

**FRANCIS ASBURY;
A BIOGRAPHICAL
STUDY**

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Francis Asbury; A Biographical Study by Horace M. Du Bose

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HORACE M. DU BOSE

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FRANCIS ASBURY

AS HE APPEARED AT THE TIME OF HIS ELECTION TO THE
EPISCOPACY, IN 1784.

FRANCIS ASBURY

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

By HORACE M. DU BOSE, D.D.
Author of the Symbol of Methodism

METHODIST FOUNDERS' SERIES

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

THE Founders' Series of biographies is to embrace, in volumes of uniform size and style of binding, studies in the lives of eminent leaders of Methodism in the earlier and middle periods of its history. The design of these volumes is to revivify in a new and fresh portraiture the personalities and labors of the founders of our Church. In issuing the present as the initial volume of this series the publishers indulge the belief that they have given a foretaste of what the scheme means not only in renewing the memory but also in reviving the testimony of those great ones in whose hands the truths of the gospel were made mighty in the salvation of men. The hope is that through the reading of these volumes many of the men of to-day may imbibe a fuller measure of the spirit and zeal of their illustrious spiritual forebears.

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PROLOGUE.

Two names are immortal in Methodism, and must remain transcendent in its history. One of these appertains to the Old World, and one to the New. The names of John Wesley and Francis Asbury are suggestive of that holiness, self-devotion, and resourcefulness of leadership which have made Methodism the most effective religious force that has appeared since the apostolic days.

The study of early Methodist biography is a certain means of preserving Methodist ideals. Truth and providence embody themselves in human life, and are thus borne across the tracts of time and space, as are precious odors in the urns in which they have been confined. This study will also lead to the development of a new evangelism. The spirit of the men of the early Methodist era was such as quickly reincarnates itself when a sympathetic contact is made with their times.

It is with a view to promoting a return to these early sources of inspiration that I have undertaken to conduct a sympathetic and discriminating study of the life and work of that apostolic man, Francis Asbury.

Icelandic spar has its lines of refraction so nearly coincident with those of water that a fragment of that crystal immersed in water becomes invisible. The personal history of Francis Asbury coincides so completely with the history of early American Methodism that one sees through the story of the apostle, as

through transparent crystal, the outlines of the age in which he wrought. The Church was the travail of the apostle's faith and love. American Methodists have neither used nor honored the memory of Asbury as they should. There is inexcusable ignorance of his great work and of his great claims upon Americans in general. There is indeed a persistent tradition which keeps his name familiar, and which suggests that he is entitled to an indefinite place in the category of innumerable saints, but there is no distinct and vital perception of the man as the chief maker of a great religious commonwealth of which all Americans are either members or beneficiaries. There is almost no recognition of the man for what he was in a pre-eminent degree—namely, one of the makers and fathers of the temporal fabric. So abstractly devoted to his apostolic mission, so utterly not of this world, was he in motive and act that his own spiritual insistency impressed the temporal lords and teachers to the point of forgetting or overlooking the service which he rendered, over and above his apostolic office, to the State and to secular civilization.

The personal and official influence which Asbury exercised for nearly half a century upon the pioneer communities of the republic gave them not only a most distinct religious momentum, but hedged them about with social restraints that formative constitutions and feebly enforced statutes could not have maintained alone. The direct annual contact of this man of commanding individuality and holy life with the groups of squatters and pioneers in the unpoliced wildernesses, and the sentry-like round of his personally directed army of itinerants, supplied a lack in the civil author-