The Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky

By John O. Gross

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Kentucky first appeared in Methodist publications in 1786. In that year Bishop Francis Asbury appointed James Haw and Benjamin Ogden to form a circuit in Kentucky. This was Haw’s fourth appointment and Ogden’s first. Leaving Baltimore, these circuit riders faced a long and perilous journey through an untrampled wilderness. Their appointment was a dense forest inhabited by savage beasts and uncivilized Indians. These men went to a circuit where there was no official board waiting to welcome them, no church edifice for their ministration, and no comfortable homes for their entertainment.

I have wondered what procedure Bishop Asbury followed in preparing these men to receive from him the most hazardous church assignment on the American continent. On another occasion before he sent Jacob Young, a young circuit rider, into the wilds of Mississippi and Louisiana, he singled him out during the conference session for more than usual attention. On the evening before conference closed, he took Young aside and read to him from Genesis the story of the original Jacob and his travels from his father’s house to Padan-Aram. When he came to that part that tells of Jacob sleeping with a stone for his pillow, he asked the young pioneer how he thought Jacob must have felt in that place. Young answered, “Serious.” “Yes, serious enough. Jacob, you must go to Natchez and take charge of the circuit.” Soon, Young was on his way, and for about twelve nights he slept in the open far removed from any mark of civilization. Bishop Asbury could have prepared Haw and Ogden to journey to Kentucky by reading to them the story of Daniel in the lions’ den.

The appointment of these two men to Kentucky in 1786 was more than a routine one. It formed an epoch in Kentucky’s history. It placed in western life the circuit rider wearing hunting shirt, coon-skin cap, buckskin pantaloons, leather belt, and moccasins made of deerskins. He accompanied the trail-blazers who marked the paths and protected the early settlers from the Indians. Some understanding historian may yet do for the western circuit rider what Parkrman did for the Jesuits, the priests who figured so conspicuously in the opening up of the Great Lakes region. Because
the doctrine of the circuit rider fitted so well the democracy of the West, he became a potential influence in forming the civilization of the section. Once a distinguished jurist said, "Had it not been for the circuit rider the whole western country would have sunk into barbarism."

The Methodist Church may be compared to the life-giving river mentioned by Ezekiel. "Everything liveth whithersoever the river cometh." The Methodist stream is formed by three tributaries: evangelism, education, and missions. Kentucky was the source of all three of these tributaries for the territory west of the Alleghenies, and from this state the church moved out into the West and beyond.

Evangelism

The evangelistic movement that was to carry Methodist churches all over the West started here. In 1798, at the session of the Western Conference, John Kobler cheerfully volunteered to be the first missionary to Ohio. In Ohio he found the country in a raw and uncultured state. Radford, the Methodist historian, in writing of the Ohio of 1798, said: "No sound of the everlasting gospel had broken upon the ears of the people to gladden their hearts, but the whole with strict propriety might be called a land of darkness and the shadow of death."

This stream of evangelism reached Indiana in 1802; in 1803, the Illinois Circuit was formed, and in 1806, the Missouri Circuit. From the humble beginning in 1786, the Kentucky Circuit expanded in twenty years into four districts, forty-one circuits, sixty-six preachers, sixteen thousand members, and had extended from the Great Lakes in the North to the Gulf of Mexico in the South, and from the Allegheny Mountains on the East as far "toward the setting sun as civilization had made its progress." In fact, the church grew three times faster than the population. This program of evangelism also had an indirect effect on providing political leadership for the new country. The class meeting and the local preacher's work assisted in developing leaders whose work was not only felt in the church but also in the state. Edward Tiffin, a Methodist local preacher, was the first governor of Ohio.

Education

The circuit rider has been rightly pictured as the harbinger of education. Even when he saw but a cabin in the wilderness, he envisioned the coming of a city with its churches and schools. When Bishop Asbury visited Kentucky in 1790 for the first conference to be held west of the Alleghenies, the main business transacted pertained to education. Out of that first conference, attended by seven
preachers, came Bethel Academy, the second school established by Methodists in America. The poor location of the academy caused it to be discontinued early, but not before it had touched the lives of many young men who later made their contributions as ministers, physicians, and lawyers in the building of the new West.

The great stream of education that was later to flow throughout the West found its source at Augusta, Kentucky, where Ohio and Kentucky Methodists joined together to build Augusta College. With a brilliant faculty of the church's strongest educators, among whom were Martin Ruter, Joseph Tomlinson, John P. Durbin, and Henry B. Bascom, this little institution held high the torch of learning for Methodists of the West. When Northwestern University was established, the trustees elected a graduate of Augusta College to be the first president. When Indiana Asbury University, now DePauw University, laid the foundation of its first building, the inspirational address on that occasion was given by Henry B. Bascom of Augusta College. Ohio Wesleyan University also drew on this school for its leadership when it began. Like a small spring that stands at the head of the great river, Augusta College stood at the source of the great western educational movement of the Methodist Church, and it is doubtful if there are any institutions of learning in the Central West that do not trace their inspiration to this small beginning in Kentucky.

Missions

The Methodist Church has been through the years a missionary church. Its first bishop, Thomas Coke, consecrated by John Wesley, died as he started on a missionary tour to India. However, the incentive for organized missionary work among Methodists was given by a mulatto, John Stewart. After his conversion under the ministry of a Kentucky preacher, Marcus Lindsey, who had been appointed to a circuit in Ohio from the Western Conference in Kentucky, Stewart opened up missionary work among neglected Indian tribes in the state of Ohio. This work later became one of the great enterprises of the early church. For years, Dr. James B. Finley, a preacher converted in a Kentucky camp meeting, directed the famous Wyandotte Mission.

On one occasion, the late John G. Bruce, a member of the Kentucky Conference, attended a camp meeting in Ohio which was attended by many Wyandotte Indians. Among them was Mononcue, an Indian chief. Mononcue was the speaker at an afternoon meeting, and during the address he said, "The time was, my white sisters, when you trembled at the sound of Mononcue's step. It was well, for Mononcue came with tomahawk and scalping knife knowing only
the war song and dance, but these men [turning to the preachers behind him] found me in the depth of my native forest worshiping in the temples of my fathers; they told me of the cross of Christ by which the enmity of man to man is destroyed. I ran to that cross and buried the tomahawk and scalping knife, and today you greet Mononcue as brother.” Sitting in the pulpit behind him was General Simon Kenton, once an Indian Scout with Daniel Boone, now an old man leaning on his staff. On his body he carried the scars of many wounds received at the hands of red men. At the conclusion of Mononcue’s address, General Kenton sprang to his feet shouting, “What hath God wrought? Who could have thought it?”, caught Mononcue in his arms, and these old warriors, each of whom had struggled upon the plains for the other’s life, subdued by the truth, stood in tender embrace, “reconciled by love divine.”

The work that started in 1819 with an appointment of the old Western Conference grew and enlarged until it can be truly said that millions who have sat in darkness, through the Methodist missionaries have seen the great light.

**Early Leaders**

The foundations of the Methodist Church in Kentucky were laid by sacrificial circuit riders who never sought material rewards for their services. Peter Cartwright served the work now included in the appointment of the Kentucky Conference known as Albany and Wayne. Francis Poythress was the first presiding elder of Kentucky and had about the same connection with Kentucky that Jesse Lee had to the New England states. The work was so exacting and difficult that he broke under it and lost his mind. William Landrum founded many Methodist churches in the mountain region including Paintsville. H. J. Perry, a circuit rider, had as his first appointment the territory now known as Knox, Bell, Whitley, Harlan, and Laurel counties. He preached at twenty-three places, traveled thirteen hundred miles, and received for his first six months’ salary—sixty-eight cents. On one occasion when Bishop Asbury came to the conference in Kentucky, he found the privations of his preachers so great that he parted with his watch, coat, and shirt to help the men. In spite of the hardships, the Methodist work grew in Kentucky.

**Beginnings of the Methodist Episcopal Church**

Pioneer Methodist preachers usually were men of great firmness and inflexible principles. They held strong convictions from the beginning against slavery. Wesley, himself, was outspoken in his opposition to the owning of human beings as chattel property. Seven-
teen years before the crisis in the nation's political life, there was a crisis in the Methodist Church; one branch retained the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church and ministered to the Methodists north of the Mason and Dixon Line. South of this line the work was in the hands of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Kentucky, at the time of the division, transferred its allegiance, with few exceptions, to the Church South. In 1853 the scattered work of the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized into a conference named Kentucky Conference. Previously such Methodist Episcopal Churches as were in Kentucky belonged to the Cincinnati and Indiana Conferences. The work in the year of the organization included fourteen churches. Prior to 1866 the churches of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky were located in about ten counties. It can be seen that the work was negligible and the Kentucky Conference would either have passed out or had its work transferred to northern conferences if there had not been a break in the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This was brought about by some ministers in that conference who believed that with the end of the war the church like the nation should reunite.

In 1865 at Covington, Kentucky, at the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a report was presented by the committee on the state of the church recommending immediate organic unification of the two churches. There was a minority report that favored continuing the church as it was lest an aggressive move for unification would disturb the work in the state. The minority report prevailed, the vote being thirty-five to twenty-five. It became evident to the men of the conference who voted for the majority report that they could no longer continue their membership with the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The following morning eighteen of them, including Daniel Stevenson, secretary of the conference; John G. Bruce, Presiding Elder; H. C. Northcott, son of Benjamin Northcott; and fifteen others located. These men later were known as the "Loyal Eighteen."

After withdrawing from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the "Loyal Eighteen" met two days later in Covington with Bishop Morris of the Methodist Episcopal Church and presented to him a plan that they had drawn placing fourteen of their number in appointments in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The appointments, of course, had no churches to which these men would go, but they set about establishing Methodist Episcopal Churches throughout the state. One layman donated $450 and made a loan of $500 possible to aid in the maintenance of the preachers until the Kentucky Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church would meet the following spring. In March of 1866 at the session of the Kentucky
Annual Conference held at Covington, the eighteen and nine others united with the Kentucky Conference.

After the withdrawal of the eighteen from the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and before the next session of the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, more than 2,000 members of the Church South had followed the eighteen into the Methodist Episcopal Churches. In 1865 the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church had only twenty-six appointments in the state. Following the withdrawal in 1865 and the uniting of the group of preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, with the Kentucky Conference, the appointments multiplied; in 1866 they numbered fifty-eight; in 1867, seventy-five; and in 1868, eighty. New churches were established all over the state, and by the end of 1876 the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky had increased more than 10,000 to 16,512. Thus, from an insignificant beginning in 1853 with a membership of less than 3,000 the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky had grown to 28,000 members by 1938.

The development of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the state was due, as may be seen, to the break that came in 1865 with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Following the break, three factors contributed to its growth—first, the ministers; second, wealthy laymen, and third, the Board of Home Missions. It may be noted the preachers were so deeply consecrated to the cause that they were willing to separate themselves from the church of their childhood. Their convictions made them militant and strong leaders for the cause of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky. They had been leaders in the Southern Church before they withdrew. John G. Bruce was a seasoned presiding elder, and for many years was one of the honored and respected leaders of the conference. Daniel Stevenson was their foremost advocate of education and one of the founders of Kentucky Wesleyan College. These men were later joined by such out-of-state leaders as John D. Walsh, E. L. Shepherd, and Amon Boreing. Such Kentuckians as Pulaski Elright, H. J. Ramey, John G. Ragan, William Childers, John Godby, and others, who entered the conference following the withdrawal of the eighteen, helped to lay the foundations for the Methodist Episcopal work in Kentucky.

But the preachers could not have done the great tasks they did had they not been aided by some strong laymen. These laymen also shared the same convictions, and with their means financed the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky. The outstanding layman of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky was Amos Shinkle. He was a citizen of Covington, the builder of the suspension bridge that connects Covington and Cincinnati, a widely
known municipal leader and businessman. He was generous with his wealth, and the chief objects of his benefactions were Methodist preachers and Methodist churches.

Each year at conference he would supplement the meager salaries of ministers serving weak appointments. In 1872 his gift for this purpose was $5,000. He was interested in the building of new churches, and his generous gifts aided many churches in Kentucky to be dedicated free of indebtedness. He was also one of the founders of the Preachers' Relief Association, and for twelve years matched all gifts made to the fund. Beginning with his initial gift of $1,200, the fund grew while he was treasurer to $17,000.

Joshua and Fanny Speed of Louisville were also Methodist philanthropists whose work paralleled Mr. Shinkle's. Trinity Church, Louisville; the Preachers' Relief Association, and Union College were greatly benefited by their large gifts. Mrs. Speed made possible the woman's dormitory at Union College, and at her death left most of her entire estate to the college. It may be said that her gifts in a real sense were the largest ever made to Union College and in 1939 made up the larger portion of the college's endowment.

John D. Hearn of Covington, Hiram Shaw of Lexington, and Vincent Boreing of London will also be remembered as laymen who served their church constructively during the formative period of its work.

The Board of Home Missions was the third factor in the developing of Kentucky Methodism. In 1872 the Board gave $8,000 to assist in the support of ministers. In 1876 in one of the reports presented on missions it was stated that one-twentieth of all monies collected by the Board of Missions was being spent in Kentucky. Later, in another report on Home Mission work given at the session of the conference in 1900, it was mentioned that the Board of Home Missions had assisted in the building of 173 of the 287 churches erected.

Since 1900 reports on the work of the Board of Home Missions in Kentucky lacked the specific detail given in the earlier reports. We do know, however, something of the contributions of this board to the church in the state. The work of the Board of Home Missions included aid to settlement schools, supplementing preachers' salaries, and furnishing loans to churches. In 1938 it appropriated approximately $20,000 annually to the conference. Without the financial aid from the Board of Home Missions, the Kentucky Conference could never have made the progress it has.

Thus, it may be seen that beginning with 1866 the Methodist Episcopal Church, like a stream fed by strong convictions and adequate finances, overflowed from a few border points to the entire state. In 1938 after seventy-five years of vigorous service, it found
that time had leveled the political and ecclesiastical barriers created by Civil War animosities, and the two branches were coming together. In the coming years it hoped that the one stream of Methodism empowered by the uniting of the two main tributaries in Kentucky would be mightier than ever before. It is proper to try to evaluate the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the eve of union and to determine something of its contribution to the Methodist stream of Kentucky.

An outstanding characteristic of the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church has been its production of preachers. The late F. W. Harrop once referred to the conference as "an ecclesiastical incubator." In the preceding sixty-five years it received into its membership from probation 306 men; by transfer, 150 men, making a total of 256 men for the Christian ministry. The Kentucky Conference has transferred to 69 conferences of Methodism 281 preachers, or whenever two men were received, one was transferred out. Yet, because of the loss from transfer, death, retirement, etc., the Kentucky Conference has not been able to keep sufficient conference men to maintain its appointments. For many years it had to rely upon local preachers to serve about one-fourth of its churches. It is evident, though, that if the conference had been able to keep a small portion of the number it sent out, the need for "supply preachers" would have been greatly reduced.

It is interesting to note that some of the leading preachers of the conference were men who came from other states—J. D. Walsh, New York; E. L. Sheperd, Ohio; Amon Boreing, Tennessee, and from England, John G. Dover, William Jones, Thomas Hanford, and F. W. Harrop. Almost one-half of the membership of the conference was made up of men born out of the state.

The inability to keep Kentucky preachers in Kentucky has always been a source of disturbance to this conference. Chief among the reasons for their not staying were the hardships faced by the Kentucky preachers. Once a committee on the State of the Church reported: "We note with sorrow that the burdens of work are exceptionally heavy and the discouragements numerous." Long moves, weak churches, poor schools, and small salaries have always been associated with Kentucky appointments.

But coupled with the hardships was another reason for leaving—the desire to escape from the inferiority complex acquired by Methodist Episcopal preachers in the state. Everywhere they were surrounded with the greatness of other churches; theirs was the smallest Methodist church.

The weakness of the Methodist Episcopal Church in many communities also caused the members of that church from other states to unite with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, when they
came to Kentucky. The reports carried by these persons to their home churches in the North were often not friendly. Unfortunately also, national church leaders from the main body of the church helped to deepen the feeling of inferiority by overlooking the membership of the church in the border territory when giving recognition. In 1884, when the Centennial of the Methodist Episcopal Church was observed in Baltimore, not a delegate was invited from the Kentucky Conference to attend. This slight caused the conference to protest the following year in strong language. Even as late as June, 1938, when representatives were placed on the commissions to prepare the agenda for the uniting conference, white conferences (except Baltimore) of the South were passed by.

In addition, the feeling of inferiority also was increased by the transfer system. Under this plan the best churches of the conference called men from out of the state, and Kentucky preachers were made to feel that they were capable only for the most obscure and unremerative churches. In 1899 a committee reported to the conference in this vigorous language: "It is the cruelest unreasonable ness, to say the least, to operate on the hypothesis that although a Kentucky preacher may build up a church, that church must be presided over by a transfer if it is not to retrograde. Many of our best men who were brought up in our midst, and who have understood our people as no transfer could, have been compelled to leave because the pulpits of our best churches are closed against them."

The Church in the Mountains

The Methodist Episcopal Church has been in many ways the Methodist Church of underprivileged sections. It has been especially strong not only in the mountain area of Kentucky but also in the whole of Appalachia. The Holston Conference has been for years the largest conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the South. It is probably not going too far to say that political issues of the Civil War period explain the success of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the mountains. The Methodist Episcopal Church often seemed sympathetic with the Republican Party, the anti-slavery party. In fact, in many places the line of demarcation between the two Methodist churches, which were identical in theology, hymnology, and polity, appeared to be only a political one. Mountain counties, always strongly Republican, gave the Methodist Episcopal Church a warm welcome and large place.

Some of the church leaders prophesied the coming of the new industrial development for the mountains. The presiding elder of the Ashland district in 1872 called the church’s attention to the coal and immense forests of the Big Sandy Valley and said that these
would cause Eastern Kentucky to vie with all other sections of the state. Then the membership in the entire mountain section was 3,017. Now it is 4,572.

Practically all of the membership of the Ashland mountain region now is to be found in the cities of the district; mountain rural circuits have all but disappeared from this region. A contrast with 1872 shows that the Blaine Circuit then had the largest membership in the district and First Church, Ashland, sixty members. Now the reverse is true. The church in the meantime has lost the rural region. This loss of the rural membership in the Ashland district has prevented any gain in that territory due to the fact that the increase in membership in the cities was largely by transfer of rural members. In Harlan, a county of great coal production, the church grew from 150 members in 1912, the year the railroad entered, to 1,245 in 1937. The church lost membership in rural areas while it gained in the industrial sections. The total percentage of Methodist population in this same region had dropped in 1939 from approximately 2 percent of the total population to .5 percent.

The service, however, of Kentucky Methodism to the mountains of Eastern Kentucky has not been limited to church work. In this territory the Methodist Episcopal Church has touched through Union College, Pikeville Hospital, and the settlement schools, large areas of mountain life. Hence, it is unfair to appraise by its membership the success of the church in this region. It has been a strong inspiration to other churches and to the youth. The constructive mission program it has developed has made it rank foremost among service agencies in our mountain region.

The Educational Program of the Conference

While but few of the ministers of Kentucky have been enriched by the contributions of education, they have, nevertheless, been ardent exponents of education. The Board of Education of the Kentucky Conference was incorporated in 1867. This was to be expected. Among the “Loyal Eighteen” were some of the foremost advocates of education in the state. Education in the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, prior to 1866, had been guided largely by Daniel Stevenson. At the time of his withdrawal from the conference, Dr. Stevenson was the Superintendent of Public Instruction of Kentucky. During the past seventy-five years, this Board of Education of the Kentucky Conference has had direct and indirect contacts with nine institutions of learning. Only one of the nine, Union College, survived, and it is a fitting memorial to the work of a Board that sought to further the cause of Christian education in Kentucky.
One of the special features of this society has been its anniversaries
distinguished in divisions $119,077.

is used for the benevolent in forty-eight years of its history. It
lucky in 1892. Its gifts are invested and held in trust, and the income
society had the charter granted by the General Assembly of Ken-
for the care of retired ministers, ministers' widows and orphans. The
and of retired ministers, it was the property of the organization in the state
purpose of this organization was to secure a permanent fund for the
Church of Kentucky was the Preachers' Relief Association. The
Another contribution of the Kentucky Conference to the Methodist

The Preachers' Relief Association

was an association of colleges and secondary schools.

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Preachers' Relief Association of the Kentucky Conference. It was

Union College was purchased by Daniel Stevenson in 1886 at a

Methodist History
at the conference session. One night is set aside to review its work. An offering has always been taken, and sometimes the pledges have amounted to sizeable sums. Two of the treasurers of this fund, Amos Shinkle and R. T. Miller, made it a practice to match all the contributions with equal amounts.

The treasurers of this fund, besides Amos Shinkle and R. T. Miller, have been Colonel John A. Johnson and J. Robert Coppin. These men were all members of Union Church, Covington, Kentucky. The most rapid growth of the fund was between 1914 and 1930, largely because of the work of the secretary, the late F. W. Harrop. In 1914 the amount stood at $33,000; in 1930, it passed $70,000, and it now stands at $89,000. About $12,000 came since 1933 from the Central German Conference which merged its work with English-speaking conferences in 1933.

Hospitals of the Kentucky Conference

In addition to Union College, the Kentucky Conference brought into the united church two other outstanding institutions—Pikeville Hospital, Pikeville, Kentucky, and the Deaconess Hospital, Louisville. In 1922 the Methodist Episcopal Church of Kentucky started a hospital program at Pikeville, Kentucky. It was not its first entrance into hospital work in the mountains in Kentucky for in 1900 an unsuccessful effort to develop a hospital was started at Middlesboro. The rear part of the church was used for a hospital, but the work was soon abandoned.

In 1925 it was discovered that the Pikeville Hospital program, involving the completion of the building and its furnishings, had created an indebtedness of about $200,000. Under the leadership of Bishop Theo. S. Henderson a bond issue covering this indebtedness was floated. Ohio Methodists agreed to help pay the indebtedness, and now to the credit of the Kentucky Conference and the Ohio Conferences let it be said that in thirteen years the total indebtedness was reduced from $200,000 to $11,000. During the financial stress of the 1930’s when bonds were lapsing or being rewritten for a reduced amount, the Methodist Hospital at Pikeville pushed on and paid its indebtedness at the rate of one hundred cents on the dollar. To the territory about Pikeville, where there is a large industrial development, this hospital stands carrying on its healing mission among a deserving but needy people.

The second hospital of Kentucky that became a part of the united church is the Deaconess Hospital in Louisville. This institution was founded by German Methodists of Kentucky and Indiana, and until 1922 was owned entirely by the Central German Conference. In that year one-half of its ownership came to the Kentucky Conference,
and with the merger of the Central German Conference in 1933, the entire ownership came to the Kentucky Conference. This institution, while never large, has been rated as one of the good hospitals of Louisville, and it serves Methodists and others of a wide territory in Kentucky and Indiana.

The Kentucky Conference and Reform

The coming of the Methodist preacher to Kentucky meant the beginning of needed reforms. Since Bishop Asbury traveled through Kentuck and noted that conditions on the Rockcastle River of the Wilderness Trail were “worse than hell itself,” dancing, horse-racing, and liquor drinking have been targets shot at from Methodist pulpits. Through 152 years of work in Kentucky, the Methodist Episcopal Church has definitely allied itself with reform movements.

It is interesting to note the connection of the Kentucky Conference with social reform. One impetus to its development was the anti-slavery attitude it possessed. While the dissenters who joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1866 were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, they had for one of their grievances the failure of their church to discipline preachers who served in the Confederate Army.

John G. Fee, founder of Berea College, who had been identified with a small group of reformers in the northern part of the state and who also at one time was a student at Augusta College, affords an excellent study of the stuff out of which these pioneer preachers were made. Once when he was preaching, a cavalcade rode up to the log cabin and the leader of a mob commanded him to leave the pulpit and accompany them. They told him, “We are going to hang you over on Birch Fork.” They promised to compromise if he would leave the county and never come back. His reply to the mob was, “You might be sick or have a tree fall on you and send for me to pray for you.” The thought of such a possibility weakened the crowd; they dropped out and let him go.

After the Civil War, the Methodist Episcopal Church was the champion of the Negro’s rights in Kentucky. Negro preachers were admitted to the Kentucky Conference, and all of the Negro work of the Methodist Episcopal Church was supervised by this conference until the formation of the Lexington Conference in 1869. The Freedman’s Aid Society, the organization that was to do much for Negro education, was hailed by the conference as the “Parable of the Good Samaritan in action.” More than sixty years ago this conference protested to the legislature against the school law that gave the Negro child thirty cents per capita and the white child one dollar and fifty cents per capita and urged its preachers not to cease to speak against the discrimination until it was corrected.
In international affairs our fathers were ahead of their day. In 1876 they declared against the futility of war and pleaded in a resolution that was sent to the President of the United States for a plan to settle international disputes without the use of the sword. In 1880 when there was an uprising against Chinese laborers in some of the western states, they protested against the treatment of the Chinese and said that the outrages were sure to bring embarrassment to mission work in China. They were right. For the treatment brought reprisals—Boxer uprisings—in the form of destroying some valuable mission property and the lives of many missionaries.

It is not surprising to be told that Methodists in Kentucky were in the forefront in the fight against the liquor traffic. More than fifty years ago, this conference urged the legislature to place in public schools textbook materials showing the effects of alcohol on the human system. A study of the resolutions presented to this conference during the past seventy-five years by the Temperance Reform Committees affords a fair history of the whole prohibition movement.

Chief among the leaders in the movement for prohibition in the conference was the late William G. Bradford. His scholarly reports on the liquor question were features at the Annual Conference for almost fifty years. The studies that he presented were surveys of the status of liquor reform. It is noteworthy to find that fifty years prior to national prohibition this conference demanded political action in order to secure "unqualified legal prohibition." The liquor situation of post-repeal days was forecast forty years ago when there was much talk about a substitute for the saloon. In a report, Bradford answered it by saying, "That would doubtless be a super-average saloon, such as a drug store, dispensary or domestic drinking. It is not the place or the character of the place where beverages are served that people protest against. It is the beverages themselves." Clear thinking and wise leadership on the greatest evil of the day was a distinct contribution of the Kentucky Conference to the whole state.

Other evils of the social order that have been challenged were racing, gambling, polygamy, Sabbath desecration, and lynching. Once in a report on Sabbath Observances, the conference asked the presiding elders to refrain from using the Sunday trains in returning home from their quarterly conferences.

It is only fair to say that both branches of Kentucky Methodism need to rediscover that an aggressive effort toward the correcting of evils in the social order is not inconsistent with the Methodist evangel of personal redemption. The strength of the united stream is needed to oppose economic injustice, sinfulness of war, race preju-
dice, sexual impurity, and other social evils threatening the existence of our national life.

The Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church came to the time of organic union of the Methodist bodies with the belief that one of its greatest convictions was about to become a reality. It can be rightfully said that the Kentucky Conference owes its existence to its belief that the union of Methodism was essential to the progress of the whole church. In 1905, H. C. Northcott, a patriarch of the conference and one of the surviving "Loyal Eighteen," brought a report forecasting the union of Methodism. There has never been an adverse position taken by the Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church against Unification.

Yet its coming is not without deep emotion. For seventy years the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky has been the beneficiary of sympathetic friends who now go into different jurisdictional conferences in the North. It is feared that the contacts with them will lessen. The intimate personal association of men in a small conference will also be missed. While we will meet again, new faces and new interests will change the spirit of the gatherings. However, our conviction for the need of Unification is so great that we firmly believe that any effort to keep Kentucky Methodism as it is will result in loss to the whole. We learn anew through this sacrifice what Jesus meant when he said, "He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." We want Kentucky Methodism to be a spiritual force in the life of our state, and as we bring our three institutions valued at $1,500,000; churches valued at $1,841,950, to join the united Methodist stream, we pray as our stream merges that

"Blessed river of salvation
Pursue thine onward way
Flow thou to every nation
Nor in thy richness stay."