

Methodist Abroad: Matthew Simpson and the Emergence of American Methodism as a World Church
 By Scott Kisker

Introduction

As to temporal power, what have we to do with that in this country? We are not senators, congressmen, or chaplains; neither do we hold any civil offices. We neither have, nor wish to have, anything to do with the government of the States, nor, as I conceive, do the States fear us. Our kingdom is not of this world. For near half a century we have never grasped at power.¹

By mid-nineteenth century, Francis Asbury's assertions no longer held true. The Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), along with the nation where it began, was growing and gaining power and respect on the world stage. Its membership boasted several holders of civil offices, and its episcopal leadership viewed church and state from a perspective quite different from Asbury. Matthew Simpson (1811-1884), a paradigmatic figure who shaped the character of American Methodism in the latter nineteenth century, was one such bishop. He was elected to episcopal office in 1852, eight years after a split between the northern and southern branches of the church over the discipline regarding slaveholding and membership. In 1857, he took his first trip to Europe as representative of the MEC. He visited Methodist missions and interacted with other ecclesial and national leaders. His observations reflect American Methodism's relatively recently achieved status and its anticipated presence as a world church.

Election

When Simpson was elected to the episcopacy, the MEC, though less than 100 years old had grown to be the largest, most representative denomination in the

¹ Francis Asbury, *Valedictory Address to Conference*.

United States. Simpson had been reared in a church quite different from the one he would oversee. Growing up in Ohio, the west, Methodism was defined by campmeeting and conversion, by small classes and societies linked by itinerant preachers. Asbury himself had baptized Simpson. By 1852, the church struggled with controversy over discipline and identity. Campmeetings were still held, but their character had changed. Sunday Schools and mission societies had emerged. Station preachers were becoming common if not the norm, and Methodists were beginning to erect church buildings that represented its more prominent position among the churches of America. Simpson saw these changes as progress, even reflecting (a bit selectively and romantically) that in "this period general peace and harmony prevailed in the Church, and increased interest was manifest in all its enterprises."

Large additions were made to the Sunday-school library, and Sunday-school papers were more extensively circulated. The most notable feature of improvement was the commencement of the erection of the better class of church buildings. Prior to this time but little attention had been paid to tasteful architecture. Many of the early churches had been unwisely located in the suburbs of towns and villages, and the edifices were exceedingly plain. In Boston the Hanover-street Church had been purchased from the Unitarians, and was the most tasteful building at that time owned by the Church. Charles-street in Baltimore, and Trinity, in Philadelphia, were the most neat and beautiful churches, which had been erected by our congregations up to that date. Christ Church in Pittsburgh, was the first church erected of Gothic architecture, and fitted up in modern style. From that time forward, in all the principal cities, movements were made for the erection of handsome and commodious churches. Simultaneous with their erection, the Church began to give to its ministers a better support, and the general financial interests were more carefully considered.²

² Matthew Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1879, 164-5.

The General Conference that elected Simpson met in Boston, a city and region that, with its Puritan heritage and role in the revolution, made a strong case to represent American religion. Methodists had had difficulty gaining a foothold there and Simpson noted with some understandable pride that General Conference's "reception presented a remarkable contrast to that of Jesse Lee, more than half a century before." The delegates were "handsomely entertained" and "many courtesies were shown them by the officers of the city. . . . No efforts were spared to render their visit and sojourn in the 'Athens of America' both pleasant and interesting."³

The conflict at General Conference that year resulted from the growing pains of an ambitious Church. "The question of pewed churches was brought to the attention of the Conference by an appeal from the action of the Ohio Conference in censuring one of its ministers."⁴ This was an East/West split and a social class split with eastern churches generally favoring pews that could be rented or sold to finance the construction and maintenance of buildings to rival their religious competitors. Simpson represented a newer, "progressive" Methodism which some, especially in the West, resisted, and which weakened his chances for election. "The grounds of hostility were that I was tolerant on the pew question and that I had not travelled sufficiently as an itinerant preacher."⁵ Simpson believed he "had the active and uncompromising opposition of nearly all the Ohio delegation and of the most of

³ Simpson, *Hundred Years of Methodism*, 162-3.

⁴ Simpson, *Hundred Years of Methodism*, 164.

⁵ Simpson, "Journal," April [May] 25, 1852. LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

the North Ohio." To these conferences "were joined Cartwright of Illinois and Phelps of Rock River and also Haney and probably Pilcher of Michigan."⁶

According to his first biographer, George Crooks, Simpson favored a moderate position. He wanted "commodious" churches but without "pew doors."⁷ This was the compromise General conference also reached. "The rule forbidding [the] erection [of pewed churches] was rescinded, and another was adopted expressing the decided judgment of the Church in favor of free churches."⁸ The controversy ebbed and "on the first ballot Levi Scott, Matthew Simpson, Edward R. Ames, and Osman C. Baker, were elected."⁹ Simpson recorded in his diary of May 27, 1852, "in presence of an immense crowd we were ordained Bishops of the M. E. Church, and invited to seats within the altar by the bishops."¹⁰

Bishop

Simpson's first four years itinerating as bishop were difficult. In his journal he showed Methodist determination to yield to God, and to grow the church he oversaw. He was far from confident as a preacher. In December, 1852, he regretted "how little good follows my pulpit labors to what would were I in the full spirit of my mission, and could I preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."¹¹ A

⁶ Simpson, "Journal," April [May] 25, 1852. LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁷ George Crooks, *The Life of Matthew Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1890) 277. This is in a quote from Simpson which I have not been able to locate.

⁸ Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, 164.

⁹ Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, 163-4.

¹⁰ Simpson, "Journal," April [May?] 27, 1852. LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

¹¹ Simpson, "Journal," Parkersburg, December 25, 1852. LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

few days later, he longed to “find subdued within me, every unhallowed desire, and may I love God with all my heart.”¹² The following day he was unusually vulnerable.

For various reasons I am much depressed. My heart greatly needs a deeper work of grace. I work in some respects sufficiently – indeed, I feel sometimes that I cannot stand the physical efforts I make, together with the mental excitement under which I labor – but must soon wear down to the grave – and yet my heart is not right – I feel that it requires a something not yet possessed to make me victorious over all my infirmities and temptations, and give me triumph in our Lord Jesus Christ. A pure heart, a simplicity of purpose, thorough self-denial, and all-conquering faith and love, I greatly need. Oh that I did even now cast myself fully upon the atoning merit of Christ, which forgiveth all sin and cleanseth from all iniquity. I need to be created anew in Christ Jesus.”¹³

In 1853 and 1854 Simpson was sent to the far West, to California and Oregon, to oversee conferences there. The trip involved travelling across the isthmus of Panama partly by boat and partly on donkey. He began to grasp the vastness the mission of Methodism to the wider world. In California he attended the Mission of William Taylor and his Bethel ship. In a letter to his wife, Ellen, he wrote “After dinner walked to plaza, where Brother Taylor preached to some one or two hundred people, a plain, pointed sermon”¹⁴ That night Simpson preached “to a full house in the Bethel,” and his message produced fruit. “After sermon Brother Taylor invited mourners – three came: one American man; one negro woman, darkest I ever saw; one Peruvian young man – all nations and tongues seem to be congregating in California, and I trust that here is to be the centre of a great good.”¹⁵

Politician

¹² Simpson, “Journal,” December 27, 1852. LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

¹³ Simpson, “Journal,” December 28, 1852. LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1. *Emphasis Simpson’s.*

¹⁴ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Steamer Antelope, Jan 30 1854, quoted in Crooks, *Life of Simpson*, 3

¹⁵ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Steamer Antelope, Jan 30 1854, quoted in Crooks, *Life of Simpson*, 315.

The 1856 General Conference met in Indianapolis, “a point” as Simpson remarked, “farther west than any previous session had been held, and indicating the rapid and continuous spread of the Church over the western sections of the country.”¹⁶ There were international guests. “Drs. Hannah and Jobson attended this session as delegates from the British Wesleyan Conference.”¹⁷ John Hannah (1792-1867) had been Divinity tutor at the 22-year-old Wesleyan Methodist theological institution at Didsbury, UK and had also twice served as president of the Wesleyan conference. F. J. Jobson (1812-1881) was a Wesleyan minister and architect “associated with A. Pugin in the revival of Gothic architecture in the kingdom.”¹⁸ These were likeminded men in whom Simpson took an interest. He wrote to Ellen, “The English delegates were introduced and I had an interview with Dr. Hannah at Gov. Wrights.”¹⁹ Four days later he “dined at Governor Wrights . . . with the English delegates and a number of others.”²⁰ Simpson’s rapport with the delegates and with prominent Methodist layman Joseph Wright (1810-1867) paid off. He “and Dr. M’Clintock were selected to visit the British and Irish Conferences in 1857.”²¹

The honor was far from certain for most of the conference as Simpson was again at the center of controversy. The issue was slavery and pressure from holiness and

¹⁶ Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, p. 166.

¹⁷ Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, p. 166.

¹⁸ Matthew Simpson, ed. *Cyclopedia of Methodism* (Philadelphia, 1876)

¹⁹ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, May 3, 1856. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858. Simpson was also doing some secret reporting from the conference. “I have sent you the Daily Advocate, in which you will see a full report. I have also sent a letter or two to the Chronicle, but you must not let it be known that they are from me.”

²⁰ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, may 8, 1856. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

²¹ Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, 1879, p. 166.

abolitionists within the Church. Simpson wrote to Ellen on May 14, "We have prospect of much trouble on the slavery questions."²² He calculated that those "in favor of making the General Rule [against slaveholding] more stringent were in the majority."²³ Simpson, however, was "thoroughly opposed to the constitutional change advocated by the anti-slavery delegates and sought to defeat it."²⁴ He wanted to keep the church together and growing and not "embarrass unnecessarily [our] brethren on the border, who were already severely pressed."²⁵ He expressed concern "that the Church will split, though I hope for the best."²⁶

He feared his "moderate" position had cost him powerful friends and a chance to go to Europe. In letters to Ellen he took stock of his relations to other delegates. "Yesterday I took dinner at Harrisons," he wrote. "They seem friendly, inquire for you etc. – as did also Mrs. Wilkins where I took tea evening before last – at neither place however a special invitation. J. B. Findley, Peter Cartwright, W. J. Haverland stay at Harrison's at his special request."²⁷ On May 17th he "dined at Bp. Ames simply at a family dinner plain but good. They seem very friendly. Harrisons are pleasant when I meet them, but nothing more."²⁸

²² Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, May 14th, 1856. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

²³ Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, p.166-7.

²⁴ Robert D. Clark, *The Life of Matthew Simpson* (New York, 1956) 194-5. See also Lucius C. Matlack, *The Antislavery Struggle and Triumph in the Methodist Episcopal Church*, (New York, 1881), 267-277.

²⁵ Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, p.166-7.

²⁶ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, May 14th, 1856. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

²⁷ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, May 9, 1856. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

²⁸ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, May 17, 1856. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

On the 21st he told Ellen:

I suppose I have pretty deeply offended the Northern brethren by saying I thought their proposed action against slavery unconstitutional. But this will likely work well and please you, for before this a large number of them said they were going to send me to England. Now I think it will not be done. . . . Of this however you must say nothing.”²⁹

But Simpson was hopeful for victory. “The slavery committee reported today,” he informed her. “The minority will respond tomorrow, and then we shall have a warm debate.” By this point though, he thought “the majority will be against any ultra action, but I am not sure. . . . The warring question will depend on ourselves.”³⁰

The person who would help him was Able Stevens (1815-1897). Stevens had been the editor of *Zion's Herald* since 1848 and *The National Magazine* since 1852. He was also for architecture and opposed to the abolitionist party within Methodism. On May 19, Simpson wrote to Ellen, “Stevens I learn arrived here Saturday night but I have not yet seen him. This week we expect to have the slavery question before us.”³¹ MEC Bishops could not engage in floor debate. Instead Simpson and Stevens crafted an argument to be delivered by Stevens.

His argument was historical: the church from the early days, although strongly antislavery in sentiment, had permitted slaveholding; in short, it had always been both an antislavery and a slaveholding church, and to make it otherwise without the approval of the annual conferences would change the basis of membership, and would therefore be unconstitutional.³²

²⁹ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, May 21 [1856]. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

³⁰ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, May 21 [1856]. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

³¹ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Indianapolis, May 19, 1856. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

³² Clark, *The Life of Simpson*, 194-5. Also Matlack, *The Antislavery Struggle*, 267-277.

The speech “swept the conference before him, scattering the abolitionists.”³³

With the abolitionists defeated,³⁴ the General Conference of the MEC did indeed appoint “Rev. J. McClintock D. D. and myself to bring its fraternal greetings to the British and Irish Wesleyan Conferences.”³⁵ McClintock (1814-1870) was the chair of ancient languages at Dickinson College, and editor of *The Methodist Quarterly Review*.³⁶ Since they were already travelling to Europe, “the Missionary Board requested us to visit the missions in Norway, France and Germany; and the bishops appointed me to preside at the German mission conference to be held at Bremen.”³⁷

³³ Clark, *The Life of Simpson*, 194-5. Also Matlack, *The Antislavery Struggle*, 267-277.

³⁴ Arguments Simpson considered regarding slavery and Church membership, are found in a letter from his mentor and uncle, also Matthew Simpson, written a month after conference. The letter begins, “My dear Nephew, I propose according to promise to give a few thoughts on the servitude or slavery authorized by the Old Testament scripture.” The last page of this extensive letter, presumably with the conclusion, is missing. However, the thrust of his argument seems to be that slaves were included in the covenant of circumcision and thus the sign of salvation, though they were lawfully bought as foreigners, and remained slaves. “And then what was required of Abraham and his seed? Ans. They should be circumcised together with every male among them whether born in their house or bought with money, that is all whom they could hold to servitude by any grant of law or authority of God, for “all their males” and “every male among them” surely includes all whom they could lawfully hold to labour or keep in servitude. But what included in this sign? Ans. the man who was circumcised came under an obligation to have the body of sin destroyed or to mortify the deeds of the body or the flesh and to live a life of holiness by keeping all God’s commandments and attending punctually to that for of worship which God should require of them. “See Matthew Simpson (uncle), Letter to Matthew Simpson (nephew), Wellsville, June 19, 1856. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

³⁵ Simpson, “Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857.” LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

³⁶ Simpson, ed., *Cyclopedie*, 573. McClintock also “aided in translating [August]Neander’s ‘Life of Christ,’ and prepared, in connection with Dr. [George] Crooks, elementary text-books on Latin and Greek.”

³⁷ Simpson, “Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857.” LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

The two would also represent American Methodism at the Evangelical Alliance Conference in Berlin.

These duties were part of American Methodism's expanding global presence. Bishop Edmund S. Janes wrote to Simpson in October 1856, anxious to get the Methodists established in Bulgaria before other Protestant missions get involved. "The question of the Bulgarian mission must be settled. Other denominations will not wait longer." He encouraged Simpson to recruit a suitable missionary. "Suppose you consult professor Harris and have him answer you at New York if you judge him the right man."³⁸

Simpson also had grand plans for Methodism. In a private notebook, on December 23, 1856, he made notes under the heading "The future of Methodism involving probable changes." The ideas mentioned, most of which did indeed come to pass, would have been considered progressive in his day and brought church practice in line with other world Protestant churches. They included: "1. Lay delegates. 2. Extension of ministerial time. 3. Fewer presiding Elders and more Bishops. 4. Districts changeable but assigned Bishops. 5. Support of Bps made direct from people. 6. Use of Liturgy."³⁹ He continued:

Are not these topics worthy of discussion that the plans may be shaped aright? Can a clear view be given of Mr. Wesley's idea of a church distinct from comprehending societies, and societies as encompassed in a church? Also what changes in a church he might have desired, not in a society. What would be the

³⁸ E. S. Janes, Letter to Matthew Simpson, Springfield, Mass, Oct 31, [18]56. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 6, General Correspondence June-December, 1856.

³⁹ Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, Dec 23rd 1856." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

effect of publishing a new edition of Mr. Wesley's Prayer Book, with an introduction?⁴⁰

Ambassador

As Simpson's trip abroad approached, tickets were purchased for him and his son Charles "in the Cunard Steamer 'Africa' to sail on May 13, 1857."⁴¹ Simpson also "contracted to supply travel letters to the *Pittsburgh* and the *Western Christian Advocate*" and "through his New York banker friend, Daniel Ross, he established a credit of £ 500 with a Liverpool banking house."⁴² He concluded he episcopal duties "early in the spring . . . at the Kentucky, North Indiana, Western Virginia, and Pittsburgh Conferences."⁴³ Then, "three days from the close"⁴⁴ of the Pittsburgh Conference, Simpson, his son Charles and wife Ellen left for New York on May 8, 1857. They were accompanied by "Allen Kramer Esq. and Alexander Bradley Esq. and their estimable ladies."⁴⁵ Kramer and Bradley were wealthy Pittsburgh Methodists and patrons of Methodist causes.⁴⁶

The group spent Sunday, May 10, in Philadelphia and Simpson preached. In the morning he spoke "at Green St. on 'Sanctify them by thy truth' and at night at Trinity

⁴⁰ Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, Dec 23rd 1856." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁴¹ Simpson, "Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857." LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

⁴² Clark, *The Life of Simpson*, 196. Swormstedt and Poe to Simpson, May 5, 1857. Daniel Ross, letter to Simpson, May 15, 1857. Diary, May 14-22, 1857.

⁴³ Simpson, "Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857." LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

⁴⁴ Simpson, "Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857." LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

⁴⁵ Simpson, "Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857." LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

⁴⁶ Alexander Bradley was a manufacturer of ironware in Pittsburgh and banker. Allen Kramer had founded a banking house in Pittsburgh. Both contributed considerably to Methodist enterprises. See Simpson, *Cyclopedia*, 130-1, 521.

from prayer of Elisha 'Open his eyes.'"⁴⁷ The next day they left for New York where they "made a home with D. L. Ross, [a wealthy New York Methodist] where we were most kindly entertained."⁴⁸ In New York, Simpson worked to raise money for the building of church buildings in America and missions abroad. On Tuesday He "preach a dedicatory sermon in the Scandinavian Bethel ship."⁴⁹ "A collection of \$2200 was taken in."⁵⁰ That evening he "gave a lecture on the 'Influence of the Bible upon Languages' in Green St. ch. in behalf of the new church in Hudson City," New Jersey.⁵¹

On Wednesday they were scheduled to leave. "Not having received [his] passports [Simpson] was obliged to go to the Mayor's office to make affidavits."⁵² He needed greater financial assurances. "I was laid under obligation to Mr. Kramer for a letter of credit which he unsolicitedly gave me. And also to Mr. Smith for several introductory notes."⁵³ At "11 1/2 I bade farewell to a host of kind friends who

⁴⁷ Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁴⁸ Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1. Daniel L. Ross was wealthy merchant with business interests in New York and San Francisco who contributed considerably to Methodist mission enterprises. See Simpson, *Cyclopedie*, 766-7.

⁴⁹ Simpson, "Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857." LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

⁵⁰ Simpson, "Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857." LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

⁵¹ Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁵² Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁵³ Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

had accompanied me . . . and in a few minutes our noble steamer loosing its cables and firing its signal guns was sweeping around gracefully in Manhattan Bay.”⁵⁴

“After viewing the bay & receding city,” he and his son Charles made a tour of the ship.⁵⁵ Simpson was awed by its size, power, and technology. He recorded its dimensions, and described its engines, and accommodations. “Her engine is said to have cost about \$200,000 and was certainly of a very superior frame & movement . . . The piston rod is 10 inches in diameter at 9 feet stroke. And the boiler and furnaces feed it . . . about 70 tons of coal per day. The ship is 287 feet long as I am informed.”⁵⁶ Simpson also wrote extensively about the quality of food and entertainment available. “Card playing is very common as is some covert gambling to a considerable amount though this is forbidden by the rules of the ship.”⁵⁷

On Sunday, May 17, Simpson was given the honor of holding religious services. He was particularly pleased, partly because it meant the captain considered him equal to a Church of England minister. “According to the rules of the [ship’s] company the captain, if no minister of the Excellent Church of England is on board, must read the Episcopal service.” Because of stormy weather, “the captain who had before signified to some of my friends that he designed to ask me to preach, sent me word that its man could not be present. With that I could conduct services wholly in my own way.” Thus the ship had as its representative of the clergy a bishop of the

⁵⁴ Simpson, “Journal of a visit to Europe, 1857.” LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, Travel Accounts.

⁵⁵ Simpson, “Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63.” LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁵⁶ Simpson, “Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63.” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁵⁷ Matthew Simpson, “Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63.” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

MEC. "At 2 conducted the service in our usual method," Simpson wrote. "We had a number of Presbyterians and Episcopalian on board, but no Methodists except Mr. Wendall and Mr. Havemeyer of NY."⁵⁸

On Saturday, May 23, Simpson saw the lighthouse and forts established at Malin Head in the north of Ireland "to guard against Napoleon in 1798." His last notations for that day read "custom house offices – Dangers – Jews – Warf – Adephi – Univer – stewards at Milburn – letters – retired late."⁵⁹ A week later he wrote to Ellen from London that he and Charles "have no acquaintances yet Methodistically, but are staying at a hotel sightseeing. Expenses are very high." He had, however, "agreed to preach in City Road on Sunday."⁶⁰

In early June, he made his way to the continent. In Hanover he prepared for the mission conference of the German MEC with Ludwig Jacoby (1813-1874). Jacoby had been born to Jewish parents and baptized in the Lutheran Church. In 1838 he immigrated to Cincinnati and heard William Nast preach. He joined the Methodists and became a missionary to German immigrants. After the democratic movements in Germany in 1848, he returned to Germany in 1849 and began gathering a MEC community in Bremen. Simpson wrote from Hanover that he was "at a loss of sleep

⁵⁸ Matthew Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁵⁹ Simpson, "Notes of Travel and Readings, 1856-63." LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 1.

⁶⁰ Simpson, to Ellen Simpson, May 29, 1857, London. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

with travelling that accommodations exhausted me considerably and last night I was compelled to sit till from this morning arranging matters with Bro. Jacoby."⁶¹

In a June 4 letter to Ellen, Simpson expected "providence permitting to set out for Antwerp on the continent and thence to Norway and to return if spared to London about the 22nd of this month on my way to Ireland." He also mentioned his disappointment with German hospitality. "Last night we had a public reception meeting with brethren at the mission House of which some two hundred were present. They are very cordial but I have no invitation to any of their houses."⁶²

American Methodist

After visiting missions in Scandinavia and bringing fraternal greetings to the Irish Wesleyan Methodist Conference, Simpson continued to Liverpool for the 1857 British Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. There he "not only gave fraternal greetings from the American church but defended its policy on slavery (the English papers . . . had openly accused him of proslaveryism)." ⁶³ An account of this speech from blind Methodist preacher and future chaplain of the United States Congress, William Henry Milburn (1823-1903), is recorded by Crooks.

The bishop, who was the first to speak, could not but be conscious, as he looked over the vast assembly, that, kindly disposed as they might be, there was a barrier to his success, for the hospitality of mind in his hearers was tinctured by a slight distrust and undervaluation of him as an American; undefined it might be but none the less real and potent. It was a trying moment for the great orator who had achieved so many triumphs in his native land, and he, at first seemed almost to falter, while the doctor [McClintock] and I, who sat near at hand, were tremulous, even feverish, dreading lest our champion might fail for the first time

⁶¹ Simpson, to Ellen Simpson, June [], 1857, Hanover. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

⁶² Simpson, to Ellen Simpson, June 4, 1857, London. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

⁶³ Clark, *The Life of Simpson*, 197.

in his life on a great occasion. For ten or fifteen minutes we were kept in most painful suspense; our breath came hard and fast, for the bishop was hampered and ill at ease, or appeared to be so. . . . Just as we were giving up all for lost the speaker seemed to forget himself for a moment or two, as a happy illustration fell from his lips; . . . there was a murmur of 'Hear, hear!' from all over the house. . . . His voice lost its wavering inflections and uncertainty of tone; his sentences flowed freely, in clearer and higher form. The speech became earnest, effective, poetic, impassioned, thrilling.⁶⁴

The substance of Simpson's defense of American Methodism was to highlight the cost borne by the church in resisting slavery. The MEC had lost nearly half a million members. "By that one act of resisting the progress of the spirit of slavery among us," he said, "we lost more members than you ever had in the Methodist body in Great Britain."⁶⁵ Moderation was necessary in the American context to preserve its growth and expansion. Simpson's speech was considered a tremendous success. The London *Watchman* extolled the presence of the American delegates as important for ecumenical and even national interests:

The two communions of Methodism; that in England being the youngest here, yet second in number only to the Established Church; that in America being the youngest there, the daughter, in fact, of British Methodist, but far more prolific than her mother, and with a larger family of spiritual children than any other Church in the United States. A deputation every four years from each to the other of these great communions must assist in perpetuating and vivifying the feeling of kinship between the two countries.⁶⁶

American Protestant

The bishop next travelled through France and Germany, on the way to preside at the German mission conference and represent the MEC at the Evangelical Alliance Meeting. To Ellen he commented on the "narrow filthy streets of Cologne" and on

⁶⁴ William Henry Millburn, "Narrative," recorded in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 335

⁶⁵ Clark, *Life of Simpson*, 198. Also *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 20 and Sept. 10, 1857.

⁶⁶ *The Watchman*, London, 1857, quoted in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 337.

the “pretty scenery” from Cologne to Mainz, “but not prettier than many spots on the Ohio or on the Hudson.” He also encountered Roman Catholicism, which he viewed with Protestant skepticism. He went to Cologne’s “famed cathedral and to the Church of St. Ursula where they pretend to show the bones of 11,000 virgins, the story is too long to tell and I question whether you would believe it at any rate. They do show a good many skulls & bones, but where they came from I cannot tell.”⁶⁷

From September 5-7, 1857, Simpson presided at the first Conference of the German MEC in Bremen. Simpson’s assessment of the mission is understated. “This work had been commenced a few years previously under the superintendency of Dr. Jacoby. . . . He had established, at Bremen, a printing-press, publishing a weekly paper, and had issued several tracts and books in the German language.”⁶⁸ Membership in Germany and Switzerland was small but growing. It totaled 534 (up from 465 the previous year).⁶⁹

Despite the relatively small number of German Methodists, Simpson’s presence at the Evangelical Alliance meeting raised his profile as an Ambassador of American Protestantism. The Alliance was a loose knit federation formed in London in 1846. Its purpose was to provide “a definite organization for the expression of unity amongst Christian individuals belonging to different churches.” This did not exclude controversy. At its first meeting, British participants moved to exclude slaveholders

⁶⁷ Simpson, to Ellen Simpson, August 21, 1857, Worms, LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

⁶⁸ Simpson, *A Hundred Years of Methodism*, 167-8.

⁶⁹ German Mission Conference, 1857.

from membership, but after six days of debate, the final constitution skirted the issue of slavery due to American pressure.⁷⁰

The Alliance's first meeting on German soil, in the capital of the Prussian Empire, began on September 10, 1857. Prussia was a rising power. The defeat of Napoleon had enlarged its borders to include the centers of the German industrial revolution. Prussia now rivaled Austria for leadership of a united Germany.⁷¹ "Second in size and in rank," wrote a clearly impressed Simpson in an unpublished narrative of his journey, "Prussia is really at the head of the Germanic states."

Its Princes have furnished much greater energy than those of Austria and the Kingdom has advanced much more rapidly in all the elements of a high Christian civilization. No nation can boast a more perfectly organized system of education. Every child, rich and poor, male or female, must attend a public school from five years of age until such time as the clergyman of the parish is satisfied that it has the education proscribed by law for its station.⁷²

Prussia desired unity among its fractious Protestant churches, a problem Catholic Austria, which repressed religious dissent, did not have. Likely for this reason, the King of Prussia gave special attention and encouragement to the Alliance meeting. According to Simpson, "the present monarch is said to be exceedingly liberal and desires that free toleration shall be given to all sects." Nonetheless, he continued, "minor sects may be oppressed without the approbation of the government. Such has been the case in reference to the Baptists in some parts of the

⁷⁰ J. W. Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship: A Centenary Tribute to the Life and Work of the World Evangelical Alliance 1846-1946*, (London, 1946), 19.

⁷¹ Catholic Austria had been forced to give up the imperial crown in 1806, under pressure from Napoleon, but controlled the German Confederation, which was created by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to coordinate the German-speaking countries and replace the former Holy Roman Empire.

⁷² Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings. 20

Kingdom.”⁷³ W. F. Warren, a young Methodist preacher studying in Germany, who was corresponding for the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, reported that the delegates were supposed to discuss the issue of religious liberty. He acknowledged, somewhat cynically however, that the meeting could only affirm it on “religious, as distinct from political, grounds”⁷⁴ because the Prussian government would not allow an open discussion.

When the assembly convened, Warren focused his reporting on the impressions made by the Methodists in attendance. A major American presence at the meeting was the Ambassador to Berlin, Methodist layman Governor Wright who had entertained Simpson and the English delegates at General Conference. Simpson remarked that his “presence . . . was to me, and to the Americans generally particularly gratifying.”⁷⁵ He likely owed his prominent place on the Alliance

⁷³ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings. 21-3. Frederick William IV was not a liberal. In 1848, a series of revolutions within Germany, resulted in an elected parliament meeting at St. Paul’s church in Frankfurt to unite all of Germany under a constitution. The Parliament failed. Another parliament met in Berlin later that year. The king was offered the imperial crown by the revolutionary assembly, but refused, believing the imperial crown could only be granted by the other monarchs of Germany. The Prussian National Assembly sought to create a constitution with the King. Instead, the King imposed a monarchist constitution and dissolved the parliament. After dissolving the parliament in 1849, the King issued a new constitution in 1850, which preserved the power of the monarch and major landholders.

⁷⁴ Clark, *The Life of Simpson*, 198. “Letter from Dr. McClintock” *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Oct 8 1857. “Letter from Germany,” *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 25, 1857.

⁷⁵ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings. 20

program to Wright's influence,⁷⁶ even though Wright "had only recently arrived" in Berlin, appointed by President Buchanan.⁷⁷

Simpson admired Wright's American and Methodist sensibilities, which he seems hard pressed to distinguish. He especially noted Wright's "determined adherence to republican simplicity in the midst of society governed by courtly etiquette." This was "especially manifested in refusing to place wines upon his table at a dinner, which he gave during the Alliance."⁷⁸ Wright was involved with Temperance movements in Indiana.

For this he was highly censured by courtly parasites, but he should have and will have, the higher regard from patriotic Americans. . . . No forms of flattery will cause [Wright] to sacrifice one iota of the rightful claims of the United States. If he err at all, it will be in an outspoken condemnation of the ridiculous etiquette and ceremonies enjoined by European courts.⁷⁹

Like Prussia, the United States was a rising power and Prussia extended to the Americans and especially the Methodist delegation, every courtesy. Indeed Methodists were received as the quasi-national church of the United States. The meeting was opened by the court preacher with a speech welcoming each church delegation. When he got to Methodism, he called it "the angel flying through the midst of heaven, summoning the dead churches to a new Christian life."⁸⁰ The next

⁷⁶ Clark, *The Life of Simpson*, 198-9. Simpson, "Trip to Europe." "Letter from Europe," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, May 10, 1860. John McClintock and W.F. Warren, *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Oct 8 and 15, 1857.

⁷⁷ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings. 5.

⁷⁸ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings. 5.

⁷⁹ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings. 5.

⁸⁰ McClintock, Letters, *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Oct 8, 1857. June 25, 1857, quoted in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 339-40.

place on the agenda was given to Ambassador Wright. McClintock commented, "it was a great gratification, too, to Christians of all lands, to see a man occupying so high a public position identifying himself with this movement of Christian brotherhood."⁸¹ Following Ambassador Wright, Simpson spoke. Warren recorded the reaction of one German at the announcement that he would speak next.

'Who is that?' said a German gentleman near me. 'Bishop Simpson of the Bischoeflichen Methodisten Kirche of America.' 'Bischoeflichen Methodisten Kirche?' repeated he, dubiously; 'Episcopal Methodist! Why, that is a contraction in terms! What do you mean' and he turned for enlightenment to another. How he succeeded, I do not know.⁸²

Simpson's speech emphasized the benefits of united effort. "The great body of American Christians," he said, "sympathized with the objects of the Conference as a union not of creeds, nor of organizations, but of heart and Christian activity."⁸³ Through such unity came the achievement of prosperity and peace. "The little streams, rising among the hills – some flowing faster some slower – might, indeed, singly, quench the thirst of the passing traveller, but only in union could they bear the treasures of commerce, and so bring the ends of the earth together."⁸⁴ Simpson also compared the political structures of Germany and those of the United States. "As in Germany, so also in the United States," he said, "the independence of the several sovereignties secured freedom of thought and action, while the confederation gave strength and power to the whole."⁸⁵ So it was with the Church. "Singly, the churches did great good, but when united in heart and activity, they

⁸¹ McClintock, Letter, in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 340.

⁸² Dr. W. F. Warren, Letter, quoted in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 341.

⁸³ McClintock, Letter in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 340-1.

⁸⁴ McClintock, Letter in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 340-1.

⁸⁵ McClintock, Letter in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 340-1.

offered a sublime spectacle to the world. . . . It was the desire of American Christians that all Christians, in all the earth, to be one in Christ Jesus.”⁸⁶

Afterward, representatives from the assembly were entertained at the King’s palace, Sansoussi. Warren remarked, “At three o’clock we betook ourselves to the Potsdam depot, white-cravatted and white kiddled, according to the irrefragable postulates of court etiquette, whence two extra trains conveyed us gratis to the ‘Prussian Versailles.’”⁸⁷ There were thirty-two in the American delegation, which included Wright, Simpson, McClintock, Warren, and the Methodist missionaries to Constantinople and Athens. Wright was chosen to present the Americans. “When the King arrived . . . and seeing Governor Wright, he hastened forward, shook his hand most cordially, and expressed his lively pleasure at finding him there.”

After a little conversation the governor proceeded to present his countrymen. The king expressed great satisfaction in seeing his old friend Doctor Baird, held Dr. Dwight’s hand a long time, inquiring about his missionary success, did not forget to greet the native Armenian preacher who was in his company, begged to know of Bishop Simpson the name of his see(!), in a word, ‘did the polite and handsome’ by us all; so much so that he excited the jealousy of more than one ‘nationality,’ among the rest his own.⁸⁸

Warren, with evident pride, recounted the reaction of “one old German.” “Setting down his great beer-pot with emphasis,” he remarked,

‘how came his majesty to show such particular regard to those Americans? I really became quite jealous of them. He showed to them more attention than to his own people.’ ‘The king ye always have with you,’ replied a gentleman near by, who had heard the remark. . . . ‘That is true,’ returned the German, in a tone which made it sound very much like, ‘too true.’⁸⁹

⁸⁶McClintock, Letter, in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 340-1.

⁸⁷ Warren, Report, in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 341

⁸⁸ Warren, Report, in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 342-343.

⁸⁹ Warren, Report, in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 341-343.

On Sunday, Bishop Simpson was given the further honor of preaching the English language service at the Garrison Church. McClintock reported to his American readers gleefully, “It was the first time that an established church in Prussia had been opened for the preaching of the gospel by an evangelical minister of the English or American churches and now it was opened for a Methodist Bishop.”⁹⁰ Simpson spoke on Christian unity from John 17:22.

True Christian union consists not in unity of belief, for this is not possible as long as minds and nations differ so widely; not in uniformity of worship, which is equally impracticable, even if desirable; but in union of fellowship with Christ, and of Christian activities and labors for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom.”⁹¹

Reaction was mixed. An Englishman said to McClintock, “Ah, sir, that was preaching; what a backbone of hard stout thinking was behind all that tenderness and unction!”⁹² Some German Lutherans were unnerved by “American schismatics in the pulpit.”⁹³

American Tourist

The remainder of Simpson’s trip was devoid of official duties and instead taken up with tourism and pilgrimage. Simpson had long hoped “if life, health, and circumstances should permit,” to extend his travels in Europe “to visit the East.”⁹⁴ In Berlin he met “Prof. Garver, a young Lutheran clergyman from Pennsylvania who desired to visit the Holy Land if he could obtain suitable company.” He also enlisted Warren, whom he had “met at the rooms of Governor Wright.” Finally, the party

⁹⁰ McClintock, quoted in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 343.

⁹¹ Doctor McClintock, in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 343-4.

⁹² Doctor McClintock, in Crooks, *Life of Simpson*, 343-4.

⁹³ Clark, *The Life of Simpson*, 200.

⁹⁴ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, July, 1857.

included “the son of Gov. Wright, the American ambassador [sic] at Berlin, a young man . . . whom [Simpson] had known almost from his childhood.”⁹⁵

The group agreed to meet up “in the city of Vienna, and start thence for Constantinople on the 2nd day of October.”⁹⁶ They would then “proceed from Vienna by the Danube and the Black Sea to Constantinople that [they] might see as much as possible of the Turkish dominions.”⁹⁷ In Constantinople Simpson planned to visit the MEC missionaries he had encountered at the Alliance meeting⁹⁸ and continue on to Jerusalem, Egypt, Italy, and then return home. His son Charles, “desiring to acquire a knowledge of the German language,”⁹⁹ was put under the care of Jacoby, and attended a school in “about 25 or 30 miles from Hanover.”¹⁰⁰

Simpson made the journey to Vienna alone. He wrote to Ellen that he had “been visiting the spots made interesting by the labors of Luther and Melanchthon,” though he seems to have begun to grow weary of sightseeing.

I have seen the house in which Luther was born, and the house in which he died. I have seen the table at which he wrote, the gown which he wore and the beads which he counted while yet a monk, the room in which he first studied the Bible, the castle in which he was lodged for safety, and the wall at which he threw the

⁹⁵ Simpson, “Travels in Europe, 1857,” LOC. Man. Division, Bishop Simpson Papers, Box 15, Sermons, Letters and Writings: Travel Accounts.

⁹⁶ Simpson, to Ellen Simpson, September 18, 1857, Berlin. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

⁹⁷ Simpson, “Travels in Europe, 1857,” LOC. Man. Division, Bishop Simpson Papers, Box 15, Sermons, Letters and Writings: Travel Accounts.

⁹⁸ Simpson, *Hundred Years of Methodism*, p.167-8.

⁹⁹ Simpson, “Travels in Europe, 1857,” LOC. Man. Division, Bishop Simpson Papers, Box 15, Sermons, Letters and Writings: Travel Accounts.

¹⁰⁰ Simpson, to Ellen Simpson, September 18, 1857, Berlin. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858. Also Clark, *Life of Simpson*, 202. Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, august 21, 1857. Simpson, Letter to Charles Simpson, Sept 27, 1857.

ink stand to hit his Satanic majesty. . . . Battlefields, too I have seen and palaces, and paintings, and ornaments, almost without number.¹⁰¹

When he arrived in Dresden, he “expected to meet two of my travelling companions but as they were delayed I turned aside . . . to visit the Moravian town of Herrnhut,”¹⁰² from “which [Wesley] drew some practical plans.”¹⁰³ The General Council of the Moravians had met just before his arrival and “with some of their brethren from America [he] had crossed the Atlantic.”¹⁰⁴ The visit confirmed his sense of Methodist superiority.

[Wesley] formed societies aiming to unite all the forms, regularity and system of the Church of England with the simplicity and religious energy of the Moravian Brethren. The question may arise to the thoughtful enquirer, why have the Moravians accomplished so little while the societies of Mr. Wesley have multiplied so rapidly and spread to the end of the earth?¹⁰⁵

On September 26, Simpson travelled to Prague in the Austrian empire where “Catholicism reigns supreme; and it is dangerous to question the most incredible narratives.”¹⁰⁶ To Simpson, Catholicism represented European decadence and superstition. He “had full opportunity to witness the splendor and pageantry of Papal ceremonies.”¹⁰⁷ He commented on a Cardinal Prince conducting service, after

¹⁰¹ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Dresden, September 25, 1857. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

¹⁰² Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings. 36-7.

¹⁰³ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Dresden, September 25, 1857. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

¹⁰⁴ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings. 36-7.

¹⁰⁵ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings.

¹⁰⁶ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹⁰⁷ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

which "the Cardinal passing from the cathedral had his long robes borne by attendants until placed in the carriage and attended by guards he drove away."¹⁰⁸ He noted on the opulence of the churches and shrines.

That of St. John of Napomuc is one of the richest in the world. It is said the silver amounts to thirty seven hundred weight. Figures of angels support a silver coffin, which is said to contain one of crystal inclosing the body. . . . The walls of the chapel of St. Wenzell are marble, rich in jewels, and fresco paintings have borders inlaid with amethysts, jasper, and other precious stones. . . . The cathedral is also rich in relics, which command the veneration of crowds of pilgrims. Among these are parts of the bones of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a piece of the true cross, a part of the sponge, two thorns of the crown, the virgin Mary's pocket handkerchief, and a host of articles of equal value. More substantial treasure than these is the church plate and robes prepared for the priests.¹⁰⁹

Simpson was however intrigued by the hold saint's cults had over the people, and how gullible they seemed.

I frequently met with men and women selling images of the saints, small picturebooks relating the miracles which they had performed and containing wild legends such as we in this Protestant country can scarcely suppose could anywhere be believed. . . . The extent to which abject submission to monkish superstition is carried is seen in the crowds, which gather around the images contained in the various chapels. The inscriptions upon the pedestals on which the images of the saints are placed, tell the efficacy of prayers offered before the statues. Some of these read "Good for diseases of the head", others, "Good for diseases of the toes", another, "Good for diseases of the eye", and so on for all the different parts of the human body, while a card at another part of the chapel proclaimed an indulgence and remission of sins for all who should offer prayers there.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹⁰⁹ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹¹⁰ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

Even so Simpson maintained a hope for the triumph of Protestantism in Bohemia. An outdoor service to honor St. Wenceslaus "reminded [him] of camp-meeting in our own western land."

Seldom have I heard more earnest addresses though I knew not the matter and seldom have I heard strains of music in which an audience of thousands joined with more apparent sincerity. Such a people preserving such habits must before long be accessible to Protestant effort.¹¹¹

It was his firm belief that "There yet slumbers however in the national heart of Bohemia a feeling of independence and a restlessness under the Roman yoke." In the not too distant future, he wrote, "a flame shall ascend from the ashes of these early martyrs which shall spread until . . . Papal idolatry shall perish from the land." He had heard, "that a large proportion of the priests in Bohemia are anxious for deliverance from Papal domination."¹¹² Prague, he believed, could "become a center from which light should spread throughout the Austrian dominions."¹¹³

His next stop was Vienna. Vienna was the center of the multi-ethnic Austrian empire. On October 2, he wrote to Ellen, "Here in Vienna, though it is yet by the Danube and Black Sea 1500 miles to Constantinople I find myself in the lands of the East. Many stranger languages are spoken here. Bohemian, Hungarian, Russian, Turkish etc., are heard in the streets."¹¹⁴ After difficulty finding the American mission in Vienna, Simpson, ever the patriot, noted:

¹¹¹ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹¹² Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹¹³ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man., Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹¹⁴ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Vienna, Oct 2 1857. LOC. Man. Division. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

American interests are not represented in foreign lands as the magnitude and honor of our country demands. Comparatively small would be the outlay to secure in each capital a permanent position from which the American flag should float and to which all eyes should be directed, as the center and safeguard of American institutions.¹¹⁵

The most important of those institutions was religious freedom, which Austria rigorously suppressed. “In no other part of Europe save central and southern Italy has persecution been so effective in completely overawing and destroying Protestantism.”¹¹⁶ “In Austria proper,” wrote Simpson, “such are the disabilities and such the persecution, that it is with great difficulty any Protestant worship can be conducted.”¹¹⁷

Simpson made his way down the Danube to Budapest, the Hungarian part of the Empire. In Budapest he met with Protestants connected with the suppressed Hungarian revolution of 1848 and its leader Lajos Kossuth.¹¹⁸ “Having formed a slight acquaintance with one of the Protestant ministers at the Evangelical Alliance in Berlin,” he wrote, “we were invited to spend in his family the Sabbath evening.” Simpson and his company dined with two Protestant seminary “Professors and a minister who was formerly a tutor of Kossuth’s children.”¹¹⁹ “We found” he wrote,

¹¹⁵ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹¹⁶ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹¹⁷ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹¹⁸ Warren, “Reminiscences to George Crooks,” in Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, 353

¹¹⁹ Simpson, “travels in Europe 1857,” LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

"a most cordial greeting and spent a pleasant evening conversing upon the condition of the Protestant church and the prospect of Hungary."¹²⁰

After that evening, Simpson wrote an extended assessment of the Magyar cause and their prospects for the future. The influence on him of the assumptions of western imperialism is evident. "The question may arise," he asked, "was the suppression of this revolution an injury to humanity? Our sympathies were deeply enlisted for Hungary." Simpson acknowledged "it has wrongs which deserve to be redressed. Its people are in many elements a noble race." Yet despite his professed love for Protestantism and liberty, Simpson judged "that the interests of humanity are best subserved by the government of Austria being maintained."¹²¹

Simpson continued by reflecting on the nature of empire and, what seemed to him, the inevitable progress of civilization.

Austria has been endeavoring to mold [several] nations into one homogeneous form. There is Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary, Croatia, Transylvania and the Italian provinces differing in language, differing in habits, and yet all under the sway of one central government. The Hungarian revolution was a contest not only for Hungarian freedom but also for the re-establishment of Magyar power, and the Magyar language. It would however be disastrous to the interests of civilization and the welfare of humanity if the various languages should be allowed to form the basis of separate and distinct governments.¹²²

From Simpson's perspective, some nations and ethnicities were destined to expand. Others were, in the progress of time, destined to retreat. "The literature of the

¹²⁰ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹²¹ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹²² Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

German language is far superior to that of the Hungarian or Croatian or that of the similar tribes embraced in the empire," he wrote:

And though possibly for many years yet to come those languages will be cultivated, yet civilization is sweeping the less important languages and systems away. One after another these dialects are ceasing to be spoken and sooner or later the literature of the earth will be embraced in a few leading languages. Of these there is no reason to suppose the Hungarian will be one.¹²³

Religious freedom was important, but ethnic and political independence was not.

The revolution doubtless did good . . . in leading the crown of Austria to relax some of their bonds. Hungary will yet be comparatively free and Austria will doubtless yet see it to her interests to break the yoke of Jesuit power, to proclaim freedom of conscience and of form of religious worship to all her inhabitants. But when under constitutional restrictions and with freedom of religious worship Austria shall have placed herself among the freer nations of the earth, she will then be a great power to mold the heterogeneous masses of which her empire is composed.¹²⁴

Empire, to Simpson, was something positive, even divine. Empire was the bringer of civilization, the bringer of peace.

The workings of Divine Providence evidently indicate in all of the great movements of the last few years that the day of small and separate nationalities and governments is at an end and that the nations of the nations will be bonded together, larger empires shall extend their borders until, parting out this earth under recognized limits, the strifes and discords which have so long prevailed shall principally be done away. It cannot be expected that the world shall be under one government, but when under a few leading governments all earthly power shall be held, then by a Congress of Nations, by the laws of the balance of power, wars may be rendered exceedingly [rare?]¹²⁵

On October 16, Simpson wrote to Ellen, "After a tedious voyage on the Danube we reached the Black Sea on Saturday last. . . . We lay at Sulina until Monday and

¹²³ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹²⁴ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

¹²⁵ Simpson, "travels in Europe 1857," LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 15, sermons letters and writings, Travel Accounts.

arrived in [Istanbul] on Tuesday evening.”¹²⁶ He had reached the end of Europe and of Christian civilization. There he saw “the Seraphio (the old one), St. Sophia church a mosque, whirling dervishers, &c.” Yet seeing the East, he was optimistic about the prospects of European civilization. “The Greek & Armenian women look about like our own,” he told Ellen. “The Turkish are veiled in a kind of way, but with two or three exceptions, all I have seen are pale, feeble cadaverous looking beings, that indicate the race is passing away.”¹²⁷

Simpson’s journey continued from Istanbul to Jerusalem and back through Egypt, France, and England. He visited missionaries and saw as many of the sights as he was able. Somewhere in the Austrian Empire he had contracted what was probably Malaria. His reflections are thus sparser from this on, and he gave up trying to write a travel narrative. He was too feeble.

Conclusion

Matthew Simpson was elected as bishop for a new era of Methodist expansion. He was a “moderate,” a “progressive,” a realist. He was also uncritical of his own culture. He accepted that Western European civilization was part of God’s salvific plan, and that European and American Empire and the spread of Methodism were means by which this would take place.¹²⁸ Simpson, as a representative leader in American Methodism in the mid-nineteenth century, was blissfully unaware that he

¹²⁶ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Constantinople, Oct 16 [18]57. LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

¹²⁷ Simpson, Letter to Ellen Simpson, Constantinople, Oct 16 [18]57. LOC. Man. Simpson Papers, Box 3, Family Correspondence 1855-1858.

¹²⁸ One could argue that Simpson was in line with John Wesley. Wesley argued that the American revolution was unjust. The colonists had religious freedom. They should stop complaining about their lack of liberty and “honor the King.” See John Wesley, *A Calm Address to Our American Colonies*.

had adopted the assumptions of his own imperialist age. This was true with regard to his “moderate” positions on pews, the issue of slaveholding, and ethnically oppressed minorities in Austria. Growth, even peace, were at stake in these compromises. A critique of his present culture grounded in the story of a minority Jew crucified by the most powerful European empire to date never occurred to him.

There is a reflection in a notebook Simpson labeled “Palestine.”

As my eyes caught the first glimpse of Sidon I almost involuntarily said, Can this be that ancient City the mother of Tyre and Carthage, and the centre of commerce for the ancient world? The glowing descriptions of the old poets, and the bold graphic touches of prophetic pencils had brought up by my youthful fancy into a picture of grandeur and magnificence.¹²⁹

Simpson was disappointed. “There were no high mountains, no vast plain, no deep bay, no large stream, and one could scarcely conceive why a large and commercial city should have ever existed at this spot.”¹³⁰ The rise and fall of Empires was before his eyes. For him though this was evidence of exaggeration on the part of ancient poets and the improved situation of Empires in his own day. It never occurred to him that he was witness to the impermanence of Empires – even ecclesial ones.

¹²⁹ Simpson, “Palestine, 1857.” LOC. Man., Bishop Simpson Papers, Box 15, Sermons, Letters and Writings: Travel Accounts.

¹³⁰ Simpson, “Palestine, 1857.” LOC. Man., Bishop Simpson Papers, Box 15, Sermons, Letters and Writings: Travel Accounts.

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