

## XIV

### CINCINNATI EDITOR

COUNTRY-BRED though he was, Matthew Simpson loved Cincinnati, the "Queen City of the West." The bustle of activity, the streets filled with carriages, the hurried gait of the pedestrians, the columns of black smoke, the pounding of steam engines, the long row of river boats swaying at the wharf, all spoke of enterprise and progress. He yielded easily to the throbbing rhythm. Rising early, he bolted his breakfast and strode down the street, sometimes with little Charlie clutching at his hand and trotting to keep up. Even so early, the stores were open, and the merchants had their displays—from trinkets and jewelry to stoves and furniture—on the sidewalk for quick sales. At the Methodist Book Concern the presses were already rolling. He was proud of the Book Concern. The third largest printing establishment in Cincinnati, it ran four cylinder and power presses, employed twenty hands in the plant alone, published three weekly papers, a monthly magazine, hundreds of books and tracts. Its capital stock was valued at some \$200,000.<sup>1</sup>

Reporting the last week in July, Simpson found his desk piled high with "exchanges," but singularly free of original articles. He clipped freely from other religious and secular newspapers, filled up the columns of the first issue, and begged his readers to send in "short articles written in a plain hand." He had nothing for next week's paper, he stated, but obituary notices.<sup>2</sup>

The *Western Christian Advocate*, with 12,000 subscribers and 50,000 readers, was a powerful organ of the Methodist Church. Some thought it more influential than the entire board of bishops. Simpson had already reflected at length on his responsibilities and his policy. For four years Charles Elliott had blown so steadily upon the fires of sectional dissension that all western Methodism was lighted up by the flames. Bishop Morris, whom Simpson consulted, thought everyone

was tired of these "controversial products." He had been bitterly criticized in the correspondence columns of the *Advocate* for his disregard of the "loyal" Methodists in St. Louis, and he believed that an editor should be conciliatory, explaining and defending truth—but "let it be the truth in love, free from anything offensive in manner." Simpson agreed. He would not enter the lists with the South. Nor would he take up the controversies Dr. Elliott had been carrying on with two Cincinnati religious editors. His would be a term of no controversy. He would avoid all personalities and rigidly exclude all subtle allusions and criticisms.<sup>3</sup>

The primary purpose of the religious press as he saw it was "to assist the pulpit in the diffusion of religious truth." He heartily approved of the "usages," "institutions," and "enterprises" of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and he proposed to state clearly and forcibly the Methodist doctrines so as to "bring the truth to operate practically upon the conscience and life of the individual." He would try to remember, however, that denominations differed only in name and organization, and that Christians of whatever church could be one in Christ Jesus, "one in spirit—one in benevolent effort."<sup>4</sup>

He ran articles and editorials on camp meetings, revivals, exposition of prophecy, the locality of heaven. He wrote long articles, filled with general historical and geographical facts on missions to Germany, France, Italy, China, New Mexico. He warmly espoused the cause of California missions, writing at length on the great possibilities in that new empire and expressing the fear that the southern church would occupy the field if his own did not move with more vigor and aggressiveness.

He kept a memorandum book, jotting down topics which might be of interest—parks in Cincinnati, Miami College, discovery of iodine, World's Industrial Fair, Sunday-school singing, the poor in winter, church architecture, religious politics, asylums for the insane. He fussed at the writers of obituaries. It was not the purpose of the paper to eulogize the dead but to edify the living. Such phrases as "weeping friends," or "mourning relatives" should be omitted. Readers would not, like one good friend, cancel their subscriptions because an obituary notice was reduced in length if they realized that fifteen or twenty notices might quote the same verse from a hymn or contain the same eulogistic phrases.<sup>5</sup>

He ran a summary of national news, published political speeches

(including one by his Indiana friend Joe Wright), gave market reports. He ran articles on discovery and travel, on geology, on Fourier and Fourierism, on politeness, on the cure of hiccups. He lauded cities which sponsored fairs with their exhibitions of improved implements, and he praised Professor William Larrabee for his lecture on progress before the Cincinnati Young Men's Mercantile Library Association. He urged every town to "get up a course of lectures for the winter," and thus displace "unworthy amusements." "Society," he wrote, "will use either their *heels* or their *heads*."<sup>6</sup>

He discoursed on the events of the first half of the century: the overthrow of Napoleon; the rise of Austria; the stirrings of the German and Italian peoples; the expulsion of Spain from South and Central America; the quadrupling of American territorial holdings and the consequent extension of "civil freedom"; the advances in the arts and crafts, in science, commerce and industry; the diffusion of learning through schools and colleges; the interpretation of hieroglyphics and their "testimony to the truth of Biblical declarations"; the establishment of foreign missions, and the translation of the Bible into two hundred languages. In all these he found evidence of progress and the mighty workings of Providence.<sup>7</sup>

The book concern agents, both of whom were members of the Ohio conference, made some difficulty in Simpson's efforts to improve the *Advocate*. On the basis of cost, they opposed the use of blocks and cuts, and the paying of correspondents: the paper had done very well in the past without these luxuries. But they had other reasons for their resistance. The Ohio delegation had been opposed to Simpson's election. And now it was apparent that he traveled too much—to Indiana for dedications, to conference sessions, to Indiana and Ohio churches as special preacher. He did not write enough. Most of his editorials were short, and frequently he dispensed with a leader and filled his column with short editorial notes. Dr. Elliott, staying at his desk, had managed to fill his columns without benefit of cuts or correspondents.<sup>8</sup>

But Simpson stood his ground. On the last day of the Pittsburgh general conference he had secured a resolution authorizing the New York and Cincinnati papers to employ correspondents. Daniel Curry of the New York East conference reported that the New York paper had a budget of \$900 for assistance to the editor, and he agreed that the weeklies must be "progressive." "If the Western shall be cooped

in the strait jacket limits proposed by your Agents," he wrote, "its circulation will necessarily be greatly circumscribed."<sup>9</sup>

Simpson appealed to the book committee (elected quadrennially by the general conference to supervise the publications of the Western Book Concern) and received approval of the expenditures, over the opposition of the agents. He hired correspondents in Washington and Philadelphia, New York (his friend Curry), and Paris. He began to use cuts—representing public buildings, colleges, churches, ordinarily with a woman in the foreground, her full skirts sweeping the street and her parasol delicately raised, or a carriage drawn by a spirited horse, his neck arched, his forefoot in mid-air at the beginning of the downward stroke.<sup>10</sup>

## II

Simpson's policy of "no controversy" kept him out of the long and invective-laden exchanges with fellow editors; but he had scarcely settled into the editorial chair when his eye fell upon a letter from a Protestant Episcopal minister to his own church paper, complaining that "the Church" could not advance in the West because of the influence of preachers who were "very generally men of no education, no talent, and very little good manners." Simpson taunted him. Why did not the western people appreciate these "'sons of the church,'" who, without doubt, were "men of *education*, of *talent*, and of *very good manners*"? Ought not such men to "shine like stars amidst the darkness of surrounding space"? Or could it be that the man's letter really savored strongly of "disappointed expectations"? Could it be that the ministers of the West compared so favorably with the sons of "the Church" that these could not win the support of the people and were left "the sole admirers of their own *education*, *talents*, and *good manners*"?<sup>11</sup>

The condescension of the Calvinists was much more bitter to the Methodist taste. The Protestant Episcopal Church, after all, was small and was the mother church of Methodism. But the Calvinists were an aggressive lot, railing against Methodist doctrines as well as Methodist manners. Simpson ignored Dr. Rice and the *Presbyterian of the West* for some months; but he took notice when Rice, chafing at the phenomenal increase in membership among the Methodists, accused them of receiving sinners into the church. The subsequent

quarrel ranged from biblical to theological to personal grounds. Rice cited the Scriptures, the Methodist discipline, appealed to logic, and censured Simpson for his tart replies: "Such a spirit savors much more of the world, than of the gospel." Simpson hoped that Rice would "keep cool," for he himself was "in perfect good humor, notwithstanding the partial excommunication . . . leveled at our head." He was not greatly troubled by the Presbyterian's wrath, however, for he had learned to disregard such bulls, "whether they emanate from Rome or from Geneva." As for the point of controversy, he thought the Methodist practice of taking in seekers not so different from the Presbyterian practice of admitting "penitent sinners."<sup>12</sup>

He then brought the controversy to a close. He could not, he wrote, attribute to all his Presbyterian friends the feelings which actuated Dr. Rice. Thousands, he believed, would regret with him the controversial spirit which marred the peace that ought to exist between true Christians. "So many are the evils which now press upon the Christian Church that it cannot well spare time and strength for controversy among its own members. In this city Sabbath-breaking, profanity, intemperance, and licentiousness are fearfully on the increase." Dr. Rice ought to see the "array of vice," rather than to account it "small dust in the balance" when weighed against the "evils of Methodism."<sup>13</sup>

If Nathan Rice was irritating, the activities of the American Home Missionary Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union—all with offices in Cincinnati, and all dominated by the New School Presbyterians and the Congregationalists—were exasperating. The American Home Missionary Society helped to support nearly 500 missionaries in western states and territories, and boasted of an enrollment of 83,500 pupils in Sunday schools; the American Tract Society had 268 colporteurs on the highways and trails, visiting 350,000 families a year and distributing half a million books. The support of these missionary enterprises came largely from established and wealthy congregations in the East, and the money flowed readily when agents and missionaries exposed the evil plottings of the Pope and his emissaries to take over the whole western region for Catholicism. On these grounds the more ecumenically minded Calvinists, among them Dr. Albert Barnes, whom Simpson admired, were able to advance the cause of peace and unity among the Protestants. However, missionaries hard pressed for funds

found that portrayal of hardships of the West, of the pitiful condition of these benighted people, also brought results. The temptation to exaggerate was considerable. The missionaries recounted the terrible conditions in the West, where families lived "three, five, and ten miles from each other, as a general thing," and were served only by "ignorant circuit-riders."<sup>14</sup>

When Albert Barnes, in an address praising the Presbyterians and Congregationalists for their home missionary work in the West, characterized the preachers of other churches (Baptist and Methodist) as purveyors of superstition not unlike Buddhist priests, Simpson replied with asperity.

Drawing for the moment on the kinship of the Episcopalians and the Methodists, he boasted of the growth of Methodism in America, and asked, sarcastically, "Is America, then, sinking toward barbarism?" What did Dr. Barnes mean by the Christian Union which he pretended to espouse? That he would welcome Episcopalians and Methodists to the Platform, saying, "Come and sit down by our light, and be improved by our refinement"? Did he mean by his platform of Christian union that there was "one side for the educated, the other for the uneducated; and Mr. Barnes to decide the fact of education by Church membership"?<sup>15</sup>

### III

True to his admonition to the Presbyterian editor, Simpson was a keeper of the people's morals. He protested that the parading of the streets by a German military company, with an address by the chaplain, was a "curious way of sanctifying the Sabbath." He condemned the Christians who thronged the theater to hear Jenny Lind and expended huge sums (\$15,000 to \$20,000 per night) for "mere amusement" while "thousands are perishing for lack of the bread of life."<sup>16</sup> He praised John B. Gough for his "eloquent" lectures on temperance, and he urged legislation to curb and punish the liquor dealers. When a measure to permit state licensing of liquor dealers was put before the voters of Ohio in 1851, he campaigned vigorously and successfully against it, despite a protest from some Methodists (whom he called "timid" or "constitutionally conservative") that he was "meddling" in politics. Arguing that the contest was against "profanity, Sabbath-breaking, rioting, and licentious-

ness," and in behalf of "the sobriety of your sons" and "the safety and happiness of your daughters," he urged the church people to organize every county and every district, and to call upon every voter.<sup>17</sup>

No event agitated him more than the public exhibition of the "Greek Slave," a statue by the famous sculptor Hiram Powers, formerly of Cincinnati. One of the most famous works of art shown in America during the decade, it presented a young woman "wholly divested of clothing."<sup>18</sup>

Much more sophisticated than he had been in 1844, Simpson did not register the shock of a simple moralist. He raised the moral question, but argued it from the tenets of art itself, the "lessons" of history, and the "practical" results. "Our emotions," he wrote, "are implanted for the purpose of leading to action"; excited emotion that does not lead to action "tends to impair the mental economy. We learn to sympathize without making exertions to relieve." The slaves in America were not white, like the slave portrayed, and he doubted that many persons would be led by it "to sympathize with and make efforts for the amelioration of the condition of the suffering African race." More than that—the compassion, it was said, was aroused by the chain on the slave's arm, and the consequent realization that her exposure was forced. But he doubted the effect of this "fiction." "Take off that chain—present no fiction of its being a helpless slave, and what remains but a licentious exhibition?"

He argued then from history, pointing out the decline of Grecian purity and the shame of Praxiteles, who selected the model for his statue of the naked Venus from among the most beautiful women in the "abandoned classes." He cited Aristotle, Seneca, Pliny, Propertius, and the early Christians. He argued from contemporary life. If a superior artist were permitted to exhibit such a statue, so would an inferior, "and soon we may have rude imitations of the nude female figure exhibited to the youth in every village in our land." Licentiousness, he said, was an increasing problem.

Our eastern cities are growing in impurity and so is the great west . . . Our coffee-houses contain licentious paintings; and some of our book-stores are guilty of trafficking in the most corrupt literature. Model artists, or naked women, representing the Greek Slave and other pieces of statuary, are traveling from city to city, and from town to town, exhibiting themselves for money; and, strange to say, they draw large audiences even among the ladies!

At the risk of giving offense, he must say that an exhibition like that of the Greek Slave "prepares the way for the model artists; and they for that house which leads to the chambers of death, and to the gates of hell." And he pleaded, "Christian reader, would Christ, or his apostles, have patronized such an exhibition?"

## IV

Simpson's most extended editorial controversy was in the political field, and with the secular press, over the Compromise of 1850. The compromise was an attempt to settle, at least temporarily, the complex political problem which resulted from the acquisition of territory after the war with Mexico. California brought the issue to a head in December, 1849, when it sought admission to the Union with a free constitution.

In the next month Henry Clay introduced a series of resolutions which, modified in the course of heated and acrimonious debate, Congress finally enacted into law in September, 1850. Among other matters, the compromise included the admission of California as a free state and the enactment of a new drastic fugitive slave law. Simpson recognized the seriousness of the problem early in March and expressed the opinion that the current session of Congress would "yet rank among the most important ever held." California, he believed, should come in as a free state. The proposal to give up a part of the territory received from Mexico to slavery was "a compromise against which every feeling of humanity, and every principle of republicanism, strongly revolts."<sup>19</sup>

In succeeding weeks he arraigned the Senate for permitting Henry Stuart Foote of Mississippi to threaten Thomas Hart Benton in its chamber with a drawn pistol, unreprimanded; he charged that men of the North, in using their votes to mix the California bill with the dispute over the New Mexico and Texas boundary, had "bowed the knee to the dark spirit of slavery"; he warned that—if he "read aright the will of the people"—a "terrible and political retribution" awaited these senators.<sup>20</sup>

Such excursions into the political field, he realized, needed explanation and justification. The Methodist press traditionally held itself above politics; its province was spiritual affairs. In all the months of the dramatic battle over the Compromise measures, the

chief organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the New York *Christian Advocate and Journal*, contained only one short article noticing it—a description of Webster's Seventh of March speech, which pleased the editor because the great orator declared that he could see no necessity for the separation of the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>21</sup>

The longer the battle in Washington continued, and the more Simpson talked, wrote, and thought about it, the angrier he became. On May 1 he tossed restraint aside and strongly impugned the motives of the politicians. "Why all these flaming speeches at Washington? Is there any danger of disunion?" So far as he could see there was "not the slightest indication of it." It was simply this: wishing to introduce slavery into New Mexico, the South felt the need of more stringent laws for the recovery of fugitive slaves. Such laws could not be passed without northern votes. How might these votes be obtained? By bargain, by the trading of office and emoluments for votes. But how then should the politicians escape "the indignation and curses of the North"?

Only by the South getting up the cry of disunion. Then when they get the country excited, these Northern champions magnanimously step forward to save the Union . . . Among themselves they laugh at the scheme, but they expect to gull the "dear people." Nay, these very men will claim the honor and gratitude of the North for their efforts to save the Union . . .

Did he hear an objection from "a sensitive politician who dreads free speech"? Is not the *Advocate* "a religious paper—how dare you discuss political questions?" Yes, it was "a religious paper," and that was the reason it dared pursue an independent course. "We are not sold to the Whigs or Democrats or Free-soil men. . . . We stand upon higher ground. We are Christians—we are Christian freemen—and this question deeply affects us." He did not stand upon an abolitionist platform, however. He objected to the extension of slavery, but he was alarmed also at the increased proscription of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Northern churches were excluded, in a large measure, from slaveholding territory. Some Methodist ministers had been mobbed, some compelled to escape for their lives, "simply for preaching the gospel among slaveholders." Slaveholders had driven one of his brethren, sent into the southwest by the bishop,

out of the Indian Territory. Let New Mexico be opened to slavery, and it would be closed to the churches of the North.

Aspiring politicians had warned him "to let these objects alone." To such threats he could only reply, "Gentlemen of the political school, you may muzzle the political press if you can, *but the religious press shall be free, and for its support we shall throw ourselves upon the country.*"<sup>22</sup>

The reaction to his editorial course, and particularly to his article "The Union," was highly favorable. Methodists of the West liked a man who would fight. Senator Benton commended him for his stand on California, and Senator Salmon P. Chase wrote pompously, "I do not choose to resist the inclination which impels me to offer to you my sincere thanks for your manly, and more than manly, your Christian article on the late scene [Foote and Benton] in the Senate." John L. Smith was ecstatic: "Your Editorial on the 'Union' has given me heart-felt joy. O how glad I am to see a man at the head of our church organ who has the *nerve* to dare to do right." William Daily, who felt that Simpson was a "little *too ultra*," none the less admired the editorial: It made "*everything tingle*. Politicians hear of it, enquire for it, read it, and some commend, and a few condemn. But, believe me, it is the most popular editorial you have written . . . It has *ginger* in it. You talk like a man."<sup>23</sup>

Simpson continued the attack during the summer. He was particularly aroused by the Fugitive Slave Law, which, he felt, encouraged southern kidnapers of free Negroes and bribed judges by paying them a higher fee for delivering a Negro to a southern claimant than for freeing him.

He would not object to a law which would enforce the provisions of the Constitution. If the enactments were made "in a fair spirit," if they would "secure the free against the kidnapper, while they arrest the fugitive, we have no word to offer in opposition." But he warned Congress of a higher law, dwelling in the bosoms of Christian people, which would render unfair laws "comparatively nugatory."<sup>24</sup>

His attack on the Fugitive Slave bill received the same "universal approbation" which had greeted his editorial on the Union. The Indiana conference gave him a rising vote of confidence. On the Indiana Asbury University campus D. W. Voorhees and others

condemned the editorial before the students and tried to secure a censure. Lucien W. Berry, who was now president, replied to the arguments, and the students supported Simpson by a vote of 100 to 4.<sup>26</sup>

William J. Brown, editor of the *Indiana State Sentinel* and congressman from Indiana, was alarmed at the criticism of his own conduct implied in Simpson's editorials and in the vote of the Indiana conference. Although a Democrat, he had supported the Whig-sponsored Compromise measures; and because of his alleged Free Soil sympathies he had lost the Speaker's chair. He had no intention now of permitting a Methodist editor to belittle him over the Fugitive Slave Law before his own constituents.

Dr. Simpson's editorial, he wrote, "was no doubt a hasty and unguarded production, written without due reflection, but prompted by pure and honest motives, but with mistaken views of the law"; and the Indiana conference, likewise, was "hasty" in its endorsement. We admire Dr. Simpson, he continued, "for his talents, we respect him for his piety. But when he leaves the pure and limpid stream of divinity, to sail his bark on the turbid and boisterous ocean of politics, he must look out, or he will have frequent collisions with more experienced navigators." He did not doubt Dr. Simpson's "fidelity" to the Constitution. He was fully aware of (and not a little concerned by) the "wide circulation" and "controlling influence" of the *Western Christian Advocate*. He would suggest to the editor and to the ministers of his church, and of other churches, and to "all editors of religious newspapers" that it would be "better for them to inculcate the principles of 'peace on earth, and good-will to all men,' rather than to influence the public mind to resist and disregard a constitutional law."<sup>28</sup>

Simpson replied with spirit. He did not understand "how being a divine renders us unfit to judge of these measures." He would leave matters of bank, subtreasury, protection, revenue, and election of candidates to politicians. "But great questions of right and equity are as much in the province of the divine as of the politician. They belong to God's law, and this must be the study of the theologian." He was no lawyer, but he had read law books. He cited Blackstone, "If any human law shall allow or require us to commit crime, we are bound to transgress that human law," and Noyes, "The inferior must

give place to the superior; men's laws to God's laws." He quoted from Vattel, Coke, Littleton, Hobart, to show the supremacy of a higher law, and finally from John McLean, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court and a Methodist: "Statutes against fundamental morality are void." If these great jurists taught the doctrine of the higher law, he went on, "we cannot help it." And if a law is to be obeyed not as law "merely," but "because it is right," then surely law must be subject to examination "even by the divine." Was not the Bible the "great charter of human freedom"? Could a politician by enacting laws close the lips of the theologian? "We wholly demur to this assumption of the exclusive right of the politicians to discuss moral topics. As long as our lips shall have utterance, or our fingers move a pen, we shall fearlessly speak and write what our judgment and our conscience approve."<sup>27</sup>

The *Advocate* containing this editorial was passed from hand to hand in the hotels of Indianapolis, where it created "quite a fluttering among the 'smaller fry' politicians" and led to "a tremendous fumbling over of the law books." Lucien Berry, delighted, wrote mockingly: "We talk of commencing suit against you forthwith for murdering Bill Brown. He is dead with law—dead by the hand of a divine."<sup>28</sup>

The *Indiana State Journal* (Whig), pleased with the opportunity to join in the thwacking of Bill Brown, praised Simpson for his "very able" writing and reprinted his editorial on the Fugitive Slave Law. It accused Brown of quoting the Washington correspondent of the *Advocate* to show that Simpson favored compromise—"a very cunning trick." Hugely enjoying Brown's discomfiture, it taunted him for undertaking to read the Methodist conference a lecture on "Christian duty." "The propriety of such a lecture from *such* a Christian, will not be questioned."<sup>29</sup>

A friend reported that Bill Brown's "barking" had been followed by "the yelpings of most of the little editors in Indiana." There was a strong inclination to brand Simpson an abolitionist—one Congressman and many others had openly done so since September. During the congressional canvass that was about to open Simpson and his paper would be the subject of stump oratory all over the state if the controversy continued; and "you may rest assured that however decorously such fellows as Bill Brown may affect to treat

you in their newspapers, they will not scruple to say anything in their speeches." Simpson would be "calumniated" and the whole Methodist Church drawn into the "whirlpool of politics."<sup>30</sup>

Brown himself soon reentered the fray, protesting that Simpson's article on the higher law had been "copied everywhere by the political press. . . . We might fill our columns with their comments." Wary, lest he alienate Methodist voters, he praised the *Advocate* for its theology but averred that many Methodists disagreed with its editor in politics and could not be "swerved in their opinions by his views, however much they may respect and love him as a Divine." In heretofore dealing "tenderly" with the editor he had assumed that Simpson as a minister of God was better informed in his own calling than in law or politics. But "we were mistaken. . . . He understands politics like a book, and quotes law equal to S. P. Chase Esq." Once more reviewing the arguments, he accused Simpson of "special pleading" and of being the "unintentional instrument" of the abolitionists. He closed with a patronizing gesture: "We have now done with Dr. Simpson, and dismiss him with the best and warmest feelings of our heart, in the language of the Saviour: 'May the Grace of God abide with you, now and forever more, amen.'"<sup>31</sup>

Simpson was much amused by Brown's "Scripture," to which he replied, despite warnings from friends that a continuance of the controversy into the forthcoming elections might injure the church: "We fully reciprocate these kind feelings and would ask, as a special favor, of Mr. Brown, that he would tell us where we may find those beautiful words which he quotes from our Savior. We strongly suspect that they must be in the same chapter with the text reported to have been quoted by a member of the Illinois Legislature some years since. He said that his heart had often been cheered by that beautiful text, 'Blessed be they who expect nothing, for they shall never be disappointed.'"<sup>32</sup>

That summer the voters of Indiana retired an unwilling Congressman Brown from public office.

The controversy was of significance to Simpson not only as editor but as churchman and orator. His concept of Christian responsibility had broadened from evangelism and the doctrine of Christian influence, which he had preached to his students, to the belief that the Christian must do battle for what was right, and that *right* was inextricably bound up with public affairs.

## V

During his editorship Simpson remained a member of the Indiana conference and continued to act as its secretary. He attended a large number of public services within its bounds and dedicated many churches. He also preached frequently in Cincinnati, spoke at temperance meetings, appeared on lecture series, and gave commencement talks. Altogether, he did nearly as much preaching as he would have done in a pastorate. His popularity in Indiana was not at all diminished. In 1851, for the third successive time, he was elected to head the Indiana delegation to a general conference—this one at Boston. There were only four dissenting votes: one, his own; one, that of a very good friend who knew he would be elected anyway; and two whom he "never knew or sought to know."<sup>83</sup>

John L. Smith's belief that Simpson would make a good bishop had gained currency. Several friends had whispered to him their intention to elect him to the episcopacy at the first opportunity; but there were obstacles, one being Edward R. Ames's ambition for the office. Never yet had two bishops been elected from the same annual conference; and there was no reason to assume that it would happen now. All through the quadrennium he and Ames had maintained friendly relations. Unsuccessfully (and perhaps with mixed motives) he sought the appointment of Ames to a missionary secretaryship when a vacancy occurred; and he won Ames's gratitude by favoring him to direct the educational work of the church in California. Ames as presiding elder, in a characteristically friendly and humorous vein, charged Simpson to be present to assist in the quarterly meeting at Indianapolis; and he relayed political news, predicted correctly that Whitcomb would be Senator, and that Joseph Wright or some one else "friendly to Methodists" would be elected governor.<sup>84</sup>

But there were also difficulties between the two. In 1848 Ames was elected to succeed Simpson as president of Indiana Asbury University, in a spirited contest with several ambitious candidates. Therefore, when Ames after brief deliberation declined the office, stating that the North Indiana conference had opposed him, and that his real call was to preach ("First apostles, then teachers"), some of Simpson's friends suspected that the whole matter had been simply a bid for popularity. At conference Ames spoke angrily from the floor,

attacking Simpson by indirection. "One man," he said, had been entirely responsible for the protest of the North Indiana conference; and the implication to the assembly was plain. "You can be no longer in doubt," Lucien Berry wrote, "that all of Ames Friendships are sinister." Why did he "strike such a blow at that one man . . . *He considers you in his way to a certain office.*"<sup>85</sup>

Much more serious was the possibility that the political controversy with Congressman Brown would alienate delegates from the border conferences. Some of the Missouri Methodists did protest against the editorial course of the *Advocate*. Simpson's friends, aware that a candidate for the episcopacy must, like an aspirant to the Presidency of the United States, be "available" to somewhat antagonistic interests, warned him to be cautious. He rejected the warning. He did steer clear of the bitter sectional conflict (which also might have alienated the men of the border), with one brief exception. When Judge Nelson of the United States Circuit Court in New York handed down a decision on the Book Concern property case favoring the South he dissented sharply. The case rested on "necessity," he wrote, and the South had failed to demonstrate any "necessity" for division. The South therefore was schismatic, the old church continued unimpaired, and the property of the book concerns belonged legally to the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>86</sup>

A much more serious obstacle to his election was his relation to the Ohio conference. Living in Cincinnati, he had chosen to keep his membership in Indiana. Ohioans, who had opposed his election in the first place, were jealous. They thought he showed favoritism to his own conference through the *Advocate*; and the agents, displeased by his frequent excursions into Indiana, charged him with "neglect" of his duties.<sup>87</sup>

In the last year he had become involved in a local quarrel. The general Methodist practice, as advised by the discipline, was that seats should be "free"; but a few churches, particularly in New England, rented or sold pews. When a new, aristocratic church in western, democratic Cincinnati adopted this practice the Methodist brethren were outraged. Simpson attended the dedication, noting in his journal, "The Ohio preachers strongly oppose it and Bro Raper is censored for consenting to preach the dedication sermon." For himself, he only prayed that "every movement result in additional glory to the blessed Redeemer." His Ohio brethren, displeased with

his "liberalism," demanded that he hold aloof from the dispute over pews. He consented, generally, but permitted selected representatives from both sides of the controversy to carry on an extended argument in the *Advocate*. By an ironical turn of events (arising out of his policy of excluding all but selected arguments on the subject from his paper), he soon had both Ohio and New England opposed to him: Ohio because he was too friendly toward pewed churches; New England because he published "false representations" against pewed churches!<sup>38</sup>

Just before the general conference it was rumored in Indiana that Simpson had bargained to recommend William Daily for the editorship of the *Advocate* in the event of his own election to the episcopacy.<sup>39</sup> After his departure for Boston the Book Committee, at the instance of the agents, reviewed his editorial course and questioned his clerks, one of whom then wrote to him that, although the committee was displeased, it would take no action.<sup>40</sup>

So Matthew Simpson, editor, proceeded to Boston, not at all sure what honors awaited him. He apparently thought well of his prospects, for he had packed his household goods and shipped them to Pittsburgh two months before. His purpose, he wrote in a manner reminiscent of 1848, was to return to the active ministry in the Pittsburgh conference.<sup>41</sup>

## XV

### AND SOME, BISHOPS

WHATEVER honors were to befall Matthew Simpson, his wife determined to share. Leaving Master Charles and his three sisters with their grandmother Verner in Pittsburgh, she went with him to Boston. They were still young in 1852, he not quite forty-one, and she but thirty-four. Matthew, with his scraggly hair, his low forehead and small triangular face, his tall frame, long arms and stooping shoulders, was uncouth even in his black broadcloth suit. Ellen by contrast was regal: tall, slender, elegant in ruffled silk and jewels. Much more fashionably dressed than some people expected the wife of a Methodist preacher to be, she made a striking figure in a Methodist gathering.<sup>1</sup> They found an apartment in a hotel not far from the seat of the conference, where they could entertain friends and have meals in private when they chose, and then turned their attention to business, Matthew taking his place among the delegates and Ellen finding a seat in the gallery.

After 1844 and 1848, the general conference of 1852 was unusually quiet. The North generally and New England particularly were still agitated over the Fugitive Slave Law. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published only a month earlier, had already sold 20,000 copies. Boston was astir over the "story of the age," but the delegates to the general conference showed no disposition to debate slavery.<sup>2</sup> No general conference had ever arraigned Congress or otherwise intervened in "political" affairs; and there seemed to be no reason for breaking the precedent now. Not even Matthew Simpson, who had criticized Congress so severely for the compromise measures of 1850, considered pursuing the question here.

Most of the business was routine. Some excitement arose over pewed churches and over the boundary lines of the border conferences; but the all-absorbing question was the election of bishops.

Elijah Hedding, senior bishop, twenty-eight years on the episcopal bench, had died in April, three weeks before the conference. Of the remaining bishops, L. L. Hamline had let it be known that he would resign because of ill health, and Beverly Waugh, now sixty-three, was scarcely able to perform his duties. Only Thomas Morris and Edmund Janes were equal to their responsibilities. The church had declined in membership after the division of 1844 but was again showing a rapid rate of increase. There were nearly three-quarters of a million members, administered to by some five thousand "traveling" preachers. The bishops must preside over thirty-nine annual conferences and appoint the traveling preachers to their posts. Clearly the conference must elect new bishops—three and possibly four.

Simpson, keenly aware of his own prospects, refused to enter the lists. He stood precisely where he had stood twenty years before, when he had declined to preach a trial sermon as a condition of being admitted to the Pittsburgh conference. He believed simply that men were appointed of God to perform the offices of the church. Some were ordained to be apostles; some, prophets; some, teachers—and some, bishops. He would not exert himself in his own behalf, but he would obey Providence.<sup>3</sup>

Several friends felt no such reticence. Lucien Berry, William M. Daily, John L. Smith, eager instruments of Providence, circulated among the delegates, urging the election of Simpson. Daily, one of the secretaries of the general conference, sat on the platform and soon became known to all the delegates. Aggressive, friendly, voluble, and persuasive, he swept from one group to another, taking the opposition by storm. Berry was less aggressive but perhaps more effective. He inspired confidence, and men came to ask his advice on the western candidates.<sup>4</sup>

As the time for the election of bishops drew near, the tension increased. The conference voted to elect four men to the high office. Party lines yielded largely to sections, with candidates from New England, the middle states, and the West. Each section advanced its favorite son, but each needed supporting votes from other sections. In the West a spirited contest developed among Simpson and Ames of Indiana and Edward Thomson, president of Ohio Wesleyan University. Ames was the best known, but some delegates thought that he had lost his opportunity when he failed of election in 1844. Thomson was strongly supported by the Ohio conferences; but op-

ponents circulated reports that he was "sickly, somewhat hard of hearing, inexperienced in the itinerancy, and necessary to the college"—all true, he wrote to his wife.<sup>5</sup>

From the opening of the conference Simpson was regarded favorably. It was said against him that he had been too short a time in the active ministry. Border delegates, fearing that his views were too antislavery, sent a committee to question him. He refused to commit himself, referring simply to his "course as editor." The Baltimore men were not satisfied with his response and lined up behind Thomson.<sup>6</sup>

Simpson's stand on the pew question was even more hazardous. Ohio was solidly opposed because he was too friendly to pewed churches. New England suspected that he was unfriendly. In the debate on a proposal to solicit funds from the church at large for a house of worship in Washington, he further alienated New England. He said the Methodists ought to have a church where senators and congressmen and other public officials could worship: he had talked with some of these men and had learned that they could not even find the Methodist meeting place. He did not demand a "grand church"; but he hoped that it would be as fine as the Boston edifice in which they were gathered, save "these bonds." And he pointed "playfully" at the doors to the pews. Father Edward Taylor of Boston was angered by the allusion, and "complained bitterly" of his western prejudice. Abel Stevens, editor of *Zion's Herald* and a friend, suggested to Simpson that the phrase be omitted from the report; but he refused.<sup>7</sup>

He had several other opportunities to create a favorable impression. His address on Sabbath schools, emphasizing the impact of religious instruction on civilization, was "fervid and appropriate." Stevens apologized to the readers of the *Daily Zion's Herald* for having to abridge a speech from which not a "syllable" should have been omitted. In an address on California missions Simpson achieved some of the eloquence that had met with such favor in the West. Leading off with "railroad speed and power," he swept the audience with his "sustained and connected train of thought." His body swayed slightly as he spoke, marking out the rhythm of his speech. The effect was hypnotic. Stevens thought the speech "powerful"; but he felt constrained to say little about the speaker, who, "unfortunately," was "one of 'the noble army' of candidates for the Episcopacy."

The committee on local arrangements, however, seemed to think more highly of Edward Thomson's prospects, for it placed him in the Bromfield Street pulpit on the Sunday morning before the election.<sup>8</sup>

The balloting was set for Tuesday May 25. By Monday morning Berry was confident that Simpson could win by a bare majority—if the delegates pledged to support him would hold steady. But two Indianans were wavering—nothing that they could do would elect Simpson, they feared. The problem was the Ames-Simpson rivalry. No conference could expect two of its members to be named bishop, and for Indiana to support two candidates was to risk splitting the vote in the East and the middle states between them and thus defeat both. The Ohio delegation saw the point, and in an effort to elect Thomson, decided to go for Ames and thus eliminate Simpson. Berry held firm, however: Indiana must support both its candidates. At the last moment he convinced Benjamin Tefft, former faculty member at Indiana Asbury and friend of both Simpson and Thomson, that the former was the better candidate; and Tefft swung a number of his colleagues in western New York into line. On Tuesday morning some twenty delegates, already pledged to Simpson, sought Berry's judgment on the respective merits of Thomson and Ames. He quickly "set them right": Ames, of course, was the better man.<sup>9</sup>

That morning the bishop ordered the bar of the conference cleared, and prayed for divine guidance in the balloting. The tellers, passing through the aisles, distributed slips of paper upon which each delegate was to write the names of his four candidates for the episcopacy. The tellers then collected the ballots and read them, one by one, while the secretaries tabulated the results. With 173 delegates voting 87 votes were necessary to elect. Long before the final ballot was counted, Simpson could foretell the result. Levi Scott of Philadelphia, candidate of the middle states, received 113 votes; Simpson, 110; Osman G. Baker of New England, 90; and Edward R. Ames, 89. Four men had been elected on the first ballot: two from Indiana. Thomson stood fifth. The Ohio delegation, in supporting Ames, had insured his election and the defeat of its own candidate.<sup>10</sup>

That afternoon at the hotel, Bishop elect and Mrs. Simpson had tea for several "select" friends. As his former colleagues eagerly expressed their congratulations he suddenly remarked:

"This day have the words of the prophet been fulfilled."

"Who is the prophet?" someone called out.

"None other than Brother John L. Smith." Then Simpson told them of the walk through the Indiana fields six years earlier, of the long talk under a tree, of his taunt, "Son of man, prophesy," and of Smith's prediction that he would be elected bishop in 1852.<sup>11</sup>

But that night, reviewing in his journal the election and the basis for the opposition to him, he wrote:

. . . the vote I received was wholly unexpected, and deeply impressed me with the kind feelings of my brethren. May I have the wisdom and grace to fit me for the high responsibilities which may devolve upon me, and especially may I be led to a more thorough consecration to God and his cause.

He felt that the election was "wholly Providential," because he had taken no part in the canvass for votes. The next morning, standing between "Brother" Hudson, who had been his senior minister at Pittsburgh twenty years before, and "Father" Havens, grizzled and muscular itinerant from Indiana, he was ordained to the episcopacy. On the Sabbath he was invited to preach at the Bromfield Street Church.<sup>12</sup>

## II

The office of bishop was the highest in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Great and sometimes eloquent men had graced it: Francis Asbury, the foremost itinerant and traveler of the long road; William McKendree and Robert Roberts, circuit riders of the old West; and Elijah Hedding and Joshua Soule, strong-willed leaders of the slavery battle. The field of the bishop was as extensive as the church itself, for the general conference, proud of the itinerant character of the ministry and of the episcopacy, had steadfastly refused to adopt the diocese plan, or to make any territorial restriction. A bishop supervised the work of only four or five annual conferences at one time; but from year to year his supervision was shifted from one group of conferences to another. Presumably, as time passed, each bishop would thus exercise his authority over the whole territory of the church. His chief responsibilities were presiding at the annual conferences and appointing pastors to circuits or stations—which was

arduous indeed, for conferences averaged 100 to 125 ministers each, every one of whom must be assigned to a church or circuit. The changes were numerous, for the rule of the church limited the stay of any minister at one charge to two years.

To a man of Simpson's eloquence the office of bishop offered an extraordinary opportunity to exercise his talents: it gave him prestige of office, a wide audience, and his speaking engagements were frequently special occasions—anniversaries of the church, ordinations, dedications, and conventions. In fact, however, the office was so circumscribed that in public affairs and social issues, and even in denominational polity, a bishop tended to be neutral. He was a moderator, presiding over meetings, who had no part in debate or discussion. "Dr. Simpson ought never to have been elected," wrote Abel Stevens, journalist and historian of the church, adding that so powerful a preacher, with his vigor and his outspokenness on public affairs, should not have his talents "neutralized forever."<sup>13</sup> Simpson would long remember those words and reflect upon them.

The last afternoon and evening in Boston, he met with the other bishops to discuss plans for conferences and to copy a number of important episcopal decisions into his notebook. He contended briefly for the privilege of being the first to visit California, but yielded to Ames. En route to Pittsburgh he paused in New York to breakfast with Mayor Harper and to purchase supplies from the Methodist Book Room—journals, parchments, portfolio, all to be shipped to the seat of his first conference. At Pittsburgh he had but Saturday and Monday to settle his family in a boarding place, and to take care of his personal business. On Sunday, visiting the Smithfield and Liberty Street churches where he had served as a young minister, he addressed two Sabbath schools, assisted in administering the Lord's supper in the afternoon, and preached to a "large congregation" at night.<sup>14</sup> He had already begun to experience something of the tempo and duties of the office of bishop.

His first conference was set for Morgantown, (West) Virginia, some two days' travel from his home at Pittsburgh. On the way he passed through Uniontown, the village to which he had come a quarter of a century before, eager to begin his studies at Madison College, having walked from Cadiz, Ohio, with his books and his clothes on his back and eleven dollars in his pocket. The contrasting circumstances did not escape him. "Uniontown to me has some pleas-

ant reminiscences," he wrote to Ellen. "Nearly twenty-four years ago I entered it one afternoon, as a poor student. . . . I could not afford a stage passage, nor could I well afford to pay for regular meals, and hence I got but one meal a day, and lived on cakes for the other two till I reached the town. . . . Change after change has since occurred, until this evening I entered it again by the same road on which I travelled then."<sup>15</sup>

The brethren at Morgantown received him kindly, and he was able to assign the preachers to their charges with "comparatively little trouble," although he sat with his cabinet of presiding elders until ten o'clock at night, and once until after midnight. He presided at the business sessions of the conference, he spoke at the Sunday-school and missionary anniversaries, preached twice, and, with appropriate charges, ordained the deacons and elders.<sup>16</sup>

Appointments soon proved to be his most harassing problem. Old friends and new acquaintances, ministers and laymen brought pressure upon him. One layman insisted on having Brother Babcock "because revivals have always followed him." A minister, hearing early in the conference that a man who was both a Mason and a poor preacher was to be appointed his presiding elder, protested that such an arrangement would "seriously militate against the interests of work and church." Over in Ohio a brother rather ingenuously urged that the bishop make him a presiding elder because his wife's rich relatives from the East expected to visit them the next summer and he wanted them to find him in an "influential position in the church." Another layman complained of his preacher's lack of spiritual qualities:

He wares verry nice whiskers and they ware not nice without going to the Barbers and haveing them blacked he also favours checker playing as strengthing the mind he favors nick nicks start off in a boat four or five mile along with a mixed crowd not one of his own members along and spend the day and to ten Oclock at night & speaks of being out in the grass the same as the Mericle performed by our savour where he fed the five thousand with the loavs & fishes there being mutch grass there.<sup>17</sup>

Because every preacher had to be moved at the end of a two-year period, the whole problem was singularly trying. Simpson welcomed information and carefully prepared in advance for the decisions he would have to make. He secured maps of the conferences

and of each district and circuit, with records of the church property, size of house, and drawing of the property; he made out forms with spaces to show the number of years a man had served a given charge, and what charges he had served, and he made an effort to call cabinet sessions in advance of the regular conference. He soon discovered that oratory was his greatest asset, even in the unhappy responsibility of making appointments. Men loved him not only for his "spiritual" preaching—his "unction" and "power," and his personal goodness and kindness—but for his vivid portrayals of the triumphs of Methodism. Once caught in his spell, the preachers were more disposed to accept their appointments. He had not been in the episcopal office many years before it was generally said that there was no better loved man in all Methodism.<sup>19</sup>

Other duties of the conferences, he found nearly as onerous as appointments. Church trials—one being of a minister who held slaves—prolonged each of his first conferences. He presided day after day, sometimes "stealing" a few minutes from the discussion to write to his wife, sometimes listening to the long debates and then complaining to his diary: "Did but little work. Had a night session . . . closed Conf. before 10 o'clock. Had some headache."<sup>19</sup>

The details and problems of travel always interested, sometimes irritated him, and occupied a large place in his life and his journals. Trains, when he could get them, were often late, forcing him to sit in a tavern or station without sleep; on one such occasion he felt fortunate in crawling into a bed of straw on the floor. He traveled sometimes on horseback, sometimes by boat or stage, occasionally by a hack or "mud wagon." Once, en route to a western conference with six other preachers, weighing the wagon down so that there was no play in the springs, he jolted the whole of a cold and snowy day over slightly frozen roads. He preferred the trains, although it sometimes "seemed rather tedious to stop between thirty and forty times at towns and where no towns were but spots where some trade could be found or a Post Office existed." He was delighted with the "very fast" travel one winter's afternoon in western Pennsylvania when the train went thirty-one miles in one hour, including "the time spent slowly in passing through Bayardstown & up grade."<sup>20</sup>

He was pleased, also, when he could get a "fair dinner of home poached eggs, potatoes & biscuit," but not a little irritated when he felt he was overcharged, as at West Point, where he paid \$2.50 for

"supper, lodging & breakfast—the highest bill I ever had, and yet the most ordinary fare." At Harrisburg he became very nearly angry when the landlord, calling him to his train just after he had "fairly started" on his dinner, charged the full half-dollar. "I suppose," he said, tartly, "if we had been allowed to get through supper it would have been a dollar."<sup>21</sup>

In due time, and with characteristic good intention, he outlined for himself in "Thoughts for health and comfort," a set of rules to be followed: retire always as early as ten; get enough sleep, but try to rise at six o'clock; if possible get regular hours for meals; avoid night traveling; use salt sponge bath every morning, "be firm to *talk less*." There were conveniences, also, which he felt he must have: a trunk arranged with hatbox, a case for parchments, writing materials, traveling case, umbrella for traveling and another for home, and a round-top desk.<sup>22</sup>

One rule was inflexible, so much a part of his routine and belief that he did not feel it necessary to list it among his "thoughts." He would not travel on Sunday. The observance of this custom led, in the second year of his episcopacy, to an incident which delighted his Methodist brethren.

He reached Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on his way to Philadelphia, after midnight on Saturday. A fellow minister and his wife kept on, but since the train would not reach the city until six or seven o'clock in the morning, Simpson got off. ("How ministers," he wrote to his wife, "can reconcile Sabbath travelling with a sense of duty I cannot tell.") The next morning he set out to find the Methodist church and fell into the company of a member, who learned that he was a preacher and introduced him as such to the pastor. The latter, without realizing that he was a bishop, invited him to preach and introduced him to the congregation simply as "Brother Simpson from Pittsburgh." The visitor enjoyed "peculiar liberty," the congregation was considerably stirred, and the pastor, astonished by the eloquence, suddenly perceived that the man in the pulpit was the bishop. At the conclusion of the sermon he seized his hand and called to the congregation that the man to whom they had listened was Bishop Simpson! To his wife, Simpson laconically reported, "Whether they thought any more of the sermon for the name I cannot tell."<sup>23</sup>

He sent home short notes of his activities, now and then a bit

of gossip, an exciting incident, or a fashion note—as when in New York he first saw hoop skirts: “Oh dear, what skirts are hanging at the windows and doors of the Ladies dressing and trimming stores—filled with whalebone hoops and looking about the size of very large barrels. It is very hard for them when dressed to get in & out of the omnibus or cars.”<sup>24</sup>

Ordinarily his letters ended with somber preachments. “Be careful of your health,” he wrote to Ellen. “Be cheerful. Look aloft. The stars display their beauty to us only when we look at them; and if we look down at the earth our hearts are never charmed.”<sup>25</sup>

Constantly away from home, he was often harassed by household needs: credit drafts for Ellen; painters who ought not be paid until the job was done and the quality of their work inspected; the care of his property and investments, including the still troublesome brewery, of which Ellen had by this time inherited a share. The brewery was a particularly distressing problem, for the other heirs, although apparently not wishing to operate the plant themselves, desired to rent the kiln. Times were so out of joint that they had “to regard their income more watchfully”; and they had been “kind” to the Simpsons. “Still,” the bishop wrote, “I would much sooner pay them the rent” which they would lose “and then let the building stand idle, than to aid in the spread of vice either directly or indirectly.”<sup>26</sup>

### III

The greatest demands upon Simpson's time were for sermons, addresses, and lectures. He became widely recognized as the most effective preacher on the episcopal board. In order to assure the success of the General Missionary Demonstration in New York City in the fall of 1853, all the bishops were urged to attend. Who should be selected as speaker? One bishop was too old, another too feeble in voice, and yet another too well acquainted in the city to attract attention. Of the remaining bishops, wrote a member of the committee on arrangements two (one of whom was Ames) were hardly known in New York; but “Bishop Simpson, during his visit here last spring became widely known, and left our city to the regret of many who long again to hear his voice. I think, dear sir, I can truly say . . . ‘thou art the man.’”<sup>27</sup>

However demanding of time and energy, the speaking engagements were a source of pleasure and satisfaction. It pleased Simpson to think that he was setting "an example of earnestness in the Christian ministry" both in manner and in quantity.<sup>28</sup>

In the fall of 1852 he studied "very busily" preparing a lecture on the "preternatural." There had been much stir about spiritualism and table rappings, and people were both curious and fearful. The first American mediums to hear the mysterious knockings from the "spirit world" were the Fox sisters, Margaret and Kate, daughters of a humble Methodist farmer in western New York. About the same time mesmerism and the somnambulic trance had come to general attention. A number of journals on spiritualism and animal magnetism sprang into existence, and one of the best was edited by La Roy Sunderland, a former Methodist preacher and editor who, in the thirties, had published one of Simpson's early writings. Among the Methodists intrigued by these strange manifestations of "supernatural" forces, was one of Simpson's former students.<sup>29</sup>

Prompted to look into this subject both by his concern for Methodism and by his own curiosity, Simpson soon came to regard the movement with contempt. By this modern delusion, he said, "telegraphic communications with heaven and hell . . . were now made about as cheaply and as quickly as with Boston or New York." They might be accounted for by ventriloquism, by collusion, by natural causes not yet explained. The duty of thinking men and women was to explain them "and not act like the Brahmin who broke the microscope because it showed him what he did not wish to see."

He could not look with favor upon belief in the preternatural, for, upon the whole, the tendency of such belief was to

retard the progress of science, and knowledge, because it checked inquiry. . . . Eclipses had once been considered as indicative of Divine displeasure. So, too, comets had once been regarded as ominous of woe, and the Pope, in view of this, had once actually made one of these heavenly wanderers the subject of an excommunicating bull!

True religion differed from the mysticism which saw phantoms and apparitions, in that it revealed the spiritual world, and gave light for earthly toil. There were just two modes of communication with the spirit world. "One was, by *spiritual communion*; the other was,

by *material or physical signs*. The latter must be rejected." If the existence of the spiritual were assumed, a man could ascertain its laws only by patient inquiry, and he could "at best but form an imperfect idea of futurity."<sup>20</sup>

The lecture was filled with "capital hits" at the "'spiritual' follies of the day" and with illustration and allusions to science. It was enthusiastically received at Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. The Pittsburgh *Christian Advocate* called for its publication; the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association and the Mechanics' Institute persuaded Simpson to appear on their lecture series; and other organizations besieged him with requests.<sup>21</sup>

He had made no dramatic entrance into the discussion of public affairs—of secular matters; yet his public lecture was a departure from the course of one who was supposed to be forever neutralized by his election to the episcopal office, and it set the pattern by which he was to sustain himself on the lecture platform for twenty-five years.

#### I V

Simpson was not satisfied with his personal relationship to the church and to God. "May I have wisdom and grace to fit me for the high responsibilities which may devolve upon me, and especially may I be led to a more thorough consecration to God and his cause," he wrote in his journal on the day of his election to the episcopacy. In the succeeding weeks he was much too busy with conferences to keep up his diary or give an account of his "religious experience." His first real leisure came during an inspection trip into western Virginia, where he was detained by high water. The churches were small; the congregations, discouraged and apathetic. "Much depressed," he sought to analyze his condition. In some respects he labored "sufficiently." Indeed, he felt sometimes that the combined "physical efforts" and "mental excitement" in his work were unendurable. Yet the good which resulted from his pulpit labors was little, compared with what he might expect if he were in "the full spirit" of his mission. What his heart greatly needed was "a deeper work of grace." "Something not yet possessed" was requisite to make him victorious over all his "infirmities and temptations." "I need to be *created anew* in Christ Jesus."<sup>22</sup>

New Year's Day found him first prostrate with penitence and then strengthened by new and pious resolutions. Awakened at two in the morning by the striking of a clock, he knelt by his bedside to ask for "wisdom and grace." Weary with his work, he doubted that he would live through another year; yet he was thankful that Death had not yet been "commissioned" to cut him down. He would aim at a higher life than ever before; he would seek to cultivate and guard his physical powers, he would better redeem his time—converse less with friends, "especially on topics other than the Church and its institutions and personal holiness." That morning he rose at six, and after his bath, having read "three chapters in the beginning of the Old Testament and two in the New," he purposed "a regular reading after this general method."

He was once again facing the problem of his youth. Behind his physical weariness and the mental anxiety of the new responsibilities was the high doctrine of his church: Christian perfection or entire sanctification. Among the early Methodist teachings none was more carefully nourished or faithfully championed by some leaders than this. In theological language the doctrine, or "experience," was "a state of grace implying purity of heart or a heart cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ." It was a crisis experience, subsequent to and not unlike conversion. Christian perfection, John Wesley had written, "implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions are governed by pure love." Simpson knew that his heart was not "cleansed from all iniquity," that he did not have the "full consecration which devoted every moment to the divine service."<sup>88</sup>

These matters he wrote into his journal. Not often did he confess them to others; but in the spring, after his trip into Virginia, he talked over his religious state with Mrs. Phoebe Palmer, distributor of tracts and one of the earliest female class leaders in New York City, who was noted for her promotion of "holiness." She was surprised and much concerned to learn that Bishop Simpson did not have the "experience." In fact, using the language and the tactic which her group found most effective, she expressed the belief that his lack was not the experience, but the "witness"; and she wrote: "I hope you will not longer permit the tempter to hinder you from laying hold upon the promise . . . from the persuasion that you may not have set yourself apart wholly, for the Lord knows the sincerity

of your intention." Other bishops were persuaded and preached the doctrine. Perhaps it was of significance to Methodism that the most eloquent of the bishops never discovered the satisfying spiritual condition of which she wrote. The following New Year's Day he was again "covenanting that, if spared, the New Year should be one of greater devotion to God."<sup>54</sup>