serve as preludes to the letters, so that a tenuous thread of continuity is provided throughout. Unfortunately the source of each letter is listed in the table of contents instead of in close proximity to the letter. The format and type are pleasing to the eye.

*Mr. Franklin* is not a work that will bring raves of commendation from the historian, for it is of necessity a cursory work; yet it serves as a worthy tribute to a worthy man, marking the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Franklin's birth.

*West Chester, Pennsylvania*  
Edward G. Everett


It will be agreed by many persons familiar with the period that the most influential American religious leader during the two crucial decades following 1855 was Bishop Matthew Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This new study of *The Life of Matthew Simpson* by Robert D. Clark, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts of the University of Oregon, is a significant contribution, both, to a better understanding of evolving Methodism, and to a clearer insight into the religious aspects of the great fratricidal conflict of a century ago.

Dr. Clark presents his study of the life and times of Bishop Simpson under twenty-five chapter headings, many of them with intriguing titles. The literary style is of a highly readable excellence, and the whole is obviously based upon thorough research into primary source materials. Full use is made of the Bishop's *diary and journal*, and of other private papers. The stirring events of the mid-nineteenth century are developed from contemporary records, especially the files of the different Methodist *Christian Advocates*.

The volume covers the span of Matthew Simpson's life, 1811 to 1884. He had close ties with Pittsburgh and the region round about. Born and reared at Cadiz in the then new frontier State of Ohio, he attended Madison College at Uniontown, Pennsylvania; commenced his ministry in the Pittsburgh Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church; served as a pastor in Pittsburgh, and then for a short time at Monongahela, from 1834 to 1837; and was a Professor and Vice-Pre-
dent of Allegheny College at Meadville, from 1837 to 1839. In 1835 he married Ellen Holmes Verner, daughter of the prominent Pittsburgh businessman, James Verner. For the first seven years of his episcopacy, after 1852, he kept his residence in Pittsburgh, and he always retained a particular affection for this city as "home."

Matthew Simpson rose to his mature stature and position of recognized leadership in Methodism between 1839 and 1852. In 1839 he was called to the Presidency of the newly organized Indiana Asbury University (now DePauw) at Greencastle, Indiana. He transferred his membership from the Pittsburgh Conference to the Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His scholarship, able administration, and oratorical abilities lifted Indiana Asbury into a position of educational leadership in frontier Indiana, and its President into a position of accepted leadership in the Annual Conference. He was elected to head the Indiana Conference delegations to the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church of 1844, 1848, and 1852. In 1848 Simpson was elected Editor of the influential Western Christian Advocate, published at Cincinnati, and in 1852 he was one of four men elected to the episcopacy, thus becoming a Bishop of his Church at the age of forty-one.

Approximately one-half of the book traces the career of Matthew Simpson until his election to the episcopacy, and the remainder of the volume is devoted to his life, work, and times as a Bishop. In the two-thirds of a century after its organization as a denomination in 1784 Methodism in America had grown from 14,988 members and eighty-three preachers to over one and one-half million members, had suffered the throes of two major and several minor divisions, and, by 1850, constituted the largest body of Christians in the nation. The Methodist division of 1844-46 was a significant prelude to the Civil War. As the chief American Church of the common people the Methodists were largely lacking in cultural status, and so were held in low social esteem by the older denominations with higher educational standards for their clergy, and greater wealth and social position in the hands of their laity.

In the mid-years of the nineteenth century Methodism was in a state of highly fluid transition from being a sect to becoming a Church. On account of his oratorical prowess, intellectual acumen and erudition, and his highly placed political and social connections, Matthew Simpson, as the leading Methodist Bishop exercised a tremendous influence in lifting the cultural and social status of Methodism. He championed
the causes of an educated clergy, the establishment of Colleges and Seminaries, more churchly Churches, better worship services, the acceptance of scientific research and insight as the handmaid of religion and not its enemy, and the admission of laymen to the governing bodies of the Church.

The early educational disadvantages of Methodists and their consequent lower social status had denied to them the recognition in the American political scene to which their numerical strength entitled them. A major contribution of this new Life of Matthew Simpson is the detail with which Dr. Clark has investigated the manner in which Bishop Simpson became involved in political activities, both in the State of Indiana, and on the national scene, and how, by the astute use of his influence, more recognition was given to Methodism in governmental affairs. The Bishop was a personal friend of Presidents Lincoln, Grant, and Hayes, and of a number of the high-ranking Cabinet officers. An important phase of the book is Dr. Clark's able treatment of the slavery-states-rights-abolition-secession issue which was the dominating social-political phenomenon of Simpson's times. He explodes as a myth the widely-accepted idea that Simpson was the real architect of the Emancipation Proclamation. The Bishop was a mighty power for northern patriotism during the Civil War, but in the post-war period he loses stature by his identification with vengeance-dominated radical Republicanism. His was a mighty voice ringing the changes upon America's "manifest destiny" in the heady period that followed the war.

Six years after Bishop Simpson's death, Dr. George R. Crooks of the faculty of Drew Theological Seminary, wrote his biography. This new biography by Dr. Clark lifts up the significance of the life and work of Bishop Simpson against the background of a longer perspective, and thus effectively supplements the earlier study. The absence of pictures in the book is a defect, there not being even a portrait of the Bishop. At points the reader, familiar with Methodist history, senses the too great limitations of space placed upon the author. Persons concerned to understand the part played by religion in general, and of Methodism in particular, upon the national scene during the crucial years of the mid-nineteenth century will find this new Life of Matthew Simpson a volume of prime importance.

Wallace Guy Smeltzer