freely about the future, explaining the exact status, and asking his opinion in the event of certain contingencies. Occasionally a few radical changes will have to be made at the last moment, but even then brief counsultation and limited choice will be possible. Every effort is made to eliminate mystery and surprise.

Difficulties Not Perils

These discrepancies are difficulties in administration, rather than "perils" jeopardizing the success or threatening the life of the itinerancy. The pathway of achievement ever bristles with difficulties, and it would be unreasonable to expect the itinerancy to escape the common lot of men and methods. Difficulties are not inherent defects, nor does their existence always constitute a menace. That the itinerancy is well qualified to cope with these difficulties its long history illustrates.

But it is only fair to say that the itinerancy, masterful as it has proven itself in every land and clime, is not without its perils. They cannot be eliminated by legislation, nor outgrown by experience. They are the legitimate offspring of the system, and will last while the itinerancy endures. To deny their existence would be futile; to recognize their existence, the best means to check their growth.

A Significant Weakness

The bishop is obliged to appoint every member of an Annual Conference to some field of labor. He can neither weed out the incompetents nor supplant them with more capable men. The itinerant has a life position, and the power of

dismissal or nonemployment, so long as he lives within the law, does not exist. This is the simple truth.

It is seen at once that membership in an Annual Conference is an asset worth while—a crown which no man can take away. Bishops, superintendents, Conferences, and churches are helpless. Once a member of an Annual Conference, a preacher must have an appointment, unless located for unacceptability, or the contravention of law will permit exclusion. This membership contains certain rights and privileges which must be recognized. The demand for employment cannot be denied. Unacceptable? It makes no difference. Must he not always be thrust upon an unwilling congregation? It makes no difference. Does he not divide and weaken every charge, and is he not so constituted that improvement is impossible? Granted. Everybody who knows the man will agree with you. But what are you going to do about it? You can grit your teeth and clench your fists, and first blow hot and then blow cold, but it will make no difference! This man is a member of an Annual Conference, and so long as he lives within the law, *and stands upon his rights,* he must have an appointment.

This is the burden of the itinerancy—*its greatest peril.* Some men must be appointed year after year about whom only one question can be asked:

Where can they do the least harm? To appoint men foredoomed to failure is a misfortune.

The church early recognized this grievous deficiency, and after long sufferance, endeavored to provide a legal remedy. Provision was made whereby an unacceptable preacher, even though a member of an Annual Conference, might be located—in effect, left without an appointment, and without his consent. The paragraph in the Discipline of 1916 reads as follows:

"When it is alleged of a member of an Annual Conference that he is so unacceptable or inefficient as to be no longer useful in his work, or that, without reason of impaired health of himself or his family disqualifying him for pastoral work, he engages in secular business, his case shall be referred to a committee of five or more members of his Conference for inquiry; and if said committee shall find the allegations sustained, and shall so recommend, the Conference shall request him to locate. If he shall refuse, and the conditions complained of continue, the Conference, at its next session, after formal trial and conviction, may locate him without his consent. But he shall have the right of appeal to a Judicial Conference."

It will be seen at once that this law is applicable only to extreme cases of nonefficiency, and even then every right of the accused is jealously safeguarded. That it is seldom invoked proves that it is less drastic than could be desired.

At this point nonitinerant systems score

heavily. Only the fittest survive. The man without a call is like the man without a country—at the end of his resources. No one is charged with the obligation of finding him a church, and no congregation is in duty bound to accept his services. He automatically retires to private life.

Of course there are certain extra-legal, but legitimate processes of elimination which the church has employed. Such men are generally kept where they can do the least harm. When they see that improvement is impossible, they are often discouraged into finding other employment.

The district superintendent may deal faithfully with the derelicts, but soon finds that it is unavailing. As well try to start a fire with rain-soaked ashes as to teach a natural defective how to become an effective minister. 'Twere just as easy to raise potatoes with words, hoe corn with phrases, or catch fish with adjectives! If a man does not know how to make shoes, he can be taught; if he does not know how to build a fence, he may practice until proficient, but the man who does not know how to be a minister can never be taught. Its secrets are *sensed,* not learned. Instead of tinkering the teapot with a thousand leaks, the district superintendent owes it to his church and to the cause which he repre-

sents to get these men back into private life at the earliest possible moment.

It may be urged that the doors of the Annual Conference should be carefully guarded, that Quarterly Conferences and district superintendents should exercise great caution in recommending candidates for admission. Agreed; but the future often eludes closest scrutiny. Time plays curious pranks with human judgments. The scarcely admitted often cut wide swaths in the harvest field, while the loudly acclaimed faint with weariness under the mere "heft" of the cradle. Life is a curious chancery, and an Annual Conference cannot always tell what the future holds in store when a young man stands at the door, hat in hand, begging admission. Certificates, diplomas, and the golden words of optimistic sponsors may be true as to the past, but astray as to the future. The Conference can only exercise its best judgment, *and take the risk.*

Too Many Scapegoats

The itinerancy makes it easy for incompetency to "put the blame elsewhere." The disappointed preacher may loudly acclaim himself the victim of administrative injustice. Bishops have been unreasonable and successive superintendents have plotted his downfall or conspired against his advancement.

Nonitinerant systems offer no such handy refuge. Failure suffers its own reward. There are no responsible authorities, in theory or fact. If successful, the honor is undivided; if a failure, the responsibility is unavoidable. Every mariner pilots his own craft. If he gets into shoal water, and finally strands upon the beach, he cannot sue the pilot unless, indeed, he institutes action against himself. The nonitinerant system takes a man into mid-stream, politely conducts him to the taffrail, and bids him plunge in. If he can swim, that is his good fortune; if he sinks, it is too bad, but no one is to blame. The itinerancy would throw him an Episcopal Life Preserver, and would then put him into the hands of a superintendent charged with the duty of teaching him how to swim. Congregationalism gives a man the opportunity to make the most out of himself, while the itinerancy makes the most out of the man.

This is the reason one will find critical itinerants. They may really have fared better in the itinerancy than under any other possible system. They have been coached, protected, endured, and patiently moved about in various types of appointments, but to no avail. Perhaps it would be unreasonable to expect them to locate the difficulty. It is so easy to lose the trail when it gets near home! And it is curious how men like to

go up to their neighbor's front door and say, "The culprit lives here." The saddest part about it is the conviction that they are right!

No one can enlighten such a man. His best friends do not like to tell him the whole truth. The very attempt will sever the ties of friendship. Their motives will be misunderstood and their alleged treachery denounced. *Unless one's most serious defects are self-seen they can never be known.* And he who attempts to enlighten another will not only show his own ignorance, but sow nettles before his unshod feet.

It is freely admitted that bishops and superintendents make mistakes, serious in nature and far-reaching in their consequences. But that any itinerant is the victim of intentional injustice, deliberately planned and insistently continued, is unthinkable. In a system where all the processes are known and scrutinized it is impossible.

CHAPTER IX

ACCIDENT OR PROVIDENCE?

WHICH alternative do the facts justify? After traversing the entire territory of the itinerancy, its origin, development, achievements, operation, difficulties, and perils, which conclusion is inevitable—accidental or providential?

If an accident, it was both fortunate and unusual. An accident is "something that takes place without one's foresight or expectation." The itinerancy was not the result of "foresight or expectation" on the part of any human being—not even Wesley's. But that does not make the itinerancy an accident. Instead of stumbling upon the itinerancy, it is believed that Wesley was led into it. The very absence of human "foresight or expectation" indicates that such an event must have originated in the Divine Mind.

If the itinerancy is the child of Providence, there should be simple, indisputable data upon which to base the conclusion. Providential events cannot be established by astute processes of reasoning. The evidence must be of such character and abundance that "he who runs may read." Does such evidence exist in connection with the

origin and development of the itinerancy? It is thought so.

The New Testament will be searched in vain for an inspired polity. None was left by our Lord, and none was given the stamp of apostolic authority. In this particular there is a radical difference between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament church was intended for a single nation, just emerging from slavery, cursed by the low ideals and bitter memories of a long and debasing bondage. Everything had to be carefully specified.

The New Testament church was to be ages long and nations wide—for all times, peoples, and tongues. Therefore no system of administration would be capable of universal adaptability. Varying types of civilization, different conceptions of truth, and divergent interpretations of the same truth would demand different administrative forms. The New Testament deals in principles, germinal truths, fundamental facts. Their organization into definite forms for propaganda is wisely left to the varying needs of times and peoples.

Jesus pursued one method in disseminating the truth, but he did not bind all his followers, in all times and climes, to the same method. His method was the best for himself, his age, his opportunities.

The apostles seized the best means at hand to publish the truth, and the infant church assumed such organized form as circumstances warranted, but nothing was said about these forms being binding upon future generations of Christians.

The organization of the Old Testament church was adapted to the accomplishment of its definite task. The adoption of a rigid and minute ritual, and committing it to unchangeableness in organization, confined it forever to a single people. It could never be anything but the church of the Jewish nation. Nor did it have a wider mission. It was to prepare the way for something better.

In the fullness of time the preparatory and passing—the Jewish Church—was succeeded by the final and indestructible—the Christian Church. But Christianity is without inspired ritual, ceremonies, or polity. This omission is intentional, not accidental. A polity suited to the year A. D. 1950 would have been a misfit in the year A. D. 50. The new church was to fit the universal mind, appeal to the universal heart, and stir the universal conscience. Its appeal was not to be limited by being shut up to certain eternally unchangeable formulas, modes of worship, or methods of organization.

In assuming, therefore, the providential origin and development of the itinerancy it is not inti-

mated that other systems are without divine sanction. The opposite is sincerely believed. And it is altogether likely that other methods of organization, undreamed of to-day, will be providentially developed in future ages.

But what facts suggest the providential origin and development of the itinerancy?

1. It came in the fullness of time. It was not born too soon nor yet too late. Had it been the child of prophecy, its advent could not have been more auspicious. Existing methods could not cope with the perils surrounding the Christian Church of the eighteenth century. Methods of ministerial supply were stereotyped, inelastic, and sterile. The whole world was aquiver with new ideas. Human thought was overleaping ancient boundaries. Nations were migrating and new civilizations were developing in the distant parts of the habitable world. Existing methods of religious propaganda were inadequate. The times were portentous with religious peril. The church was timidly facing an uncertain future. Bishop Burnet declared that he was "oppressed night and day" with "sad thoughts" on the prospects of Christianity in the realm. "I cannot," he adds, "look on without the deepest concern, when I see the imminent ruin hanging over this church, and, by consequence, over the whole reformation. The outward state of things is black

enough, God knows; but that which heightens my fears rises chiefly from the inward state into which we are unhappily fallen." Isaac Watts sent out a clarion call for "the recovery of dying religion in the world." The intellectual leaders of the nation were either indifferent or openly hostile. Hobbs, Tindale, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Gibbon, among the mightiest leaders of skepticism in all time, were guiding the higher classes of society in revolt against Christianity. The situation could be saved only by a counter revolution among the common people.

Religion needed a new appeal and a new method. *Methodism supplied both!* The appeal must be to the masses, and the method adapted to their needs. The appeal without the method would be like seed without soil, while the method without the appeal would be like soil without seed. The unforeseen itinerancy was the providential method for the diffusion of the new appeal. The systematized wanderings of the itinerants brought religion into the home life of the common people throughout the English-speaking world. Without the itinerancy the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield would scarcely have created a ripple upon the surface of human affairs.

The situation in America was none the less critical. Infidelity was rampant in the centers

of learning, where many undergraduates were proudly calling themselves after the moral monstrosities of the French Revolution. Many of the leaders of the new nation had been powerfully affected by the continental drift from Christianity, and while not avowed atheists, were skeptical of Christianity. Infidelity was strong in the cities, where its baneful literature had secured wide circulation, while the wilderness was being settled with a population largely without religious training, convictions, or opportunities. The situation was deplorable when the itinerants began to thread their perilous way through the primeval forests in search of the lost sheep. Fifty years later would have been too late; a hundred years later and the tragedy of an irreligious continent could hardly have been avoided. If the early itinerants had come directly from the skies, their appearance could not have been more opportune; and if the itinerancy had been revealed to some American Moses, it could not have been better adapted to meet the exacting conditions of the New World.

2. The itinerancy was providential in its mode of operation. It was neither a modification nor an elaboration of other systems, but an entirely new departure. It was not a mosaic pieced together out of the best of existing systems, but a new creation.

(1) It introduced the principle of scientific rotation and oversight into religious work. Instead of settling a young man over a single congregation and leaving him severely alone with all his tasks and problems, without investigation, suggestion, or the power of correction, the itinerancy provided official overseers, and, by terminating each pastorate annually, introduced variety and efficiency in administration.

If the itinerancy were built to-day by a modern efficiency expert, it is difficult to see how it could be improved. No man is employed indefinitely by a congregation because it cannot get rid of him without risking disruption. The itinerancy does not depend upon written reports, but sends a living investigator, and one who is much more than a tabulator of statistical data. It knows where its most distant preachers are located, how well they are doing, whether they could do better elsewhere, and where.

(2) The itinerancy permitted the employment of men with moderate gifts. Its earliest triumphs were mainly won by men who could have accomplished little in any other system. It has always utilized the man with a single talent. Men whose natural gifts and intellectual equipment would not have permitted an indefinite pastorate anywhere turned thousands toward the cross as they swept back and forth over their great circuits.

(3) It eliminated waste through nonemployment. The early itinerants did not confine their labors to the Sabbath day. They preached every day—whenever an appointment could be made or a congregation gathered. The modern itinerant may not preach so often, but he is continuously employed from the time he enters the Conference until his distant retirement. He wastes no time candidating, and loses no strength worrying about the possibility of future employment.

(4) It cultivates pastoral evangelism. Few men in the ministry are capable of indefinite evangelism in the same church or community. One mind can present the truth in only one way, and that way, however novel or forceful, loses power through repetition. A new personality appeals to a new constituency, which naturally becomes limited by time. There is an element of persuasiveness in a new face and voice which is gradually lost with the years. The itinerancy does not make these conditions, but recognizes their existence, and prepares to meet them.

(5) It avoids decadence over prolonged disagreement with or about preachers. A congregation seldom becomes embroiled over the retention or removal of an itinerant. If wanted, he stays; if not wanted, he can go without shame to himself, injury to the church, or serious embarrassment to his future ministry.

(6) Its ministerial fecundity has been the marvel of men. It has, without self-impoverishment, replenished the depleted arteries of sister denominations. It has always been served by an indigenous ministry. The preservation of its militancy, peculiar phraseology, and spiritual earnestness is largely due to this fact. Its ministry is not an admixture of diversive beliefs or antagonistic ideals. Every type of mind and variety of talent is found in the itinerancy, but all are animated by the same purpose.

To suppose that a system so new, so unanticipated, and so unexpectedly adapted to universal conditions should be a mere accident is unthinkable.

3. The perils escaped by the itinerancy indicate providential guidance. The system did not spring from any human mind, not even Wesley's. The plan was not thought out, but the men with whom it originated were thrust out to tell the wonderful things God had done for their souls. Wesley, quick to see and swift to follow the indications of Providence, seized and systematized the new agency. That is to say, the itinerancy was accepted and utilized, not created. In this significant fact the hand of Providence is clearly seen. If thought of, it would have been rejected as an impossibility. But coming quietly, like zephyrs in the springtime, the winter of

Christianity's peril was soon changed into the glorious season of promise and power.

Experience with the itinerancy gradually prepared the mind of Wesley to give American Methodism an episcopal form of government. While Wesley lived English Methodism, on its human side, was the product of one mind, while American Methodism, up to the Christmas Conference of 1784, was the joint product of the decisions and advice of Wesley and the skillful enginery of Francis Asbury. But everything was in a tentative state. It was only a society, uncertain of its rights and nervous about the future. The preachers were growing restless under the rigid rule of Asbury, and there were not wanting suggestions of its curtailment. The arrival of Thomas Coke from England, the organization of the church, and the ordination of Francis Asbury to the office of bishop forever fixed the polity of American Methodism. *It meant the perpetuation of the power of appointment in the hands of one man.* If this power had once been divided, its future restoration would have been doubtful, and it is believed that the history of American Methodism would have been essentially different. The hand of Providence was in these historic events.

Why did the Christmas Conference ordain only twelve men? The people had long clamored for

the sacraments, and the preachers had been eager to administer them. When the way was finally open, why were not all the preachers ordained? It is apparent that the presiding eldership would never have been known if this had been done, or if even a large portion of the ministers had been permitted to administer the sacraments. The ordination of only twelve men, whatever may have been the reasons advanced at the time, gave birth to the presiding eldership. Once more *the hand of man was not seen,* and the conclusion is irresistible that Providence willed this strong arm of service upon the body of the church.

It was scarcely to be expected that the possession of supreme power by the bishops in stationing the preachers should go unchallenged, especially among so democratic a folk as the Methodists. For thirty-five years the controversy smoldered, and then burst into a flame that threatened the entire edifice. It was proposed either to abolish the episcopacy or reduce its powers to zero. But the flames that threatened so much did so little, and the episcopacy came through the ordeal firmly rooted in the life of the church.

The unexpected settlement of the long controversy concerning an elective presiding eldership is considered providential. A majority of the delegates in the General Conference of 1820 had

been elected because they favored an elective eldership. No sooner had the Conference assembled than this became apparent. A compromise committee, composed of three advocates of the change, three of its opponents, and the three bishops, McKendree, George, and Roberts, was appointed. The report of this committee provided that the bishop should nominate three men for each vacant district, and the Conference should proceed to elect without debate. After a brief discussion this astonishing proposition was adopted by a vote of sixty-one to twenty-five! The question had been settled, apparently forever, *and the wrong way.* Only drastic failure could ever force a repeal. So it seemed, but the unexpected happened.

Joshua Soule, who had been elected to the episcopacy a week before this action had been taken, declined ordination, alleging that the new legislation was unconstitutional, in that it tended to "do away episcopacy," by depriving the bishops of an important part of the power placed in their hands for the good of the church. The Conference accepted the resignation, its opinion remaining unchanged.

Bishop McKendree, who had been prevented by feeble health from attending the meetings of the "compromise committee," came before the Conference with a formal protest against the new

measure, as being contrary to the Restrictive Rules and subversive of an efficient itinerancy His appeal made a profound impression, but the determination of the Conference remained unshaken. However, after a lengthy debate, the operation of the new law was suspended for a period of four years. The General Conference of 1824 continued this suspension, even though many of its delegates had been elected because they favored the new law. Public interest in the subject seems to have waned, and the law was repealed by the General Conference of 1828.

The escape of the church from the evils of an elective presiding eldership was providential. It would have been a hazardous experiment, automatically introducing strife and perpetuating controversy in the church.

But enough. It was said by One in the olden time, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The itinerancy can ask no better fate than to be judged by this standard. What has it done? What is it doing? What are its prospects for future achievement? Born in an atmosphere of ridicule and hostility, scorned by other systems as fantastic and temporary, using such instrumentalities as were available, reaching out its hands ever to the common folk of the race, it has crossed the seas, traversed the continents, led millions of earth's sin-cursed inhabitants to the

foot of the cross, and bids fair to become one of the mightiest moral forces working for the regeneration of the race.

Providential? How could the evidence be more conclusive? Undoubtedly, the answer must be "Yes!"