



# Swallowed Up in God: The Best of Francis Asbury's Journal and Letters

*Matt Friedeman*

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Francis Asbury was an American hero. Actually, he was a British subject, who lived his adult life in America, and became a hero to the vast majority of those he served and of many contemporary evangelicals who have read and pondered his impact on history. British or not, when you think of Asbury, it is difficult to see him as any less than “American hero.” But he was more. He was a Kingdom hero; America was the land of many lost, Asbury came by assignment and stayed while others fainted, faltered, found more comfortable refuge and flew back home to England. It is said of him that he “changed American popular religion – and by extension American culture – as much as anyone ever has. America is one of the most religious nations on earth, and Asbury is an important reason why. Concerning the personal journal of Francis Asbury: The bishop wasn’t necessarily eager for a future chronicler setting down a perspective of his life. Indeed, Asbury thought his day-to-day account of ministry in America was going to be the determiner of his legacy and he thus spent significant time re-reading and editing it. He thought his Journal would be quite enough. The truth is that the Journal is not only enough; it is too much. So there is excuse for a biography to abbreviate and to interpret more concisely. This editor has agreed that the Journal is indeed too much for most modern yet interested readers, but highlighted portions may be just right. Some of his letters from a 1958 compilation have been added to provide even more perspective from a slightly different angle. Both the journal and letters will provide inspiration and a ready grasp of the key player in the leading evangelistic frontier of the latter 18th and early 19th centuries. Some of these portions are “quotable quotes” that can and ought to be memorized and rearticulated as opportunities arise. Others could be used for historical perspective and sprinkling in appropriate sermons and writings. Some of the passages are chosen not so much to provide a fascinating quote as to provide a cultural or personal angle to the era. Perhaps this small volume could lead many to read a good biography of Asbury or even read the Journal itself – the truly interested will not be disappointed in the latter. We have called this the “best” of the Journal and his Letters. But it is just one man’s reading and penciling in the margins. In the reading and marking, enough intellectual and spiritual pleasure was found that sharing the findings seemed only natural.

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