

The Rev. William Shipp Bynum & Diocesan Mission Strategies, 1876-1885

A Presentation to Diocesan Convention, January 24, 2013¹

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

The Rev. N. Brooks Graebner, Historiographer

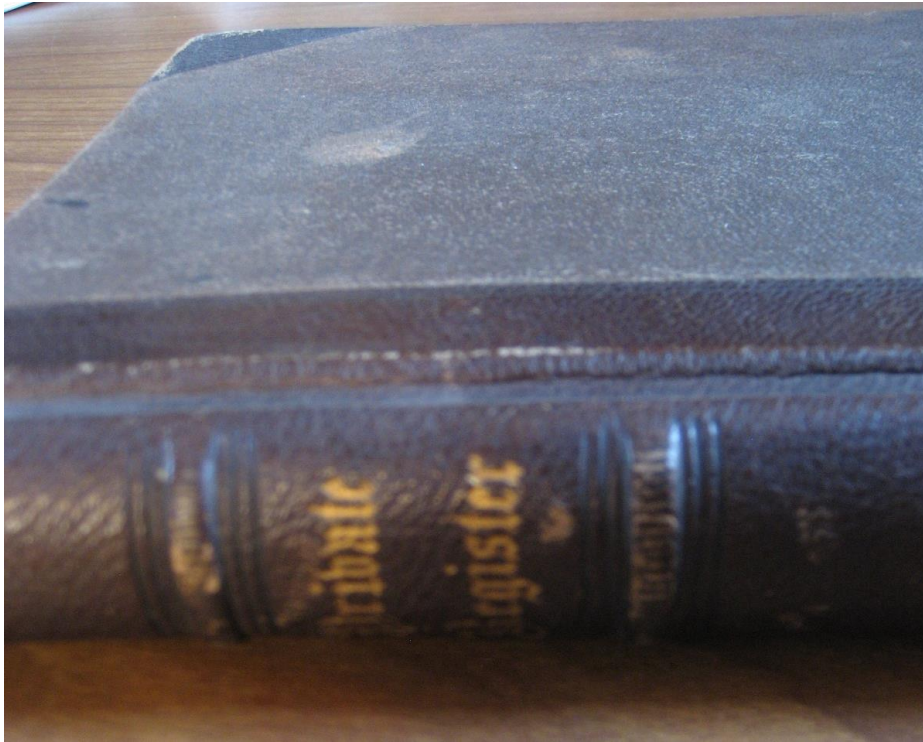


The Galilee Initiative provides us a useful and inspiring way to set forth the mission imperatives of the Church in 21st century North Carolina. “Galilee” is also a helpful way to interpret our history. Many of our predecessors had a similar awareness of exciting, creative possibilities—and of daunting challenges to overcome. They, no less than ourselves, had a pervasive sense that the Church could and should be doing more to extend its reach and deepen its appeal.

Because of the remarkable parallels to our own time, it is instructive to look at how this consciousness was framed in the 1870s and 1880s: what was proposed, what was done, and what was left undone.

¹ The author would like to thank Bishop Michael Curry, Paul Broughton, The Rev. Canon Cathie Caimano, The Rev. Dr. Lauren Winner, Project Archivist Lynn Hoke, and the Archives & History Committee of the Diocese for their support and encouragement in making this presentation. Thanks go also to all the Canons of the Diocese and to Dr. Winner for their participation in the panel discussion following the presentation. The image of William S. Bynum appears in Elizabeth Gabriel Byrd, ed., *Saint Paul's Episcopal Church Winston-Salem, North Carolina 1876-1976* (Winston-Salem 1976), 9.

Rather than talk in broad strokes, I'd like to focus principally on the life and career of one individual: William Shipp Bynum (1848-1898), a little-known missionary pioneer. My attention was first drawn to Bynum by an unexpected gift from my colleague Randall Keeney, who presented me at the 2011 Clergy Conference with Bynum's personal service register.

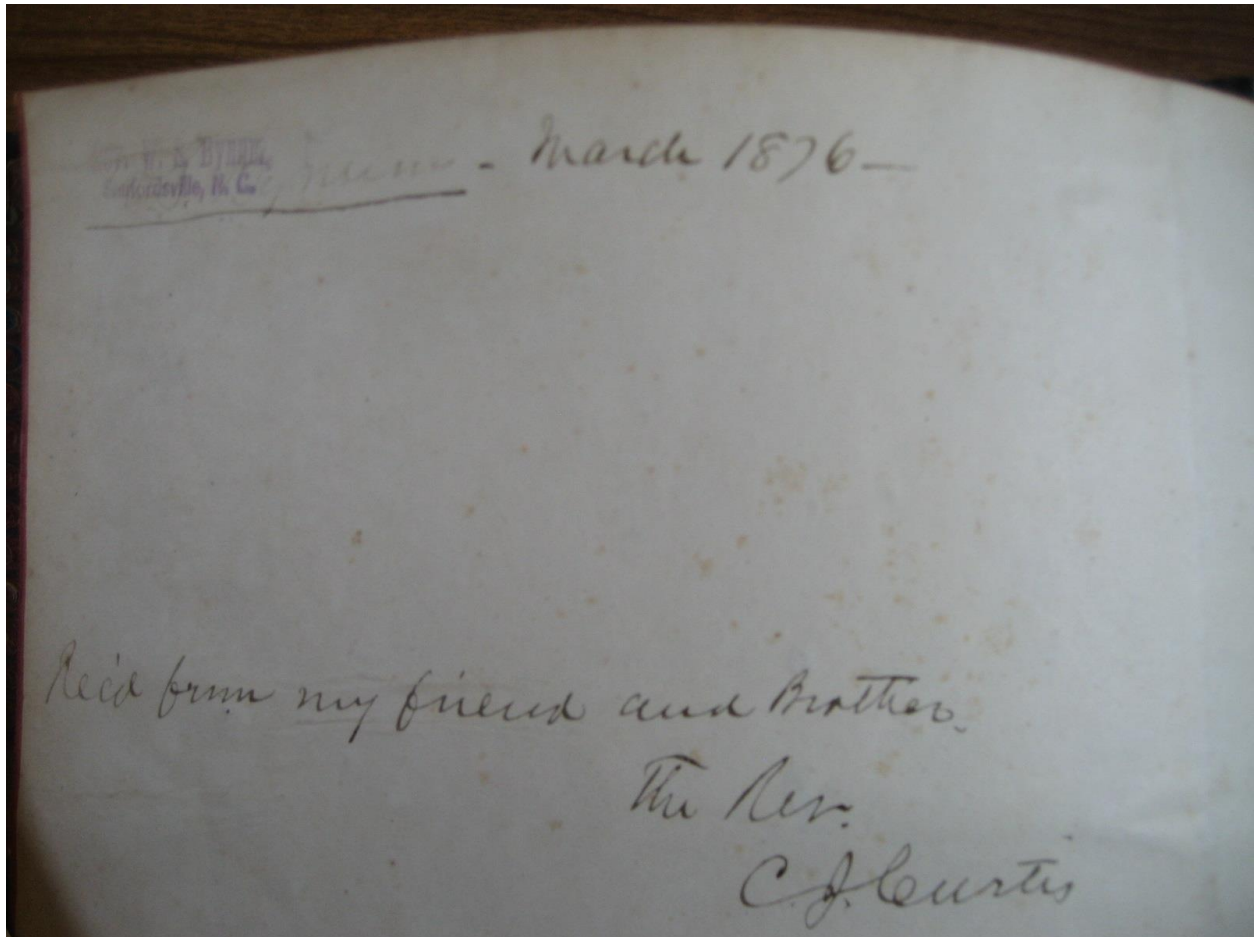


This had been handed to him by an estate dealer in Asheville, who thought it should be returned to the church, and since the register mentioned St. Barnabas in Greensboro, he kindly brought it there.²

² The St. Barnabas in Greensboro mentioned in Bynum's register is what we today know as Holy Trinity, Greensboro; the name was changed after a short-lived merger with St. Andrew's, Greensboro in 1910 led to the combined congregation taking the name Holy Trinity—and when they subsequently split again in 1912, the former St. Barnabas retained the new name and has been known as Holy Trinity ever since. The current St. Barnabas, Greensboro was established in 1968.

When I opened the register, two things caught my attention.

1. The register, dated 1876, was a gift from Charles J. Curtis, then Rector of St. Matthew's, Hillsborough.



2. The register listed services in lots of places besides Greensboro: there were entries for Company Shops (now Burlington), for Winston, and for Germanton.

SERVICE OR PART.	CHURCH AND PLACE.	Services
Lull, special collection Full	St. Barnabas, Greensboro + Cottage	Sermon heard
"	" " "	Lecture
"	Winston. St. Barnabas, Greensboro	Baptismal ser
"	St. Barnabas	day before
"	"	Fried. - had
"	"	Holy Com.
"	"	no other ser
"	"	Stopped
"	"	way of bus
"	"	Ladies a
at Co. S.	Co. S.	
"	St. Barnabas	
"	"	
"	"	
"	"	
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And so I determined to learn more about Bynum, his peripatetic ministry, and his connection to Hillsborough.

As I began to read the diocesan journals and newspapers to familiarize myself with Bynum's career, what opened before me was a fascinating account of how the Church in the 1870s and 80s was deliberately trying to do what Bishop Curry would have us do, namely, to go where we haven't gone before and reach people we haven't reached before. So, let us return to the origins of the Episcopal Church in the Northwest region of our Diocese and trace how Bynum, along with his Bishops and his companions, strove to extend the mission and ministry of the Episcopal Church, here and indeed throughout the state.

William Shipp Bynum was the son of William Preston Bynum, a prominent lawyer and jurist in Lincolnton and Charlotte, and a great benefactor of the Church and the University here in North Carolina.³ Willie, as he was called, attended Hillsborough Military Academy. Evidently, he worshipped at St. Matthew's while in Hillsborough, because he became a close friend of the rector's son, Charles J. (Charlie) Curtis. In 1870, the relationship with the Curtis family became even closer, when Bynum married Charlie Curtis's sister, Mary (Minna). Bynum first chose to follow his father into a legal career, but then offered himself in service to the Church. He was ordained a deacon in March, 1876, presumably with intention to remain in practice of law and serve as a permanent deacon.⁴

³ William Preston Bynum is responsible for the building of the chapel at Thompson orphanage, for St. Mary's House in Greensboro, and for Bynum Hall on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill. See his entry in the *North Carolina Dictionary of Biography* (Chapel Hill, 1979).

⁴ For a brief account of Bynum's connections to Hillsborough and the Curtis family, see Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *A Yankee Botanist in the Carolinas: The Reverend Moses Ashley Curtis, D.D. (1808-1872)* (Berlin, 1986), 213. In the Journal of Annual Convention, Bynum was not listed as a candidate for priest's orders at the time of his ordination to the diaconate. Indeed he only appeared in the list of such candidates in 1880, and he was ordained a priest two years thereafter.

Charlie Curtis, meanwhile had gone to General Seminary, and when his father, Moses Ashley Curtis, died in the spring of 1872, young Charlie, just about to finish seminary, was ordained and called to succeed his father as rector of St. Matthew's.

About the same time, Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr., later Bishop of our Diocese, was in Hillsborough to read law and prepare for a legal career. Young Cheshire's father was the long-time rector of Calvary, Tarboro, and a close friend and colleague of the Hillsborough rector, with whom he shared a passion for plants. Cheshire, like Bynum, married a Hillsborough woman from St. Matthew's parish, his cousin Annie Huske Webb, in 1874.⁵

Why all this Hillsborough parochial and familial history? Because one can't appreciate the unfolding of Bynum's career unless one keeps in mind the close connections among these three young men: Bynum, Curtis, and Cheshire, all of whom entered adulthood in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. They were closely bound by ties of family and friendship—and by a common outlook upon the needs of the Church.

Also, a member of this cohort was Francis J. Murdoch, rector of the church in Salisbury from 1870 until his death in 1909. Murdoch was born in 1846, Curtis in 1847, Bynum in 1848, and Cheshire in 1850. All four grew up in North Carolina in Episcopal households.⁶

Most significantly, they all came of age under the leadership of Bishop Thomas Atkinson, for whom they shared utmost affection and respect. From the beginning of his episcopate, Atkinson stressed the importance of broadening the appeal of the

⁵ Lawrence Foushee London, *Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire* (Chapel Hill, 1941), 3, 13, 17.

⁶ Curtis, Murdoch, and Bynum all served at least briefly in the Confederate Army.

Episcopal Church in North Carolina. In an early charge to the clergy of the diocese, he advocated the abolition of pew rents in order to make churches open to all persons and especially the poor; the adaptation of Prayer Book services to make them more appealing and fitting to various occasions; and the calling of native clergy from all races and classes of society.⁷ Following the Civil War, Atkinson gave particular missionary attention to the newly-freed African Americans. To that end, in his 1866 address to diocesan convention, he called for bringing blacks into ordained ministry as soon as possible, and he called for more missionaries in general to work throughout North Carolina. He also raised the issue of dividing the state into two dioceses, and failing that, to call for the election of an assisting bishop.⁸

The Convention of 1867 revisited all these topics. Bishop Atkinson reiterated his conviction that the Church must take steps to educate the black population and admit black men into ordained ministry. He went on to elaborate the underlying principle for that conviction:

A man who regards our Church from the point of view in which some of its enemies affect to look at it, that is, as a voluntary society of decided aristocratic spirit and sympathies, may very consistently think that its ministers, and indeed its members, should be confined to a certain class in society, and a certain race among the people; but it is difficult to understand how he reasons who sets out with affirming that our Church is Catholic and Apostolic, and concludes with maintaining that it ought not to receive ministers, and by necessary consequence members, of a different race from

⁷ *Primary Charge of the Rt. Rev. Thomas Atkinson, Bishop of North Carolina, to the Clergy. Delivered at the Convention at Warrenton, May, 1855* (Fayetteville, 1855).

⁸ *Journal of the 50th Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of North Carolina* (1866): 17-19. Hereinafter abbreviated *NCDJ*.

his own, although that race may be, as with us, one-third, or with others, half of the entire population.⁹

For Atkinson, no Church that claimed to be Catholic and Apostolic could afford to minister exclusively to one race or class.

The Bishop also restated his convictions concerning the advisability of creating two dioceses in North Carolina. Although he thought it the best course, he recognized that North Carolina did not meet the minimum self-supporting parish criteria set forth in the Constitution of the Episcopal Church, so he recommended as the “next expedient” the appointment of an assistant bishop.¹⁰

Atkinson gave as his reasons for seeking two dioceses (or failing that, two bishops), his own health and the sheer number of churches to visit. But a special committee on diocesan missions, charged with responding to Atkinson’s 1866 call for more missionary activity, put the matter in a different light. The committee believed that the Episcopal Church in North Carolina was suffering from a lack of attention to the distinctive needs and challenges for missionary activity in different parts of the state. Therefore, the committee saw the division of the diocese as an important step in effective missionary strategy, and they placed the following resolution before Convention:

Resolved, that for a full performance of the Church’s work, as a Missionary Church in the State of North Carolina, a division of the Diocese is absolutely essential.¹¹

⁹ *NCDJ*, 51st (1867): 24.

¹⁰ *NCDJ*, 51st (1867): 25.

¹¹ *NCDJ*, 51st (1867): 34.

The Committee, however, recognized the same constitutional impediments as the Bishop, and so they made a further resolve: to create six regional convocations for missionary purposes. At the convention of 1869, this led to a joint proposal from the Bishop and the committee that each of the six convocations “take into serious consideration the importance and necessity of itinerant missionary labor, and to provide for the same within their bounds, as may seem to them, under the direction of the Bishop, to be wisest and best.”¹²

These were not matters which Atkinson simply talked about. He proposed and worked for specific, concrete steps: he worked with the national Freedman’s Commission of the Episcopal Church to establish St. Augustine’s for African-Americans in 1867; he worked with the diocese to establish the Ravenscroft School in Asheville for training native clergy; he called for an Assistant Bishop and was pleased to accept the ministrations of Theodore Lyman in that post in 1873.

Over the course of a decade, young Murdoch, Cheshire, Bynum, and Curtis all entered the ranks of ordained ministers, going forth to help fulfill Atkinson’s inclusive vision of a Church “Apostolic and Catholic” in North Carolina. Murdoch and Curtis went directly into ordained ministry (1868 and 1872, respectively); Bynum and Cheshire went first into the practice of law, becoming deacons in 1876 and 1878, respectively.

Bynum’s ecclesiastical career formally began with ordination to the diaconate in March, 1876. Once ordained, he was assigned to be minister-in-charge in Greensboro, where a church, organized in 1870, had been without regular clergy

¹² *NCDJ*, 53rd (1869): 38f.

for almost a year. After several months on the job, Bynum reported that the Greensboro congregation had slipped badly; probably only twenty communicants remained from a reported thirty-six in 1875.

Bynum also reported that he was eager to establish the church in Winston: a town which grew up around the Forsyth county courthouse, but which came into its own in 1873 with the completion of the Northwestern North Carolina Railroad linking it to Greensboro and Virginia, and quickly began to grow as a center of industry and commerce. Bishop Atkinson mentioned the importance of this particular mission in his 1876 convention address:

Winston is, really, but an extension of Salem, and is growing very rapidly, and the two united, make a considerable town, where we have some faithful members of the church, and it is most desirable that they should have, immediately, a house of Prayer. . . . The Rev. Mr. Bynum, who has been recently ordained, will give a part of his time to Winston, and from his labors, I expect very beneficial results.¹³

Bynum leapt on the Bishop's remarks, asking for that portion of Atkinson's address to be referred to a committee of five members; the next day, the convention committee put forth the following resolution, which the Convention ratified:

The committee appointed to consider the application from the Church in Winston, respectfully report that in their judgment few places in the country, and none in the Diocese, offer stronger claims upon the regards of the Church. They accordingly report the following resolution, to wit:

¹³ *NCDJ*, 60th (1876): 31. For a history of the growth of Winston-Salem in the years following 1873, see Michael Shirley, *From Congregation Town to Industrial City: Culture and Social Change in a Southern Community* (New York, 1994).

Resolved, That in the judgment of this Convention, the movement which has been inaugurated for the building of a Church in Winston, Forsythe county, N.C., is one of great consequence to the Church in that part of the Diocese; and it is hereby cordially commended to the favorable consideration of our people.¹⁴

By the time of the 1877 Convention, Bynum had much to report. As for the church in Greensboro, he began by correcting his report of the previous May. He'd been wrong to think that there were still twenty communicants. In point of fact, two-thirds of the previously reported thirty-six communicants had been lost before he came. But the church, he hastened to add, was now coming back to life. The turning point was July, 1876, when "the Rev. Messrs. F. J. Murdoch and Chas. J. Curtis, held here an eight days' mission, to which, under God, is due much credit for what has been accomplished at this place. . . . Indeed, these two brethren have in many ways, at personal sacrifice to themselves, given greatly needed help to our Church, besides establishing beyond cavil, the usefulness of the 'Mission' for quickening the zeal of our own people and breaking down unreasoning prejudice against us."¹⁵

Indeed, from this time forward, Murdoch, Curtis, and Bynum formed what they called "the Evangelical Brotherhood." With the knowledge and blessing of Bishop Atkinson, these three men dedicated themselves to holding protracted preaching missions throughout the Piedmont, asking no compensation and taking no collection. They would preach extemporaneously, keep their references to other

¹⁴ *NCDJ*, 60th (1876): 73f.

¹⁵ *NCDJ*, 61st (1877): 109.

denominations positive, and encourage their listeners to repent and return to the Lord.¹⁶

The ethos of the Evangelical Brotherhood makes clear that these men were North Carolinians who not only drank deeply at the well of Atkinson's "Catholic principles," but who also imbibed the preaching style and content of evangelical Protestantism. Murdoch always preached extemporaneously. Curtis was perhaps the most flamboyant of the group, because he combined skills as a musician with his preaching. We actually possess remarkable accounts of Curtis preaching and singing at the black Baptist churches in Hillsborough and Durham and of his mission at Monticello in northern Guilford County.¹⁷

¹⁶ This notice appeared in advance of a preaching mission in Winston: "A Mission begins (D.V.) in St. Paul's Church [Winston] on Sunday, June 20th. The clergy conducting it will be members of the Evangelical Brotherhood—a Society whose constitution, rules, and books are submitted to and sanctioned by Bishop Atkinson. Rev. Frank J. Murdoch of Salisbury is Warden of this Society, and will therefore direct details of the proposed Mission." *The Church Messenger* 2, no. 5 (June 15, 1880).

Following the event, there was another piece in the *Messenger*, describing the Evangelical Brothers as a society formed at St. Barnabas, Greensboro, several years ago whose preaching is extemporaneous, the teaching positive, and the practical appeal for repentance. "Together with the Rev. Charles J. Curtis, Mr. Murdoch has held not a few missions and in no instance have they failed to leave permanent impressions for good upon the life and work of Parishes at various points in Central and Northwestern North Carolina. . . . The order to which these faithful Priests belong accepts no compensation for what it does. The missions are held literally 'without money and without price.' St. Paul's Parish has had a great refreshment and felt as if an answer were indeed made to the Prophet's prayer: 'Revive thy work O Lord!' " [signed "B." (Byrum)] *Church Messenger* 2, no. 8 (July 9, 1880).

¹⁷ For accounts of Curtis preaching to African-American congregations, see the *Church Messenger* 2, no. 21 (October 5, 1880) and 3 no. 41 (February 23, 1882). For the Guilford County mission, see the *Church Messenger* 3, no. 26 (November 10, 1881). According to the published account of the latter, Curtis simplified the service and shortened the appointed bible reading to the portion appropriate to the sermon. He led the singing as well as preaching on the subject of true and false conversion. The account commends Curtis for "bringing a new light on what the church really teaches" and urges others to do what Curtis has done: go out into the country where the Episcopal Church is unknown and adapt our services to the comprehension of the people as far as may be consistent with the principle and law of the church.

As for Winston, Bynum could report that the cornerstone of a new Chapel would be laid in a matter of weeks. But he complained about the lack of support from elsewhere in the diocese:

Had the Church in the Diocese responded to our appeals according to the tenor of the resolutions passed at last Convention, we might have reported at this [place] *fifty* confirmations instead of five. Unless we are aided soon, a most noble opportunity and some precious souls will have been thrown away. The people here have done their duty; the general Church has not sustained them. To the Rev. Dr. Cheshire and a few other of the clergy, we are indebted for kindly help Bishop Lyman has also subscribed one hundred dollars (\$100) to our building fund. We need eight hundred dollars now to complete the work begun.¹⁸

But that wasn't all: Bynum also reported that he had just begun missionary work at Company Shops—what we know today as Burlington.

By 1878, Bynum had further expanded his mission field and was now starting to hold monthly services in Germanton as well as Greensboro, Winston, and Burlington. The church building in Winston needed only \$200 more for completion, and the congregation in Greensboro continued to grow, in spite of the fact that Bynum could now give them, the parish which provided most of his salary, but one Sunday a month.¹⁹

For three successive conventions, Bynum pleaded for more help. Finally, it came in January, 1879, when Robert B. Sutton, formerly in Pittsboro, was named Rector & Head of the St. Barnabas' Associate Mission, with Bynum now serving as Assistant at St. Barnabas and co-missionary with Sutton in the outlying churches

¹⁸ NCDJ 61st (1877): 110.

¹⁹ NCDJ 62nd (1878): 80, 81.

and mission stations. In describing this new organization to the Diocese, Sutton gave full credit to Bynum for his dedication and tenacity. He then described the mission field this way: “The work is widely spread, embracing the towns on the N.C.R.R., between Company’s Shops and High Point, on the Richmond & Danville R.R. and on the Salem branch, and from Winston thirteen miles north to Germanton and eighteen miles to Huntsville, west of the Yadkin river. There is work here for two or three more workers if we had only the means to support them.”²⁰

By May, 1879, the church building in Winston had been consecrated and a building in Burlington was underway.²¹ Moreover, the mission field was expanding: in addition to Germanton, the team of Sutton and Bynum were now arranging for regular services in High Point, Huntsville, Jamestown, and Reidsville.

But that was not the extent of Bynum’s labors on behalf of the Church. While continuing to work with Sutton, now from a base of operation in Winston, Bynum agreed to start a new diocesan newspaper, the *Church Messenger*, something the Church in North Carolina had been lacking for a number of years. With the blessing of Bishops Atkinson and Lyman, the paper was launched in time for the

²⁰ NCDJ 63rd (1879): 196, 197.

²¹ The cornerstone for St. Athanasius’ chapel in Burlington was laid in December 1879; the building completed in 1880 and consecrated in September of that year. See the *Church Messenger* of January 1, 1880 for an account of the cornerstone ceremony; see Margaret Elizabeth Gant, *The Episcopal Church in Burlington, 1879-1979* (n.d.) for other details.

1879 convention. Published bi-weekly for the first year, it went weekly thereafter.²²

Bynum had no prior experience as an editor, and his limitations as a newspaper man soon become evident; but the Evangelical Brotherhood once again came to the rescue: Murdoch and Bynum prevailed upon Charlie Curtis to leave Hillsborough and take over the reins. Curtis bought the paper, becoming both proprietor and editor, and moved to Winston in 1880. And for a brief period of time, the two brothers-in-law, Bynum and Curtis, were ministering in the greater Winston area together.²³

The 1880 convention was clearly a high point for Bynum and the church in Winston. Convention was held at St. Paul's to show the entire diocese all that had been done here in four short years. But in some respects, the convention of 1881 was even more significant for what it reveals about the ministry in this place. For in choosing their delegates to the 1881 convention, the vestry of St. Paul's became the first predominantly white congregation to elect a black man as part of their delegation. Curtis made it the subject of an editorial in *The Church Messenger* entitled 'A good Catholic example.'

²² Bishop Atkinson said of the new paper: "[I]f properly sustained, it will furnish us with very valuable aid in our work. It will serve to explain and defend those principles of evangelical truth and primitive order, which is the special mission of our Church to advance, and which are so often misunderstood and misrepresented. It will be a record of our Diocesan labours and a channel of general religious intelligence of our people. It will be a welcome visitor to the families through the Diocese, stirring them up to increased diligence in running the Christian race, and increased zeal in advancing the Kingdom of Christ. A properly conducted religious periodical can be all this, and it is strongly hoped that the CHURCH MESSENGER will be all this and that it will deserve and receive the general support and patronage of the Church in this Diocese." *NCDJ* 63rd (1879): 63.

²³ Curtis began his work as editor and proprietor with the paper of August 10, 1880. For an account of his activities in the Winston area at St. Paul's as well as at Germanton, Walnut Cove, and Huntsville, see *NCDJ* 65th (1881): 165.

A case worthy of record and of high commendation has just occurred in St. Paul's Parish, Winston, NC showing the triumph of true Church principles over social prejudice. The vestry, in electing delegates to represent the parish in the approaching Convention of the Church in the diocese, unanimously chose a *colored man* of the congregation among the delegates, especially requesting that he would attend. The sight of colored men as delegates on the floor of the Convention is and has been for years familiar enough to us all in this diocese—thanks to the lofty Catholic position taken by Bishop Atkinson But these men have been representatives of congregations composed of people of their own race. This instance is the first on record, we are sure, in this diocese or in any southern diocese, perhaps in the whole country, in which a congregation composed almost exclusively of whites, and with a white vestry entirely, have offered to send a colored man to represent them in a Convention of the Church

Curtis praised the vestry for “breaking loose from the thralldom of social pressure” and he concluded by reminding his readers that “Catholic Truth” demands that “no difference [be] recognized in race, age, color, condition or circumstances. We are all one in Christ and the Church.”²⁴

Curtis's editorial found its way to the editorial desk of the Raleigh *Observer*, where it met with the scornful opinion that electing black delegates was not the way for the Episcopal denomination to promote itself among the white people of North Carolina. This, in turn, prompted Bynum to make the following points in rebuttal:

- The vestry was discharging its duty and voting unanimously. All was done in conformity with the Church's teachings and canons.
- “In electing a negro there was no thought of antagonizing anybody, nor any object beyond paying a just tribute to a thoroughly informed, zealous and

²⁴ *Church Messenger* 2, no. 50 (May 5, 1881).

faithful communicant, whose worth and gentlemanly bearing the entire community is able to appreciate . . .”

- “And who are they? Two Democratic Editors, a leading lawyer, a trusted railroad officer, a competent druggist, and a gentleman at one time widely known to North Carolina merchants. These constitute the offending vestry.”
- “Speaking now for myself permit me to add that while your editorial may voice the opinions of those calling a branch of the Living Church ‘that denomination’ and wishing it to be ‘run’ on lines of caste and color, there are not a few who stand for a larger-hearted Christianity than that, and many who believe, without reserve, that at the foot of the Cross all men are equal.”

Bynum closed by lamenting that the delegate in question probably would now decline to attend.²⁵

The clear continuity between Bishop Atkinson’s teachings of “Catholic Principles” and the actions of Bynum and the vestry of St. Paul’s was especially poignant in light of the Bishop’s death in early 1881. When the convention met in May, much of its focus was upon commemorating their much beloved leader for the past 27 years. But there were two other significant developments, both of which showed a powerful missionary impulse at work in the diocese.

One was Bishop Lyman’s appointment of a committee of five to consider the establishment of the Permanent Diaconate in North Carolina. A bold call for the revival of the Permanent Diaconate had been made the year before by the Morganton Convocation, but though action had been called for, no action had been taken.²⁶ Now Francis J. Murdoch and another young priest, John Huske, were

²⁵ *The Church Messenger* v. 3, no. 1 (May 19, 1881).

²⁶ *NCDJ* 64th (1880): 50-52.

appointed, along with three laymen, to study the matter and report to the next convention.²⁷

The other was Convention approval for the calling of two diocesan evangelists, to be paid from the Permanent Episcopal and Contingent Fund. Edward Wootten, a priest in Bertie County, had proposed this action in the pages of the *Church Messenger* in November 1880, having noted that no convocation had yet appointed anyone, though the need was as urgent as ever. R.S. Bronson, Rector in Wilson and Rocky Mount, seconded the proposal two months later.²⁸ By the time of convention, there was a groundswell of support, and when Wootten introduced it, it passed.²⁹

The Bishop appointed two men: Bynum and a Virginian, George Dame. Both began work in late 1881, but within a matter of months, Dame determined to accept a call to Plymouth, NC. Bynum continued, and reported to the 1882 convention on his missionary strategy and preliminary results. Bynum explained that he generally limited his ministrations to preaching, and that in preaching he contented himself with “simple, straightforward statement of catholic truths. . . . Wherever there was anything in common between catholic faith and sectarianism, I have tried to begin with that, and then to develop from this starting-point as much as I could of the ‘whole counsel of God.’” Bynum went on to note that it was his practice to preach two or three times a day, sometimes at points ten, twenty, or thirty miles apart. Indeed, the day of his ordination to the priesthood (March 5,

²⁷ *NCDJ* 65th (1881): 52.

²⁸ *Church Messenger* 2 no. 25 (November 11, 1880) and 2 no. 35 (January 20, 1881).

²⁹ *NCDJ* 65th (1881):38, 44.

1882) was a perfect example of the schedule he and his “evangelical brothers” liked to keep. At the Sunday morning ordination service in St. Luke’s, Lincolnton, Murdoch preached (without notes, of course) on the meaning of apostolic succession. That afternoon, Murdoch went to the community of High Shoals to preach, while Curtis and Cheshire went off to the mission station of St. Stephen’s to do likewise. Then, in the evening they all reassembled in Lincolnton, where Bishop Lyman preached and confirmed.³⁰

Lyman himself thought that all the parishes in the diocese should catch the missionary spirit. After commending the Church in Edenton for its outreach to African-Americans, the Bishop added:

I do not think there is a sufficient recognition of our duty to extend a knowledge of the Church and its teaching in the outlying districts around our Parish Churches. There is the danger of feeling that we have no responsibility except for those who may have attached themselves to our congregations. Now surely this is an utter mistake. It tends to foster a very narrow spirit of congregationalism, and makes us unmindful of that great aggressive principle, which is one of the first elements of Christianity. But the Clergy and the people should try to do what they can to carry the Gospel out into the rural districts. Services might easily be held, if not on Sundays, at least occasionally on a week-day night, in such buildings as might be secured for the purpose, and I feel quite sure that no such efforts would ever fail of producing the most encouraging results.³¹

³⁰ For an account of the events surrounding Bynum’s ordination, see *Church Messenger* 3, no. 43 (March 9, 1882). For Bynum’s report of his work as Evangelist, see *NCDJ* 66th (1882): 168-170.

³¹ *NCDJ* 66th (1882): 96.

But the Bishop's call to diocesan-wide mission consciousness was not the centerpiece of convention action in 1882. Rather, it was the convention's determination to proceed in principle to effect a division of the diocese.

The ensuing year became one of the most fascinating and critical in the life of our Church in North Carolina. Lyman and Bynum outdid themselves in holding missions and visitations throughout the diocese. Bynum traveled to 45 counties, from Cherokee to Currituck. He logged over 4,000 miles on railway and steamship lines and nearly 1,500 by horse and on foot. Lyman did more visitations than ever before—getting to nearly every parish and missionary station in the state and visiting 20 of them twice. What is more, Lyman went on a January speaking tour of the Northeast to raise support for a theological department at St. Augustine's. Their visitation schedules were published together in the *Messenger*.³²

Why all this effort? In part, it was to justify continuation of the current arrangement. Lyman wholeheartedly agreed with the 1882 minority report on diocesan division, which contended that such division was premature: the diocese was still numerically and financially weak, and evangelists were a greater priority than another bishop. Lyman declared that with the extension of rail lines, one didn't need another bishop to do visitations because travel had become so much easier. Lyman could not have made his own views clearer: "If you can only have two or more active and efficient Evangelists, occasional visits from them, with continued services for two or three days, in each missionary station which is

³² For the Bishop's Address, see *NCDJ* 67th (1883): 45-79; For the Evangelist's Report, see *NCDJ* 67th (1883): 151-157.

visited, will accomplish far more for the Church than simply an annual visit from the Bishop.”³³

But the funding for the current arrangement of bishop and evangelist was contingent upon keeping the diocese united, since both positions were paid for from the Permanent Episcopal Fund. Bynum himself saw the problem immediately and offered to resign his position, effective diocesan convention 1883.³⁴ Some viewed the loss of the evangelist position with relative equanimity. One writer to the *Messenger* said philosophically, “This is a step backwards; but it is inevitable.”³⁵ Others were less sanguine, contending: “This Evangelist scheme has never yet been fully put to work. At one Convention it was started, one most competent Evangelist secured, and the next Convention virtually knocks the whole scheme in the head. . . . We [the writer] stand to-day where the convention apparently stood two years ago, in the full conviction that two or three Evangelists can achieve a work in this Diocese which no one Bishop can do.”³⁶ It would be a decided understatement to say the letters to the editor in the *Church Messenger* become quite heated. Edmund Joyner, who succeeded Charles Curtis as editor, felt it necessary to remind his letter-writers that they all followed a gentle savior.³⁷

In the meantime, to be saved from all false choices, the leadership of the newly-formed Charlotte Convocation had taken steps to retain evangelists but on a

³³ *NCDJ* 66th (1882): 99.

³⁴ *Church Messenger* 4, no. 2 (May 25, 1882).

³⁵ *Church Messenger* 4, no. 46 (April 19, 1883).

³⁶ *Church Messenger* 4, no. 47 (April 26, 1883).

³⁷ *Church Messenger* 4, no. 48 (May 3, 1883).

different footing, reviving the vision of convocational evangelists. And so, the Dean and Secretary of that Convocation scraped together \$15.00 (!) and prevailed upon Charlie Curtis to give up editing the *Church Messenger*, move to Charlotte, and take up this position on the promise that the Charlotte convocation would raise the funds to keep it going. And who was it who made the direct, personal appeal to Curtis to step out in faith? None other than the new rector of St. Peter's in Charlotte, Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr. Curtis took up the work in late fall of 1882. Accounts of Curtis's visitations are stirring, as are accounts of Bynum's work, both published in the *Church Messenger*.³⁸

Also appearing in the *Church Messenger* in the run-up to the 1883 convention were numerous articles and letters about the Permanent Diaconate. Many of these were from Francis J. Murdoch, principal author of a much-anticipated report to be delivered to convention. Murdoch actually began making his views clear as soon as he was appointed to the drafting committee in 1881. Murdoch was eager to see ordination opened up to non-stipendiary clergy who would continue to serve in secular occupations but pledge one seventh of their time to missionary activity in areas where the church did not currently exist. The challenge, as he saw it, was how to get a sufficient number of the very best men to consider such service. His answer was to stand the customary way of thinking about ordination on its head:

For a long time we have been told to look out for fit men for the office, and then, I suppose, try and persuade them to seek for it. . . . Now, in my

³⁸ J. B. Cheshire, Jr. wrote a detailed account of the meeting of the Charlotte Convocation and the calling of Curtis as Evangelist which appeared in the *Messenger* on February 22, 1883. Edmund Joyner subsequently wrote an editorial for the *Messenger*, commending both the Charlotte Convocation and Curtis for doing something "soul-refreshing." Volume 4, no. 40 (March 8, 1883). Accounts of Curtis's work began to appear with the *Church Messenger* of March 22, 1883, and continued on April 5 and 26, and May 24, 1883. Bynum's work in the eastern part of the state was praised in reports appearing in the *Messenger* on June 29, 1882 and April 12, 1883.

opinion, this is nonsense. If, when the convention is assembled, it is agreed that the clergy and laity from each Convocation shall hand in, after prayer and consultation, the names of seven persons within the bounds of that Convocation who are the best men to put in the office, we would know in a few hours forty-two persons whom we would want for deacons. This being done, the next step is to call them to the diaconate and let them refuse the call if they dare, at the peril of their souls.

But according to the popular theology a call to the ministry is a secret transaction between God and the soul of the man called. Men that believe in the order of the Church should know better. . . . I should think that if a diocesan Convention can call a man to the Episcopate, it might call one to be a deacon. Now the truth of the matter is that the call to the ministry comes from the authorities of the Church If a bishop shall use his undoubted authority to call thirty or forty of the best men in his diocese to the diaconate (his sacred council of presbyters, deacons, and brethren approving) there will be more that will find themselves inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to accept that outward call than there will be that will dare to make ‘the great refusal.’ . . . [T]hus the permanent diaconate should be restored.³⁹

Charles Curtis, as Editor of the *Messenger*, also weighed in on the matter. For him, the restoration of the Permanent Diaconate was a way for the Episcopal Church to do something analogous to the Methodist provisions for local preachers and the Campbellite understanding that all church members are called to be preachers and missionaries. But he feared that “in our hide-bound conservatism” we will be afraid to put it into effect. Indeed, this was a repeated refrain in the *Messenger*. Here’s Curtis again on the subject of adaptation: “the time is past for letting a stiff hide-bound conservatism of an old-fashioned ‘High Church’ Protestant Episcopal uniformity to make the Church hold aloof from the use of methods (properly weeded out) that have been found in some respects helpful

³⁹*Church Messenger* 3, no. 3 (June 2, 1881).

among the protestant bodies among us. The time is past for keeping so slavishly to a rigid cast-iron mould of respectability and custom and system as to neglect the ministering agencies for the poor and the degraded”⁴⁰

With all this passion flowing through diocesan veins, the 1883 convention was destined to be memorable and momentous. The delegates proceeded with the division of the diocese over the Bishop’s dispassionate dissent, albeit not his veto. The delegates also received and endorsed a bold report on the Permanent Diaconate from Francis J. Murdoch, which not only called for a deacon in every congregation, but retained the provision that the Bishop issue direct, personal calls to “the best men in the diocese.” Last but not least, the convention received a detailed, six-page report from Bynum on his work as Diocesan Evangelist.⁴¹

But however much delegates appreciated Bynum’s work, the inevitable elimination of his position proceeded. Curtis remained evangelist for the Charlotte Convocation until December, 1883, when he received a call to a church in Maryland. Taking his place as Charlotte Convocation Evangelist was none other than W. S. Bynum.

But the handwriting was on the wall. Bynum was now 35, with a wife and seven children (an eighth would be born in 1887), and his days as an itinerant minister were numbered. Bishop Lyman again praised Bynum’s gifts as an evangelist in his

⁴⁰ For editorial supporting the Permanent Diaconate , see *Church Messenger* v. 2, no. 50 (May 5, 1881). For editorial on ‘Adaptation’ see *Church Messenger* 4, no. 10 (July 27, 1882).

⁴¹ The vote on the issue of Division of the Diocese is recorded in *NCDJ 67th (1883)*: 26ff. Cheshire, Curtis and Murdoch all voted in favor; Bynum either abstained or was absent when the vote was taken. The Bishop’s statement opposing division—but not to the point of veto—appears on pages 74-76. For the report on the Permanent Diaconate, see pages 15-17; for the report of the Evangelist, see pages 151-157. Bynum’s report is immediately followed by Curtis’s report as Evangelist for the Charlotte Convocation.

1884 convention address but noted that Bynum's 'domestic duties' had precluded much of his work.⁴² Not surprisingly, when Bynum subsequently received a call to Calvary parish in Henderson County, he accepted, and was listed as Calvary's rector in the 1885 Journal of Convention.⁴³

Conclusion

Looking back on Bynum's early ministry, one can't fault him for creativity, commitment, and vision. His work in Greensboro in the mid-1870s put that young congregation on a stable footing and led to forming congregations and building churches in Winston and Burlington. After his tenure in what is now called the Northwest Region, Bynum's early mission work in Germanton, Reidsville, and High Point would continue, ultimately leading to the building of churches and the creation of congregations in all these places. He successfully launched a new diocesan newspaper and was wise enough (and perhaps fortunate enough) to hand over the reins to his brother-in-law before it failed.

Bynum, along with his cohort of "evangelical brothers," was committed to extending the reach of the church into new mission territory. Moreover, he was committed to an inclusive vision of a church for all races and classes, making St. Paul's Winston-Salem the first church in this State (and perhaps in the Episcopal Church) to integrate its convention delegation.

⁴² NCDJ 1884 p. 66.

⁴³ NCDJ 69th (1885): 6; the same Journal also lists J. B. Cheshire, Jr. as Associate Editor of the *Church Messenger*, making him the third member of the Hillsborough clergy cohort to do so.

If he did not succeed in the position of Diocesan Evangelist, the reason does not lie with his message or method, but with the inability of the Church in North Carolina to adequately support his efforts concurrently with the creation of the Diocese of East Carolina. In 1883, his was the road not taken.