

Chapter 17

Conference in Lewisburg Appointed to Perry Circuit

Conference met in Lewisburg, Union County, March, 1873. At this conference I presented the parsonage difficulties on the Cumberland Circuit, and asked the conference to help us out in some way – or by some means. But they could do nothing for us, so I requested to be removed. My request was granted and I was appointed to Perry Circuit, Perry County – very much to the dissatisfaction of the friends on Cumberland Circuit.

Perry Circuit was a large two handed circuit – extending from Newport to Stony Point,¹ a distance of twenty-five or thirty miles, with parsonage in Elliottsburg. We moved by rail to Newport, and from there twelve miles to Elliottsburg by wagons. The friends turned out and gave us a hearty welcome. Rev. F.M. Baker,² a young married man appointed as my colleague moved to Newport.

The day we loaded our goods in the cars at Kingston, it snowed and rained all day. As a result, I took a severe cold – which resulted in catarrh and bronchitis. My health continued to fail until I was hardly able for duty – yet I met all my appointments. I had such severe pain above my eyes that I could scarcely see. Read I could not. I would frequently take one of the family to drive for me, bandage my eyes shut, and thus go from appointment to appointment. When we arrived at the preaching place I would remove the bandage, enter the church or school house, as the case might be, and begin the services without reading a lesson or announcing a hymn – being unable to see well enough to read. After singing and prayer, I would announce a familiar text and preach. It was generally supposed and widely reported that I was rapidly going into consumption, which is hereditary in our family.

Rev. J. Boas,³ of sainted memory, held a quarterly meeting in Elliottsburg, by appointment of the presiding elder, in April. He said to my wife in my absence, “Sister Dietterich. I am sorry to tell you – but I do not believe Brother Dietterich

¹ The church at Stony Point, 3.5 miles east of Blaine on OA 7, was erected in 1866 and torn down in 1969. The cemetery remains, along with the steps from the highway to the building site.

² Francis M. Baker (1839-1926) was an educational oddity at this time within the Evangelical Association. He graduated from Bucknell University in 1869 and from Union Theological Seminary (in New York City) in 1872 before being licensed and appointed by the conference. This was his second appointment. He would go on to serve as principal of the denomination’s Union Seminary in New Berlin, Union County PA, 1874-79, before transferring first to the Methodist Episcopal denomination and then to the Presbyterian Church. His son George Fenner Baker, born September 1873 while he was serving Perry Circuit, also became a Presbyterian clergyman.

³ Jacob Boas (1815-1884) married Rebecca Kutz, daughter of the namesake of Kutz’ Church, and is buried in that cemetery. His 50 years of distinguished Evangelical ministry includes 9 years as a district superintendent and several missionary appointments – during one of which he is credited with organizing the first Evangelical circuit west of Chicago.

will live over the summer. I never saw a man fail as he has, since I last saw him at conference.” And this was the general opinion. I then purchased twelve dollars worth of “Sage’s Catarrh Remedy,” “Pierce’s Golden Medical Discovery” and “Pellets” – and went to applying and using them according to directions. And by these, and the prayers of my wife, I was fully restored to health in the month of May. I do not know which cured me, as I have as much faith in her prayers – or even more – than in the remedies used. Then, too, my restoration came so suddenly that I believed it to be in answer to prayer – rather than by medicine, which I think would have been more gradual. But perhaps it was in answer to prayers that God blessed the means and made them effectual in my case. Be that as it may, I blessed God for the cure and thanked him for a wife in whose prayers I have confidence.

Brother Baker and myself got along very pleasantly together. Indeed I never had any trouble with my colleague, whether I was junior or senior preacher. We had no camp meeting on our circuit, but attended some on the district. At the Middleburg Camp, in Snyder County, I took dysentery in a severe form and was obliged to go home. I suffered from this and was under medical treatment from August to October, when I fully recovered.

We had several very successful meetings during the winter, resulting in sixty-three conversions. Among the converts at our meeting in Elliottsburg was Mr. B.F. Anthony,⁴ a married man who had been desperately wicked – according to his own confession. He united with the church and soon began to preach occasionally. A little over one year after his conversion, he entered the active work of the ministry – in which he labored very successfully until 1886, when he died in Berlin, Adams County. He was in the active ministry eleven years. Thus one of my spiritual sons in the ministry has gone before. I can see him today, as I saw him arise in the rear of the church and come boldly down the aisle to the altar, where he humbly bowed as a seeker of salvation in the church, in Elliottsburg. He did a good work on that circuit before he went to conference, which will be referred to in the proper place in this book. The minutes of the conference convened in March 1887, contain the following on his death:

During the year, death entered the active ranks of our conference, and Brother B.F. Anthony is no more. His work on earth is finished. Brother Anthony began to preach in 1875. He was a faithful, active worker in the ministry, and a successful pastor. He died in the triumphs of a living faith. A wife and six children mourn their loss.

⁴ Benjamin F. Anthony (1844-1886) served three years (August 1861 to September 1864) in the Union Signal Corps. He was arrested and confined in June 1864 for "conduct unbecoming." Released by mistake, he was rearrested and freed only when his term of enlistment expired – and so his discharge was honorable. He was working as a molder of bricks when converted. He died in East Berlin while serving the Dillsburg Circuit and is buried in the Bower [Red Mount] Church Cemetery in York County. Several years later his widow, the former Anna Fenicle, married Evangelical preacher Benjamin F. Hall (1824-1901).

At the end of the year Brother Baker was made principal of Union Seminary, located at New Berlin, Union County, from 1874 to 1878. He then withdrew, and united with the M.E. Church.

Baileysburg⁵ was one of our appointments, where we preached in the school house. The Methodists also preached in the same house. There was but a small membership, even of both churches. The Methodist minister was holding a protracted meeting there, and on Sabbath evening the house was crowded full when some of the young men behaved badly. The minister reproved them kindly, but all to no purpose. He finally reproved them more sharply, and admonished and warned them – telling them to improve the present moment by seeking the Lord, and now prepare to meet their God. He said that life was short and uncertain, and concluded by saying, “Some of your souls may be in hell before tomorrow night – unless you repent.” A certain young man who was a leader among the boys that evening, after meeting accompanied a young lady to her home some distance. And after a short conversation at the gate, he said, “Good night, Mary. I suppose the next time you and I meet will be in hell, according to what the preacher said tonight.” And thus they parted. And he walked home, about two miles, and went to bed.

The next morning he arose early, ate breakfast, shouldered his axe, and went some distance to the woods to cut wood. After chopping about a half hour, by a mis-stroke, the axe severed an artery in his leg – and in ten minutes he was dead. Is it not to be feared that the minister’s words came true in the case of this young man? How dreadful thus to die. God will not always be mocked. The Psalmist says, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” – Psalm 9:17.

In Newport we had an interesting conversation, and I was selected to preach the opening sermon in the Reformed Church for a union prayer meeting to be observed by all the churches in town – and to meet in the different churches night about, during the week of prayer. This was a grand success the first year. They closed it the second Sabbath with a union communion. We tried it the next year again, but did not succeed so well. Before the week was up the meeting was left entirely with the Lutheran minister, Rev. Aughe,⁶ and myself. As far as the other ministers were concerned, it was entirely neglected by them and would have died a natural death before the week was up if it had not been for us. O shame.

There I became quite intimately acquainted with Rev. Aughe, the Lutheran pastor, who frequently attended my meetings and took an active part in them. We also made pastoral visits and visited the sick together. This dear brother died a few

⁵ Nothing is left of Baileysburg, which was located along the river about 3 miles southeast of Newport where Upper Bailey and Lower Bailey roads meet. It was a community erected around an iron forge that was a stop on the canal and later a station on the Pennsylvania Railroad.

⁶ Abraham Harmon Aughe (1821-1878) was born in Ohio and attended Pennsylvania [Gettysburg] College. He served in Newport 1871-1876 and is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Gettysburg.