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## Memoirs

## John H. Bickford

The fraternity of Methodist preachers is the strongest known to our age. Our common experiences, requirements, and duties create a band of comrades of the Jonathan-David type. No vocation is subjected to more insistent toil and nervous consumption. Hence our comrades oftentimes fall in the way before the fullness of years has come. In earlier days this was much more the experience than now.

John Helps Bickford was born at Lancaster, Ohio, in 1860. In 1887, he came into our ministerial fraternity in Indiana, a promising, capable young man. In those days he bore a spare body. He had worked his way through school and with a great consecration gave himself to the work of the Methodist ministry.

He was a zealous preacher. There was no pulpit loitering or half-hearted efforts in his messages. Laziness was a stranger in his camp of life. If unemployed he was ill at ease. In his preaching he expected his audiences to be drawn toward the larger life.

He was studious but not a slave to books. He was given to independence of thought which often appealed from cloistered pages to the actual experiences of busy life. He despised sham or pretense. He often contended that we believe more in what we see than in what we read. He was a robust thinker, unafraid of the new, and yet he held rather tenaciously to older interpretations and experiential values of Christian life.

Doctor Bickford was at his best in the pulpit. He was not disobedient to his divine summons to preach. He delighted in being an ambassador of the Cross. Few of our brethren have served more large churches. He was human and as such made his mistakes, but let us say in our hearts, we shall write his faults upon the sand that the overflow of the rivers of love may wash them away forever. He was a man of very positive convictions. These marked him as a center of very strong friendship, or of determined opposition. He was pronounced in his attitudes. To the last he was unswerving from his anchorage of belief by any discordant forces surging over the fields of thought. He believed that the gospel should reach and save the souls of men. As rated by some of our bishops, Doctor Bickford in the noontime of his service ranked among our strongest preachers.

Four years ago his physical condition made it advisable that he should retire from the effective ranks. No Conference could retire such a man from the activities of life. He worked as strength allowed and recorded the number of times he read the Bible through in the sunset days of life. He studied the hymns of the Church as carefully as though he was to pass examination on them. This habit had fuller sway during his retirement. We know of his marking and writing out choice passages of Scripture and the richer hymns as he went through the Bible and the Hymnal in these later years.

He was a man of great faith in the Word and prayed very much on the basis of that faith. So often of late years he would say: "I believe the Bible. It makes me certain promises on prayer and surely my petitions will be heard and answered." When some advised him not to pray along certain lines, he would say, "I can not quit, God will hear." Down to the last his devotions deepened and faith strengthened its hold on the verities of life and truth. In the latter months when sore pressed with sufferings and

disappointments he would write: "I must go soon. I wish it would be tonight. I want to go and be with my mother in heaven."

Some years ago that dread disease, diabetes, laid hold upon him and would not relent until he fell asleep at North East, Md., January 3. He began his unmixed victories over the world, the flesh and the devil on a Sunday morning in that life where Sabbaths never end. His wife, son, daughter, and two sisters survive him.

Let us emulate his virtues and build for ourselves the more stalwart character, remembering that we too, at best, must soon slip out from our tents of flesh and allow time to test our works while God judges our characters. Doctor Bickford marked and often read Hymn 426, the first and last stanzas of which are:

"My span of life will soon be done,  
The passing moments say;  
As lengthening shadows o'er the mead  
Proclaim the close of day.

"Courage my soul, on God rely,  
Deliverance soon will come;  
A thousand ways has Providence  
To bring believers home."

DANIEL WESTFALL.

## Calvin H. Reckard

Calvin Henry Reckard was born in Washington county, Ohio, April 21, 1865. It was here, a few miles out from Marietta, that his boyhood days were spent. His father, Henry O. Reckard, who was an eccentric and devout Methodist, died when Calvin was about thirteen years of age. From this time the support of the family of five children fell upon the shoulders of the mother and the eldest boy. It was through the mother's hard work and good management that the children were all kept under the maternal roof and given a public school education. Calvin was converted at the age of eighteen and at that time responded to the call of the Holy Spirit for the ministry. From this time on his mind was turned with a longing for a college education. The mother, Susanna-Wesley-like, again showed her deep concern for the boy who was destined to become a minister of the gospel and with heroic sacrifice made it possible for Calvin to enter college. Having already been schooled in the home, he gladly supplemented what had been saved by performing manual labor while in college.

Graduating from Scio in 1895, he sought admission to the East Ohio Conference at its annual session in the fall of that year but found the door of the Conference closed to all applicants and no vacancies to be filled. Having looked forward to this occasion with so much confidence and hope, it was the greatest discouragement that had ever yet crossed the path of this young man. But having already learned to trust in a loving Providence to open the way for those whom he called to his service, Calvin waited until word was received that there would be room for a few more men in the Pittsburgh Conference. He presented himself at the seat of this Conference, meeting at Indiana, Pa. He was received and appointed to serve the Independence charge, then a circuit of five appointments. He gave four years to the work of this charge and was blessed with a great ingathering of souls. A new church was built, and material improvements at all points of the circuit filled his heart with great joy and assurance. It seemed to him here that the ashes of the past years had been changed into gold.