

The history of Methodism in Kentucky by the Rev. A. H. Redford

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Redford, A. H. (Albert Henry), 1818-1884.

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Kentucky District, and, in the absence of Bishop Asbury, presided over the Annual Conferences. "Grave in his deportment, chaste in his conversation, constant in his private devotions, and faithful in the discharge of his ministerial duties," he exerted an influence for Methodism, and contributed to its success in Kentucky, to an extent that can be claimed for no other man. When we recount his excessive and constant labors through twenty-four years, having "never been known to disappoint a congregation, unless prevented by sickness or disease," with the weight of so many Churches resting upon him, we are not surprised that his physical strength should have given way; and to the Church it is a cause for gratitude to God, that his noble intellect did not become impaired in the morn or noon of his life. It was not until he had entered "its sere and yellow leaf" that he gave any indications of the overthrow of his reason. The last years of his life were spent with his sister, Mrs. Susanna Pryor, twelve miles south of Lexington, Kentucky, where, in 1818, he passed away.

Peter Massie was among the first-fruits of Methodism in Kentucky.* He entered the itinerant work this year, after having long resisted his convictions on this subject; but when he yielded, he gave himself wholly to the work. He was a young man of "good personal appearance," but of delicate constitution. Living in close communion with God, deeply imbued with the spirit of his mission, wholly

* Western Methodism, p. 67.

it. The latest account, he was living near Eddyville, a local preacher. Probably Brother Holliday can give you some account of him. His son, John Wesley Ogden, occupies the pulpit, we are told, among the Cumberland Presbyterians.

“A few years ago—I think it was in 1818—Brother Poythress died, *insane*, in Jessamine county, Kentucky, about twelve miles from Lexington, at the house of his sister, Mrs. Susanna Pryor, with whom he had lived, *in a state of derangement*, for a considerable time. My acquaintance with him began in the forty-fourth year of his age, (as he told me in July, 1788.) I have long thought that his mental powers had even then begun to fail. Be that as it may, his mind was certainly sinking, though sinking very gradually, for several years before. In the fall of 1800, if I remember rightly, he retired from the work. His exemplary piety, his zealous and *useful labors*, and his faithful (I do not say *able*) attention to the duties of his station, secured to him a degree of confidence and affection which made most of his friends *blind to his condition*. When he left his District, he came to his sister’s without much delay, and, excepting a little while that he spent in Lexington, about the latter part of the year 1801, continued there the remainder of his days.

“At an early stage of his total derangement, he conceived an opinion that *he never had been pious*. He said that he had been *sincere* in his religious profession, but had always been mistaken in thinking that he was a Christian. In combating this opinion, his friends sometimes drew from him the

strongest arguments, as he conceived, which recollection could supply, to prove that he must have been radically wicked even in his last days. Some have thought that on these occasions he furnished divine proof of the uprightness of his character. His memory was unimpaired; and it was thought that the man must be circumspect indeed who knew nothing worse of himself. He had a strange notion that he was suffering under the operation of a malignant influence proceeding from *mankind en masse*, and even those who as individuals regarded him with *good-will* were somehow compelled to aid in inflicting the evil.

“My helper on Cumberland Circuit, Brother O’Cull, labored with great zeal till some time in the fall of 1791, when he broke himself down so entirely that he has never recovered to this day. True, he sometimes preaches—and preaches, I am told, in a very impressive strain—but he has to speak slowly and in a very soft tone of voice. Indeed, it is in this manner only that he can hold conversation. He resides in Fleming county, in the northern part of this State, and has reared a family. After he broke down, Brother Stephen Brooks, by the direction of the Presiding Elder, took his place on the Cumberland Circuit till next spring.

“In 1794, I succeeded Brother Lurton, in August, and returned in November, being superseded by Aquila Sugg. I recollect nothing worth relating that fell under my notice in Cumberland Circuit, that year. Moses Spear was the helper. He lives somewhere in your bounds, I believe. Perhaps you