VI. UNDERGIRDING THE MISSIONARY THRUST

As the General Conference of 1926 approached, many had become aware of the cumbersome nature of the Board of Missions. There were fourteen coordinate secretaries and two treasurers with no directing head. Edmund F. Cook, who was in charge of missionary education in the Sunday schools, asked Cram and Clark to discuss the situation with him. They drafted a new constitution, providing for a general secretary and two secretaries for each department, and they agreed to work for the election of Cram as general secretary.

The General Conference adopted the plan prepared by the three men, and Clark was named assistant general secretary of the Board of Missions in charge of literature. The new constitution provided for an annual General Missionary Council and for a missionary cultivation campaign in January and February of each year. Clark was placed in charge of both while still carrying responsibility for promoting the district missionary institutes.

The January-February Cultivation Movement, with its freewill offering for missions, secured important results, including the raising of $2,500,000 the first quadrennium. By 1930, however, the boards which had not been sharing in the offering induced the General Conference to change the plan. Henceforth there was to be an annual Kingdom Extension offering and the proceeds were to be distributed among the several agencies of the church.

In the first year the Kingdom Extension offering fell far below the previous missionary offerings and the assessment income. It decreased year by year and the total received during this second quadrennium was only $640,000 or one-fourth as much as the previous collection, leaving the Board of Missions with a heavy indebtedness. By 1935 it was dropped. Clark felt that this experience showed that people would give extra money for missions when the cause was properly presented. And the Kingdom Extension movement also resulted in an impact through missionary education. Eventually the movement provided the basis for planning the various crusades across the church that Clark later helped to plan and direct.

A Plan for Popularizing Missions

Clark also helped to set up a General Missionary Council that brought together thousands of Methodists in meetings for information and inspiration. The first of these was at Memphis in 1929. Clark had arranged for Wladislaw Dropiowski of Poland to speak; he had been director of a government school in Poland, was converted by the Methodist missionaries, and became the head of the school and orphanage at Warsaw. In 1933 the Council met at Augusta, Georgia, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Paine College, an institution for Negroes operated jointly by the Method-
ist Episcopal Church, South, and the Colored (later Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church. The 1936 session was at Washington, where both the Japanese and Chinese ambassadors were among the speakers.

In 1932 the mission leaders felt it was necessary to supplement the flagging Kingdom Extension movement. Elmer T. Clark and Bishop Arthur J. Moore developed plans for a campaign that was called the Bishops' Crusade. It was proposed to send teams of speakers from coast to coast and hold mass meetings in the largest cities with addresses, conferences, discussions, and financial collections.

The first swing across the country was in October, 1933, and the meetings were held from New Orleans to California. Everywhere the crowds overflowed the largest churches. The speakers were changed but Bishop Moore and Clark made the whole itinerary. At San Francisco these two men rested a week at the Mark Hopkins Hotel and there the addresses given by Bishop Moore were enlarged and soon published in a small study book called The Sound of Trumpets. A quarter of a million copies were sold.

The second campaign opened at Staunton, Virginia, on January 9, 1934. The speakers moved through Virginia, the Carolinas, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona and California, closing at Berkeley on February 15th. Twenty-five cities were visited in six weeks. The crowds were enormous. At Columbia, South Carolina, it was necessary to rent the great city auditorium. Bishop Moore and Clark made the entire tour.

In 1937 the Crusade was primarily to pay the debt of $785,000 which had been incurred by the Board of Missions. Bishop Moore was in Africa but he was called home by the College of Bishops to participate as the principal speaker.

_Aldersgate Commemoration_

In 1938 it was known as the Aldersgate Commemoration because it was the two hundredth anniversary of the “heart warming” experience of John Wesley on Aldersgate Street in London. It was also the one-hundredth anniversary of the sending of the first Southern Methodist missionaries to China, these being Charles Taylor and Benjamin Jenkins. These two anniversaries were combined and an extensive educational campaign was carried out. In the absence of Bishop Moore the movement was led largely by Bishop A. Frank Smith. Two teams took the field. One went westward under the leadership of Bishops Paul B. Kern and W. N. Ainsworth, while Bishop Smith led another through twenty-four cities of the East and South. Clark travelled with the eastern group.

Dinners were arranged in all communities at which money was raised for the missionary debt. Bishop Moore had returned from Africa and a speech by him was carried by radio to these dinner
meetings. At the end of the campaign the Bishops reported $402,000 had been raised and soon thereafter Dr. Cram announced that the indebtedness of the Board had been liquidated.

The Aldersgate Commemoration culminated in a meeting of the General Missionary Council at Savannah. Clark promoted the commemoration in both branches of American Methodism, prepared a book of plans, and published Mr. Frank O. Salisbury's portrait of John Wesley as a full-color poster for the churches. At the Savannah meeting, Governor Gordon Browning of Tennessee and Governor E. D. Rivers of Georgia, both Methodist laymen, were among the speakers. So was Merton S. Rice of Detroit and many other notables. The addresses were published in a volume called *What Happened at Aldersgate*. Clark wrote the first chapter and later expanded it into the book called *The Warm Heart of Wesley*.

In 1939 the Crusade was called the China Rehabilitation Campaign. It was designed to raise funds for the mission in China which had suffered greatly from the war. Again Bishop Moore and Clark worked together. The team started at San Francisco in March and moved eastward, visiting twenty-five cities and ending in mid-April. The two leaders were accompanied by three Chinese: Y. C. Yang, President of Soochow University, Miss Hsiu-li Yui, a youth leader, and Z. T. Kaung, a minister, and later a bishop. Kaung was the pastor of the famous Soong family and had led Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to Christ and married him to Mayling Soong, the youngest of the daughters.

Thus ended the great Crusades in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Following unification of American Methodism in 1939, Clark was called upon to organize two other Crusades in the united Church, because of his extensive experience in these earlier movements.
VII. AUTHOR AND EDITOR OF PROLIFIC PROPORTIONS

We have already noted the extensive writing and editing done by Elmer T. Clark—ever since his serving as war correspondent in 1917-18. As one surveys the multitude of books and articles that he wrote, one is not surprised that Who's Who continued year after year in its sketch of him to label him simply as “author.”

In addition to writings already mentioned, many more continued to flow from Clark’s pen. He had enrolled in George Peabody College for Teachers and had received the Master of Arts degree in 1927. He continued to take courses until he had finished all the work and passed all the examinations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. His dissertation on Psychology of Religious Awakening was accepted. Since it was necessary to submit the dissertation in printed form, Clark entered into a contract with the Macmillan Company for the publication of the manuscript as one of their books. Plans for publishing the book moved along quickly and suddenly it was scheduled to appear before the commencement in 1929 at which the degree was to be conferred.

Degree or Book?

When the Peabody College officials learned this, Clark was informed that the degree could not be conferred unless publication was deferred. The publishers had the book in type and were not willing to slow up their plans to use the book quickly. Clark felt the attitude of the college officials was unreasonable. However, he said, “Since I already held three doctorates and had received the educational advantage from the work done, I decided that a Macmillan publication was worth more than the degree.” His judgment was vindicated, for the work was acclaimed and widely used in this and other countries.

Clark also made church magazine history in his handling of The Missionary Voice. During the depression the magazine lost half its subscriptions in two years. Then the new Publishing Agent, John W. Barton, notified the staff that printing costs would be increased $750 per month. The magazine, therefore, faced extinction. W. G. Cram and E. H. Rawlings, the editor, asked Clark to take over the business management and save it, promising him a free hand. He agreed to do what he could and began to study the problem.

Saving the Voice

Clark tells how he handled the situation:

“I first interviewed Dr. Barton, who said the price was too low and the Publishing House was losing money. Furthermore, he said we had not given all our printing to the Publishing House and this he did not like. I told him we accepted the lowest bids, and he re-
plied that the House should do all the printing regardless of price. When I said we might find it necessary to have the magazine printed elsewhere, Barton said I would not dare to take it away, since an official Methodist publication had never been printed elsewhere, and if I carried out my ‘threat’ he would report it to the next General Conference. I replied that I did not think that body would require the Board of Missions, in its straitened financial circumstances, to pay the Publishing House more than other printers would charge; at any rate I would keep a complete record and report to the General Conference the exact amount we had saved by seeking lower prices.

“I went to Chicago and consulted two great printing concerns. The Cuneo Company offered a contract at the price we had been paying, and after consulting Dr. Cram by telephone, I signed a contract for twelve months and moved the printing of the periodical to Chicago. This caused something of a flurry, but an explanation won general approval.

“But something more was needed, for the lost circulation must be regained, and this seemed almost impossible during the depression. Other publications were reducing their size and otherwise retrenching. I resolved to take an opposite course and give our readers more instead of less. So in January 1930, I added a rotogravure picture section of eight pages, and the following November I put on an art cover printed in full color. At once the circulation began to increase under our intensive promotion efforts.

“Then in 1932 I changed the name to World Outlook. The women of the Church had always been the magazine’s main supporters, and they had secured nearly all the subscriptions. The name Missionary Voice, in the thinking of our Methodists, was connected with the Woman’s Missionary Society, although it was intended as the missionary periodical of the whole Church. We launched an annual subscription campaign through the district missionary institutes as well as through the women’s organization. Soon the previous circulation had been passed, and my belief that the people would pay for a better publication had been justified.

“In 1936 B. A. Whitmore became Publishing Agent and he at once came to see me about the printing contract. I told him I was eager to return the magazine to the Publishing House, and had always been, but could not pay a premium to do so. He said that could not be expected and that he would meet any price made by others. This was gratifying, and I at once advised the Chicago printers that the periodical would be brought back to Nashville. In a few months the Methodist Publishing House again began printing the magazine.”

In 1938 Clark was elected secretary in charge of literature and editor of the magazine. In 1939 it had become self-supporting and
had a cash reserve of $12,000. When Clark turned it over to his successor in 1952, it had a reserve of $200,000.

Of The Making of Books

We have noted that Elmer wrote the first annual mission study book in 1924, and others from time to time. In the years when he was not the author he was the editor. Among mission study books that he wrote were these:

1924  Healing Ourselves
1925  The Task Ahead
1926  Thy Kingdom Come
1929  The Church and The World Parish

And, in addition to the annual study books, across the years he wrote many other books and booklets in the interpretive and promotional field. Among these, including those already mentioned, are these titles:

1915  The New Evangelism
1915  The Church Efficiency Movement
1919  The Centenary Book of Facts
1920  Educational Survey of the M. E. Church, South
1920  Talking Points on Christian Education
1923  The Book of Home Mission Specials
1924  The Rural Church in the South
1924  The Negro and His Religion
1924  The Latin Immigrant in the South
1925  The Rebirth of Protestantism in Europe
1925  The Task Ahead (Missionary Crisis of the Church)
1925  Thy Kingdom Come (Stewardship and Missions)
1927  What's the Matter in China?
1940  Methodism Marches on: The Story of Methodist Evangelism Around the World
1942  Latin America, U.S.A. (with Harry C. Spencer)
1943  The Chiangs of China
1956  The World Methodist Movement (with Ivan Lee Holt)
1966  The Methodist Evangel

In addition, he wrote three books that can only be put into a miscellaneous category. These are:

1919  Social Studies of the War
1929  The Psychology of Religious Awakening
1937  The Small Sects in America

The latter book has had wide use, selling about 15,000 in cloth and almost 30,000 in a paperback edition.
Finally, he produced a wide range of titles in the general area of church, and especially Methodist, history. These range all the way from small pamphlets to a two-hundred page annual conference history:

1912  One Hundred Years of New Madrid Methodism  
1950  The Warm Heart of Wesley  
1952  An Album of Methodist History  
1957  Charles Wesley, the Singer of the Evangelical Revival  
1959  Francis Asbury  
1960  Charles Wesley  
1960  I'll Praise My Maker, Isaac Watts  
1960  Arthur James Moore, World Evangelist  
1962  The Wesley Family  
1963  Junaluska Jubilee, A Short History of the Lake Junaluska Assembly  
1966  Methodism in Western North Carolina  

As an Editor of Books

He also served as editor of the following volumes:

1929  The Missionary Imperative  
1932  The Book of Daily Devotion (edited with W. G. Cram)  
1936  Methodism Revitalized  
1938  What Happened at Aldersgate  
1940  Missionary Yearbook of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1927 to 1940 (including annual report of the Board of Missions)  
1952  Who's Who in The Methodist Church  

We noted above the title of Book of Daily Devotion that Clark edited. Mrs. W. G. Cram selected the scripture quotations for the book, and her husband's name was listed as one of the editors. A committee was formed in the Board of Missions to study the possibility of a quarterly devotional publication, and Clark, as a member of the committee, was asked to have some dummies prepared as guides. Grover C. Emmons had been appointed to edit the publication, but a name for the quarterly had not been chosen. Emmons attended a Crusade meeting in Richmond, Virginia, where John William Smith spoke on the “Upper Room” as a devotional topic. Emmons said, “That is the title,” and it is claimed that he then wired Elmer Clark, who brought out the first copy of The Upper Room. The first year the booklet had a circulation of 100,000, and it was on its way. J. Manning Potts, who later served sixteen years as editor of The Upper Room, happened to be the conference mission-
ary secretary who chaired the meeting in Richmond, Virginia, at which the title was chosen.

The Outstanding Editorial Task

Elmer T.'s most outstanding editorial accomplishment, and the work most often referred to by Methodist historians, is the annotated edition of the *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*. Clark served as editor-in-chief, collaborating with his long-time friend and colleague, Jacob Simpson Payton, on the two volumes containing the *Journal*, while at the same time J. Manning Potts edited the volume containing Letters of Francis Asbury. The three men carried on a heavy correspondence, met frequently, and kept in close touch during the years required to complete the three-volume work. Elmer T. and his staff checked every note sent in by area editors, rewrote many of the footnotes, and at the end compiled the index and read the proof for the two volumes of the *Journal*. The pages were printed by the Epworth Press in London, while the Abingdon Press in this country did the binding. As is the case in any undertaking of such large proportion, there were some errors and there was criticism, but by and large the three-volume work has been acclaimed as a worthy addition to the historical record of American Methodism.

Clark wrote about some of the difficulties of this enterprise in these words:

"Asbury's letters had never been collected and the manuscript of his famous *Journal* had been lost in a fire which destroyed the Publishing House (Methodist Book Concern) in 1836. However, Asbury himself had published extracts from his *Journal* in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1789 and 1790, and Francis Hollingsworth had published the whole *Journal* in 1821 and it was reprinted in 1852 and again about two years later without date.

"Hollingsworth evidently did little editorial work on the *Journal* other than transcribing it. His volumes had no notes or annotations, numerous dates were erroneous, and some sections were out of chronological order. Asbury used hundreds of abbreviations and initials for places and people and none of these were identified. It was decided that all such omissions and errors should be corrected insofar as possible. The method of doing this was intricate. In the case of an individual who was mentioned by initials only, for example, the first step was to determine the county or place in which he lived and seek to identify him by the United States Census reports or the court house records. In this manner it was possible to identify hundreds and even thousands of persons and places.

"Dr. J. Manning Potts was asked to assume responsibility for collecting and editing the *Letters* while Dr. Jacob S. Payton collabo-
orated with me in annotating the *Journal*. A group of fifteen Regional Research Editors was formed and hundreds of others gave local assistance. All notes were sent to me and I edited them and made the final annotations. The work required about seven years and the three-volume *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* was in 1958 published simultaneously in Great Britain and the United States."

**The Secret of His Productivity**

Clark’s secret of such voluminous writing may lie partly in his early work as a newspaper correspondent. Speed was one of the requirements for such writing, and he evidently carried that trait over into his later writings. Words evidently came to him easily. He wrote in longhand, using a giant-size fountain pen. On many projects his wife, Mary Alva, would transcribe his manuscript.

Furthermore, he evidently liked to write. And writing may have helped him to fill a good many sleepless hours, for he was subject to insomnia. He took writing seriously; his wife’s sister, Mrs. Cecil D. Jones, has commented on hearing him talk about the responsibility a writer has every time he puts his pen to paper.

This journalistic ability of his was not unrecognized in his lifetime. At the 1952 General Conference, which met at San Francisco, he was presented with two first awards by the Associated Church Press of the United States and Canada for excellence of *World Outlook*. He also received first prize from the Southern Graphic Arts Society for a booklet he had issued on Puerto Rico. The A. N. Marquis Company of *Who’s Who* fame published a new volume called *Who Knows and What*, in which he was listed as an authority on church history, the psychology of religion and the history of Methodism.