POWER TO THE PEOPLE: GEORGE RICHARD CROOKS, THE METHODIST, AND LAY REPRESENTATION IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

by Kenneth E. Rowe

Methodism may have begun as a lay liberation movement, but by the middle of the nineteenth century, the healthy partnership of clergy and layfolk in ministry which turned England and early America upside down had dissolved. An increasingly professionalized and residential clergy stifled lay initiative and action. As a result a series of explosive lay revolts took place in American Methodism as laypersons sought increased participation in the life of their church, first in the 1820's and again in the 1850's and 1860's.

The heroes and villains of the first great lay revolt in the 1820's are all more or less well known. All of the standard accounts of American Methodism gave them their due. However, the good guys and bad guys of the second great lay revolt in the 1860's are less well known and recognized and the standard history of this phase of Methodism's lay liberation movement has not yet been written. During its mid-nineteenth-century phase one man stands out as unquestioned leader--George Richard Crooks.

For more than twenty years it was Crooks who nurtured the movement in its first flower in Philadelphia in the 1850's, obtained a rehearing for an old and unpopular cause, organized public meetings, founded and edited a vigorous independent newspaper in New York to advocate lay rights, made his New York editorial office the command post for the movement, revived flagging spirits and kept the movement alive through the difficult war years, inspired the movement's friends and bore the brunt of its critics, and, in the end (1872) led the reformers to limited success.

Phase Two of the movement for lay representation in the conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church began in Philadelphia in the Winter of 1851. The leaven of lay rights reform, dormant for two decades, began to rise. The exodus of the Methodist Protestants in 1830 did not rid the mother church of all "lay liberationists" any more than the subsequent secession of the Wesleyans in 1842 rid the church of all aboli-
tionists. The surprising fact is that renewed agitation on the subject of lay rights in the church was so long postponed.

In the fall of 1851 George Richard Crooks was serving as pastor of fashionable Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church in his native Philadelphia. The young pastor—then only twenty-nine—was fresh from a nine-year teaching stint at his alma mater, Dickinson College, and already had authored with his Dickinson colleague, John McClintock, two textbooks—one in Latin (1846) and the other in Greek (1848). This teacher turned pastor busied himself listening to the laity. Detecting a desire for increased participation in the life of their church, Crooks invited a group of Philadelphia laymen to meet in his church in November of 1851 to discuss the matter and circulated minutes of the meeting to friends.

1 For an account of Crooks' experiences at Dickinson, see Charles C. Sellers, Dickinson College, A History (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 207-08, 222, 225, 452, 509. For more extensive biographical sketches see William F. Anderson, "George Richard Crooks," Methodist Review (N.Y.), 80/3 (May, 1898), 345-58; Christian Advocate (N.Y.), 72/9 (March 4, 1897), 137-38, 144; and New York Annual Conference, M. E. Church, Minutes, 1897, 107-11.


Oddly enough, one of the sparks that ignited the fire of lay rights reform in the 1850's was generated out of the agonizing schism of 1844 when American Methodism divided North and South. Litigation with regard to dividing the assets of the prosperous Methodist Book Concern lingered on. Nine days before the meeting of lay reformers in Crooks' church, the "property question" was finally decided in the federal courts and the transcript published.³ The legal debates before the courts connected with the controversy which ordered division of assets North and South, brought up the question of church government. The chief counsel for the plaintiffs (Methodist Episcopal Church, South), the Honorable Reverdy Johnson of Baltimore,⁴ affirmed that Methodist preachers, North and South, were "aristocrats," labeled the government as an "aristocracy" in which the laity had no participation, and predicted that the church will be "compelled" to alter her constitution in this matter.⁵

Judge Johnson's words did not go unnoticed. Two lead articles entitled "Ministerial Aristocracy" and "Lay Representation" soon appeared in the church's chief weekly--the Christian Advocate (New York). The


⁴ The chief legal fame of Reverdy Johnson (1796-1876) rested on his ability as a constitutional lawyer, having participated in several celebrated cases, including the Cyrus McCormick reaper patent case in 1854 and two years later the Dred Scott case. He also served in the U.S. Senate and as Attorney General under President Zachary Taylor, 1849-1850. See DAB, 10/112-14.

⁵ U.S. Circuit Court (second circuit), The Methodist Church Property Case, Report of the Suit, 331.
author was none other than Dr. Thomas E. Bond, Senior, of Baltimore, veteran and victor in the battle with the Methodist reformers in the 1820's. After accusing Judge Johnson of meddling in the internal affairs of a duly constituted church, Bond proceeded to answer the charge. Far from being "aristocrats," he argued vehemently, Methodist preachers were "elected" by the laity of the church, since recommendations for licenses to preach, the first step toward ordination, came from the laity. Far from having no part in the government of the church, the laity had, said Bond, the "omnipotent, fearful power of destroying the itinerancy," and thereby the government, by ceasing to elect the preachers. Dr. Bond then proceeded in his second article to his main point--so decisive in the debates of the 1820's—that the divine call to the ministry carried with it an equally divine right of ministers to exclusive government of the church. Chiefly from the enormous expense it would incur and the advantage he felt it would give to the richer portions of the church over the poorer, he concluded lay representation would be immensely impractical.6

Judge Johnson's subtle jabs and Dr. Bond's indignant response did much to bring the question of lay rights and participation in the church's conferences again before the Methodist people. Within weeks a full-blown church fight was raging. The storm center was Philadelphia, where a group of clergy (including Crooks) and lay folk gathered to plan strategy for what they knew would be a long and difficult battle. A call went out to all "male members" in the area to meet in

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6 Thomas Emerson Bond, Sr., "Ministerial Aristocracy," Christian Advocate (N.Y.) [hereafter cited CA], 27/5 (Jan. 29, 1852), 17; "Lay Representation," CA, 27/6 (Feb. 5, 1852), 21. For editor George Peck's recollections of the impact of these articles, see his autobiography, The Life and Times of George Peck, Written by Himself (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1874), 330. Bond (1782-1856), physician and editor from Baltimore, was one of Methodism's most distinguished laymen. In 1827 he penned his Appeal to the Methodists, which fairly squelched the reform movement. A vigorous supporter of "Methodism as it is," he was twice elected editor of the New York Christian Advocate (1840-1848 and 1852 until his death).
the spacious Union Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, December 11, 1851. Confident that

...lay representation in [the church's] councils would more certainly secure a division of the responsibilities between the ministry and laity, and thereby arouse to greater activity and usefulness the Church--greatly increase its future prosperity--and secure the honor and glory of God

the rally resolved to call a General Convention to be held in the same city on the third day of March, 1852,

to consist of delegates from the various stations and circuits within the bounds of our church, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning the General Conference to be held in Boston in May next for such action in their body assembled as will secure the introduction of Lay Delegation into our Conferences.7

Twenty influential laymen were appointed as a planning committee with young Crooks as one of their advisors.

Although the convention specifically requested the editors of the Methodist press to publish the proceedings and call, editor George Peck of the Christian Advocate (New York) refused to publish a full account of the convention or its resolutions. Peck defended the silence of the church's chief official paper on what soon came to be known as the "Philadelphia movement" in an editorial in the December 25th issue:

"We cannot lend the Advocate to the furtherance of a movement for revolutionizing the government of the

7 [Abel Stevens], "Methodist Movement in Philadelphia," Zion's Herald (Boston), 22/53 (Dec. 31, 1851), 210. Includes account of the proceedings and complete text of preamble and four resolutions. Although Stevens was only thirty-six in 1851, he had been editor of Zion's Herald for thirteen years. In frail health most of his life, he was yet a prolific writer who would later join Crooks on the editorial staff of The Methodist.
Not only did editor Peck refuse to publish the address, petitions and resolutions of the Lay Convention as news, but he refused to print the call for the spring convention as a paid advertisement. 9

Determined to spread the word, the Philadelphia reformers banded together to form their own independent newspaper. The Philadelphia Christian Advocate was launched in the early Spring of 1852 with a layman, W. P. Tilden, in the editorial chair. Friend and foe alike were welcomed to the columns of the new paper. Both sides vied for space. Eighteen months later the new weekly was discontinued for lack of subscribers at a loss to the proprietors of some $3,000. 10

So profound had been the opposition to the radicalism of the 1820's that the new reformers had to proceed with great care so as not to provoke dangerous internal disturbances in the church. Seeking to profit from the experience of the past, they called on two leading figures from the debates of the 1820's for counsel—

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10 William S. Stockton, "Correction of certain errors in 'A Short History of Lay Representation in the M.E. Church,' May 4, 1859." Clipping from unidentified May 1859 issue of The Methodist, a short-lived reform newspaper in New York edited by W. B. Barber in Drew University Library. The writer has been unable to locate a file of this paper or its predecessor, the Layman's Advocate. It is regrettable that only one issue of the Philadelphia Christian Advocate appears to have survived, 2/34 (Aug. 30, 1853) in the historical collection of Old St. George's Church in Philadelphia.
William S. Stockton and Thomas E. Bond. William Stockton, a Philadelphia layman who helped launch the first campaign for lay rights in 1821 and who set the precedent for establishing an independent Methodist paper, agreed to advise the reformers (advice not always taken) and contributed frequently to the newly launched weekly. Dr. Bond, a Baltimore layman, who virtually concluded the first campaign with the masterful report against lay rights he helped write for the General Conference of 1828, agreed to meet with the laymen. But he was not converted and quickly became the leader of the opposition.

Sensing the new movement as a "frivolous impulse toward novelty...leading inevitably to the decline and fall of Methodism," Bond hastened to New York where he spent several weeks in February with the church's book editor, rushing into print his *The Economy of Methodism Illustrated and Defended*. The new volume consisted mainly of reprints of the choicest bits of ammunition he fired in the press against the lay reformers in the 1820's, along with a brief but biting commentary on the Philadelphia Movement.

After three months of preparatory effort, 170 laymen representing thirty-three churches in several annual conferences, met in Philadelphia on March 3 and 4. After electing William H. Allen, President of Girard College, as chairman, the convention drafted and adopted two strongly worded resolutions to the forthcoming General Conference. In addition to calling for equal lay representation in the annual conferences as well as in the General Conference, the petitioners

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11 "The Reformers of 1852" he wrote in the margin of his copy of *The Wesleyan Repository* "have not used as plain language to the General Conference now in session at Boston, May 1852. We took the ground of right...We surely knew the ground we stood upon. What is not a right is not expedient to ask for." handwritten annotation on his article "On Church Government," in his copy of *The Wesleyan Repository* (Trenton, N.J.) 1/8 (July 19, 1831), 137, in Drew University Library.

included a detailed plan for implementation. A circular containing an address to the people, possibly written by Crooks, along with the petitions was widely circulated in pamphlet form and in the press.

Affirming at the outset to be "very peaceable members of the Church [who] would as soon harm their mothers as her," the reformers set aside for the moment the question of "abstract right." Instead they chose to argue their case solely on the grounds of expediency.

Men will exert themselves most zealously for that in which they feel individually the deepest interest, and that their feeling of interest in any institution will be more intense, as their sense of responsibility for its welfare is stronger....If you would make men vigilant, active and industrious, in any branch of business, you give them a partnership in the concern.

All history proved it was dangerous for one group (in this case the clergy) to draw up rules for another. Above all, the reformers argued

the [proposed] change is in harmony with the spirit of Christianity, with the progressive movements of the age, and especially with the ideas of the American people.13

This time editor Peck opened the columns of the Christian Advocate and gave a full account of the

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13 "Address to the Ministers and Members of the M.E. Church," CA, 27/17 (April 22, 1852), 68. Keeping up with the Southern Methodists also was a factor in the reformers' minds. In December of 1851, Tennessee was the first of several annual conferences of the M.E. Church, South to adopt a plan of limited lay representation in the annual conferences by creating lay finance committees. For full text of Tennessee Conference financial plan, see "Lay Representation," CA, 27/15 (April 8, 1852), 58. This plan was endorsed by that church's 1854 General Conference (Journal, 215). The same plan was given stronger emphasis in 1858 (Journal, 555).
convention and its address. 14 How far this shift of opinion affected his failure to be reelected editor by the General Conference later that Spring is not clear, but we do know that the most able and uncompromising opponent of the movement, Dr. Bond, was brought out of retirement to take Peck's place in the editorial chair. 15

To counteract the effect of the Philadelphia movement, laity "in favor of sustaining the Church as it is" met in St. George's Church in Philadelphia on March 15 to plan a counter-offensive. An open letter to the laity of the church containing a call for a convention of the loyal opposition to be held in Philadelphia May 5 was adopted and circulated. 16 One hundred and sixty-five contented laymen gathered on the eve of the General Conference and empowered their biggest gun, Dr. Bond himself, to preside, to deliver the keynote address, and to draft a petition on their behalf to the General Conference assuring the "Reverend fathers and brethren" that the vast majority of layfolk were "entirely satisfied" with the church as it was. Bond put it bluntly:

Having inherited the Church from our ancestors in its purity and efficiency, and having enjoyed its unalloyed advantages ourselves, it is our duty and privilege to transmit it, in its beauty and strength,

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14 "The Philadelphia Convention," CA, 27/11 (March 11, 1852), 42, 43. For convention address see CA 27/17 and 18 (April 22 and 29, 1852), 68 and 72. Along with accounts of the conventions and its address in two installments, Peck published a series of five editorials on the movement, March 11-April 8 (pp. 42, 46, 50, 54, and 58). The editor of the Methodist Protestant, Ely Yeates Reese, exhilarated at the prospect of the conversion of the mother church to reform principles, prophesied "Lay delegation is a certain futurity in the M.E. Church." "Laymen's Convention of the M.E. Church," Methodist Protestant, 19/6 (Feb. 7, 1852), 23.

15 M.E. Church, General Conference, 1852, Journal, 80.

16 "Meeting of Laymen in Philadelphia," CA, 27/13 (March 25, 1852), 51. A four-page Reply to the Address to the Ministers and Members of the M.E. Church by W. H. Allen and Others, Committee, &C., dated April 22, 1853 and signed by twenty-five laymen was released to the press and circulated in pamphlet form.
to those who shall come after us....We must guard it with the utmost carefulness if we would not be recreant to God, and traitors to the world.17

Meanwhile in Boston the bishops in their address to the General Conference, although not mentioning lay representation, talked about the dangers of reform.18 Unlike the bishops, the preachers felt compelled to act forthrightly on the issue. Numerous petitions both for and against the reform were referred to a large Committee on Lay Delegation chaired by Matthew Simpson. After considering the petitions and arguments the Committee concluded unanimously that such a change would not be in the best interests of the church, that the laity had already ample opportunities to serve their church, and that most of them were opposed to the change. The committee's report was overwhelmingly accepted by a vote of 171 to 3, which left no doubt where the preachers themselves stood in 1852.19

During the middle 1850's Laymen's Associations were organized in several annual conferences and some succeeded in persuading their clerical brethren to pass resolutions favorable to the reform.20 An even better omen came in the Spring of 1856 when, upon the death of Dr. Bond, a new editor, Abel Stevens, was appointed

17 Thomas J. Bond, Sr., To the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Now in Session, in the City of Boston [Philadelphia: 1852], 7. For an account of the Bay meeting of the Bishops' opposition, see "Lay Representation in the M.E. Church, etc., 71," The Methodist, 4/28 (July 17, 1863), 221. See also Edward L. Brinckhouse, History of Methodist Reform (Baltimore: Board of Publication of the Methodist Protestant Church, 1871), 173.
18 E.K. Church, General Conference, 1852, Journal, 159.
19 Ibid., verso, 30; text, 147-88. See also Matthew Simpson's recommendations in A Hundred Years of Methodism in New York (Stamford and New York, 1884), 126-31, and George Bond's notice in the two The Late and Times of Rev. George Bond Written by Himself (New York: Selvick and Phillips, 1863), 11.
20 A Message from a Committee of Members of the M.E. Conference held in the City of Philadelphia, March 8, 1856, of the Minutes, Resolutions, and Business of the General Conference of the M.E. Church, 1856, together with an Address of the Committee on Lay Delegation, by Abel Stevens, in the Minutes, Resolutions, and Business of the General Conference of the M.E. Church, 1856, 12.
to head the Christian Advocate (New York) even though it was known that he was a friend of the reformers. 21 But many veterans of the ministry and also of the laity, remembering the disturbances and secessions of the Methodist Protestants and the Wesleyans, denounced the new movement as fraught with disaster.

The Philadelphia laymen presented a petition on the subject to the General Conference of 1856 meeting in Indianapolis, but the great debate on slavery crowded out the issue of lay rights. On the next to the last day of the Conference a brief report on lay representation suggested that the reform was "demanded neither by the exigencies of the case, nor by the voice of the Church." 22

Four years later in the Spring of 1860, prior to the next General Conference, laymen favoring lay representation again met in convention in Philadelphia, March 27. In his keynote address, William H. Allen, again president of the convention, decried the simple view of the Methodist layman as one who prays, pays, and obeys.

In the educational, the tract, the missionary, and publication enterprises of the Church [he reminded his lay brothers, we] must be content to work and to give, while others direct and manage. So far as any responsibility is concerned, [we] are expected to bury all talents except those of gold and silver, and even those [we] must not use according to [our] own judgment, nor in any manner direct or control their use by others, after they have passed into the Lord's treasury. In the great movements of the Church--which are carried on with [our] own money--[our] learning, [our] intelligence, [our] counsel, [our] social and public influence are rejected and ignored.

After a generous dose of church history, citing Mosheim and Lord Peter King, President Allen concluded:

The interests of our Church demand that the government retrace its steps, and return to a form more in accordance with primitive usages than the present; and that the admission of representatives from the laity to an equal share with the clergy in the legislative assemblies of our Church will promote its harmony, prosperity, and peace, give a new impulse to its progress, and elevate the people without depressing the clergy.

Convinced that "forms of Church government are human institutions, and may be altered or amended to suit the exigencies of different times," representatives of twenty-three Philadelphia area churches drafted still another memorial. Five thousand copies of the address and memorial were printed and distributed.23

Later that Spring in Buffalo it was the bishops themselves who brought up the subject of lay representation in their address to the General Conference. Bishop Matthew Simpson persuaded his colleagues to include a paragraph on lay representation in their Episcopal Address. He wrote the section himself—a fact which the delegates generally knew.24

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23 A Memorial, op.cit., 6, 10, 11. For an account of the convention, plus the text of the petition to the General Conference and resolutions, see "Lay Delegation," CA, 35/15 (April 12,1860), 60. Dr. Francis Hodgson took up the fallen mantle of Dr. Bond and wrote three stinging articles attacking the memorial: "Lay Delegation: The Memorial," CA, 35/17-19 (April 26-May 10, 1860), 68, 70, 76. William H. Allen, faculty colleague with Crooks at Dickinson now President of Girard College in Philadelphia, countered with two articles: "Lay Representation," CA, 35/22-23 (May 31-June 7, 1860), 88, 92. Hodgson also published a chilly article "Lay Representation," in the Methodist Quarterly Review (N.Y.), 42/2 (April, 1860), 228-45. He averred that from the time of Constantine the sharing of ecclesiastical responsibility with the laity was the source of untold woe and extended his congratulations to the M.E. Church that, guided by the providence of God, she had shunned this iniquity! Eight years later he was still at it: "Lay Delegation," CA, 43/1-2 (Jan. 2-9, 1868), 2 and 10.

We are of the opinion [said the bishops] that lay
delegation might be introduced in one form into the
General Conference with safety, and perhaps advantage,
that form being a separate house....25

After considerable discussion, the Conference declared
itself ready to sanction the change if the preachers
and people desired it. To determine the mind of the
church the bishops were requested to present a plan for
equal representation of clergy and laity in the General
Conference to the annual and quarterly conferences
prior to the next General Conference.26 This would
be the first such popular referendum taken in American
Methodism. "The powerful speeches made in favor of
the change [in Buffalo, Crooks later wrote] took both
its friends and opponents by surprise."27 The re-
formers took heart, but saw they had their work cut
out for them if the referendum was to pass.

Crooks had transferred his ministerial membership
to the New York East Conference in 1857 and quickly
associated himself with New York laymen sympathetic
to the Philadelphia movement. Immediately after the
General Conference in 1860 they took counsel, rented
a storefront on Nassau Street, and established an in-
dependent weekly to convert the electorate. It was
called simply The Methodist and Crooks himself became
the editor-in-chief. Publication began July 14, 1860
with a subscription price of two dollars per year,
fifty cents more than its chief rival on Mulberry Street.

To boost circulation, handsome premiums were
offered--a hundred dollar melodion for 100 annual sub-
scribers, a fifty dollar sewing machine for 50. Four-
teen annual subscriptions merited a seven-volume set
of Wesley's Works valued at ten dollars. Even gathering
two subscriptions entitled one to choose a popular re-
ligious book valued at one dollar.28

26 Ibid., 446.
27 [Crooks], "Reasons for this Publication," Methodist, 1:2
(July 21, 1860), 4.
28 [Crooks], "Inducements for Immediate Subscriptions," Methodist,
1:17 (Nov. 3, 1860), 133.
The immediate provocation for founding the journal had been the absence of a free press in the church. The time had come, said Crooks in the first issue, for "a larger, more thoroughly edited, and more independent organ of Methodism than its established journals." "It is [to be] the people's paper, set in motion by the money of the people, and to be sustained by their patronage." 29

Two issues were singled out for special attention from the very beginning—slavery and lay representation.

Inasmuch as the subject of Lay Representation has been formally presented by the General Conference to the people for consideration [wrote the editor] The Methodist will treat it as a question of moment to the denomination, and will open its columns for its temperate and loyal discussion. 30

Despite talk of moderation and loyalty and promises of premiums, preachers and layfolk loyal to the official Christian Advocates would have nothing to do with this interloper in Methodist journalism or with any movement it sponsored. Some said its advocacy of lay representation was a mere cover for gaining power to overthrow the church's position on slavery. No flood of subscriptions came—only a trickle. Crooks was deeply disappointed and troubled over the opposition to the newly founded paper:

To tell the truth [he later wrote] freedom of thought and speech even on matters not of the faith, was grudgingly allowed in those days. It is strange that the founding of a newspaper, one of the commonest occurrences of American life, should bring upon its founders so much detraction, but so it was....Old prejudices were shocked, old traditions were threatened, the distribution of powers in the church was to be changed, the ministers, honest to the core, and persuaded that the settlement of 1828 was both Scriptural and final, were amazed to hear it questioned by brother ministers [and layfolk]. The itinerancy had, in many minds, taken the rank of a divine institution, and the

29 [Crooks, Editor's note], Methodist, 1/1 (July 14, 1860), 8.
30 Ibid.
saying, as old as Bishop Asbury, that itinerancy and lay delegation are incompatible with each other, was repeated with as much confidence as if it were one of the verities of Christ's Gospel. 31

Sensing that the public mind was too preoccupied with slavery and the war, Crooks at first cooled his ardor for lay representation. Letters arrived on his desk asking him and his paper to be more forthright. "When the right hour arises," he promised an inquirer in January of 1861, "we shall fully, but calmly, discuss the question." 32 Six months later in the lead editorial Crooks announced that

The time has come, we think, for the more formal opening of the discussion of the question in the Church. The auspices for any such inquiry are not favorable, for these troubled times, but the Church will soon be called to act upon the subject, and the times may not be more favorable before its vote must be taken. 33

In a carefully reasoned series of articles that Fall (1861), Crooks set forth the Scriptural and historical justification for the basic right of the laity to share in the government of their church, asserted that Methodist layfolk were fully competent and trustworthy, assured the fathers and brethren that the reform they sought in no way threatened the two hallmarks of the Methodist system— itinerancy and episcopacy, and predicted that Methodism's continued prosperity and future success would depend upon making the change speedily. Only then, he said, would the church be spared the reproach of other more democratic and more American Methodist and Protestant churches. 34

31 [Crooks], The Life of Bishop Matthew Simpson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890), 412, 425. In a letter to Simpson November 10, 1876, Crooks wrote: "I am the sufferer for what I have done in the last fifteen years. No man living could be blackened & so unscrupulously as I have been & not be affected by it." Simpson papers, Drew University Library.
32 [Crooks], "Lay Representation," Methodist, 2:2 (Jan. 19, 1861), 12.
33 [Crooks], "Lay Representation," Methodist, 2:31 (June 1, 1861), 11.
34 [Crooks], "Lay Representation," Methodist, 2:31 (June 15, 1861), 20.
Focusing on the basic right of the laity to share in the government of the church marked a significant shift in strategy from the timid beginnings in the 1850's when the reformers chose to argue the case on the grounds of expediency alone.

Taking the offensive, Crooks chided the editors of the church's official papers for their "neutral policy" on the matter. Action of the General Conference and intelligent voting required free and full discussion in the church press. He reminded his fellow editors that on the issue of slavery many of them gave no rest to themselves or the church. [You] wrote, [you] printed, [you] argued, [you] impeached opponents, [you] coerced [your] lukewarm associates, and with incessant drill and widely extended party organization, [you] pushed [your] pet scheme.

What other inference could be drawn, Crooks asked his readers, than that the editors were willing to "quietly strangle" the issue.

Crooks feverishly wrote to friends around the country in the several annual conferences inquiring about the times appointed for the vote and solicited returns. But by the time the bishops and presiding elders began taking the vote the war had broken out and the people were indifferent to reform. As late as November 9, 1861, Crooks could report that only 10 out of 49 annual conferences had set a time of voting.

35 [Crooks], "A Curious Fact," Methodist, 2/37 (Sept. 21, 1861), 292.
37 See Crooks' papers, Drew University Library, letter file for Fall of 1861.
The first report on the church-wide referendum came from Ebenezer Church, Manayunk, a Philadelphia suburb: two dozen for, one against. Crooks' Philadelphia correspondent labelled Manayunk an "intelligent and progressive town." The voting dragged on into the Spring of 1863. Caught up in the wild fever of a civil war, voter turnout at the Methodist polls continued to be slim. The final tally reported to the General Conference of 1864 must have been a bitter disappointment to Crooks and his colleagues. The ministers opposed the change 3,069 to 1,338 and the people likewise turned the reform down 47,885 to 28,884.

Crooks realized that if the movement was to succeed, it must have support from key leaders in the church and it must present a united front. Several leaders and at least one bishop showed uncommon courage in openly identifying themselves with the movement. Clergy John P. Durbin, Gilbert Haven, John McClintock, Abel Stevens, layman James Strong, and Bishop Matthew Simpson, all closely in touch with Crooks, wrote articles and pamphlets, addressed rallies around the country, and encouraged friend and foe alike to give the cause a fair hearing. Crooks took the initiative with the New York and Philadelphia reformers in planning a national rally for lay representation in New York City in the Spring of 1863. The Philadelphia reformers agreed to finance the publication of a circular and asked Crooks to draft it. Addressed "To the Laymen of the M.E. Church throughout the United States," it included a mini-history of the movement and an urgent call to action:

Many circumstances have combined to defeat the wish and purpose of the General Conference to obtain a full expression of the preference of our laity. While we have been taking the votes of the Church, a civil war of unprecedented magnitude has been raging. The Church has participated in the patriotic ardor which pervades all classes of the people, and has devoted its utmost

energy to the preservation of the nation which carries
the Church in its bosom. The three years which has
nearly elapsed since May, 1860 have been an unpropitious
time for determining by popular ballot, a question of
church order. In addition to this our denominational
press, has taken but little pains to inform the people
of the state of the question, and of their duty in the
premises. As a consequence of these and other causes,
the vote polled has been small, and is, in no sense, an
adequate representation of the mind of the Church. Yet
it has been proved, that in the midst of the distraction
of a civil war which is calling our fathers, brothers
and sons away from their peaceful homes, upwards of
30,000 Methodist laymen have avowed their conviction of
the importance and desirableness of Lay Representation....
Thirty thousand Lay Representationists in the M.E.
Church are a sufficient leaven to leaven the whole mass.
But it behooves [us] to be united and co-operators.41

The open letter was handsomely printed and widely cir-
culated.

The reformers begged Bishop Simpson and Bishop
Janes to speak at a planning rally in New York. Janes
replied curtly: "I judge it inexpedient for me to
identify myself with your proposed convention." Daniel
Ross, a New York layman and trustee of The Methodist,
importuned Simpson: "On other subjects you would not
hesitate for a moment." Although it was not "Method-
istical" for a bishop "to enter into a progressive
movement," it seemed to Ross that "we must carry on the
thing bravely, or it will fail of success."42 Simpson
accepted the invitation, a well deserved tribute to
the reformers.43

41 [Crooks], To the Laymen of the Methodist Episcopal Church
throughout the United States, Philadelphia, February 20, 1863,
(April 15, 1863), 117. Crooks later identified himself as the
author in copy in his papers in Drew University Library.
42 Henry B. Ridgaway, The Life of Edmund S. Janes (New York:
Phillips and Hunt, 1882), 271f; Crooks, Life of Simpson, 415.
43 For Bishop Simpson's key role in the struggle, see Crooks,
and Robert D. Clark, The Life of Matthew Simpson (New York: Mac-
The planning rally was held in John Street Church, New York, March 16, 1863. Simpson, cautious and conciliatory, praised the 400 plus laymen who packed the church for their patience and their "brotherly kindness." Crooks editorialized on the whole affair in the next issue of The Methodist:

Nothing could be better timed than Bishop Simpson's counsel to the laymen to carry on their reform movement concurrently with a peaceful administration of all the interests of the Church. This since 1851 they have done, and this, we know, they mean to do to the end. They will raise the grand edifice of Methodism a whole story higher by giving it new substructure, while the busy throngs that people it are plying their appointed tasks. The calmness, the patience with which the advocates of Lay Representation have pressed their reform upon the conscience of the Church are the best guarantee that they will labor in the same spirit till they reach the consummation of their hopes.44

The John Street meeting was, however, merely preliminary to a larger, more representative national convention to be held in the city's "Cathedral of Methodism" recently built, white marbled, tall-spired St. Paul's Church in Manhattan. On May 13 and 14 the friends of Lay Representation from a dozen states gathered for a two-day convention. Bishop Simpson again was one of the principal speakers. This time his speech was more forthright. The Bishop, now at the height of his popularity, confided:

I believe that there will always be periods of agitation and threatened schism, until the laity are admitted into the highest assemblies of our church.

Wesley's "great movement" he reminded his audience had "called lay influence into exercise in the church." Methodist people taught by tradition

to work, to pray, to sing, to exhort, to lead class, to preach, very naturally should inquire: "Why should

44 [Crooks], "The John-Street Meeting," Methodist, 4:11 (Mar. 31, 1863), 34; report of proceedings and addresses, 35.
The laymen immediately ordered the printing of 50,000 copies of the Bishop's speech along with 5,000 copies of the proceedings of the convention.\textsuperscript{46}

Despite Simpson's eloquence the movement still faced formidable odds. The editors of the church's leading newspaper, Edward Thomson, and its prestigious Quarterly Review, Daniel D. Whedon, pressed the editorial staff of their Nassau Street neighbors mercilessly. "Is the founding and support of periodicals for private objects," Whedon wrote in a scathing article in his Review in 1863, "trenching on the territories of the periodicals of the Church, and infringing upon our legal system, loyal?"\textsuperscript{47}

Crooks countered:

The press is FOR the people. It is their only effectual check upon those who are selected as the depositories of power. Through it they give utterance to their wants, their grievances, and whatever else


\textsuperscript{46} Letter, Daniel Ross to Crooks, June 26, 1863. Crooks papers, Drew.

\textsuperscript{47} Daniel D. Whedon, "Lay Representation and our Itinerancy," Methodist Quarterly Review (N.Y.), 45/3 (July, 1863), 475-94.
concerns them. A system of government, civil or ecclesiastical, which would permit only the expression of its own (that is, of official) opinion would be a sheer despotism. In the normal development, therefore, of the press, under the conditions of freedom, it will come at length to be the organ of the people, by means of which they hold their rulers closely to their responsibilities, and keep alive in them a sense of their accountableness to public opinion. Especially will it be likely to develop in this direction under a hierarchical system, where the press is, originally, the property of the ministry and where the people have an interest of their own to represent and promote.

Crooks confided to his old friend John McClintock in a letter

Dear Mac:

Your's rec'd. You will have found before this that we have withdrawn from the controversy with the "officials" [the Advocates] as you propose. We were compelled to fight. They were acting in concert & the object of their combination was to break us down, by frightening off our subscribers. Durbin, who speaks always cautiously, said the other day to me, that in this war "the officials had made a combination against us."

We have not come off second best either in argument or subscribers. In Subs. we shall hold our own, if we do not increase....The friends of the Adv. have been stirred up and some bitterness of feeling has been created, but the final result will, I think, be advantageous to us. We shall go on the rest of the year after our old fashion--peaceably.

By the next year his impatience was apparent:

I know that it is thought best to do all we can to harmonize all parties [he wrote to McClintock]. In this I concur, & am working for that end. But in seeking for harmony, I do not intend to sacrifice

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49 Letter, Crooks to McClintock, Feb. 27, 1864, in McClintock papers, Brew.
my position, nor my identification with an enterprise
to which I have given my heart and strength.\textsuperscript{50}

It was soon General Conference time again and time
for another Spring offensive. Crooks penned and pub­
lished another series of able articles on "The Laity
and the Church" which hit the headlines of his paper
in April of 1864.\textsuperscript{51} The resolutions of the St. Paul's
convention in New York the previous Spring called for
another lay convention to meet simultaneously with the
General Conference of 1864 in Philadelphia to bring
lay representationists and clergy delegates face to
face.

The laymen's convention maintained that the result
of the referendum was in no way decisive. The vote
had been "very imperfectly and in some churches irregu­
larly taken," the laymen charged, and besides preoc­
cupation with the war had interfered with proper con­
sideration of the question. They made a vigorous
demand for action by the General Conference despite
the negative vote of 1861-63.

To resist the claim of the laity to participate in the
general administration of the Church, is,...a resis­
tance of the whole tendency of the Christian life in
this our age. In all the Protestant Churches of the
world--unless our own be the sole exception--a more
perfect association of the ministry with the laity in
the administration of the interests of the kingdom of
Christ is forming. This fact is one of the salient
features of the Church history of our times.

They supplemented their declaration with other strong,
pertinent arguments that lay representation stood firmly

\textsuperscript{50} Letter, Crooks to McClintock, Sept. 9, 1864, McClintock
papers, Drew.

\textsuperscript{51} [Crooks], "The Laity and the Church," Methodist, 5/13-17
(April 2-30, 1864), 100, 108, 116, 124, 132. No. 1, Argument
from Wesley; no. 2, Argument from tradition (Protestant Principle);
no. 3, Lay Representation not subversive of itinerancy; no. 4,
Church does not belong to the clergy; no. 5, example of Wesleyan
Methodist Church in England.
on Methodist and Scriptural grounds. But the Conference was unmoved, reaffirming its previous willingness to approve lay representation only when assured "that the Church desires it," but discerning "no such declaration of the popular will as to justify...taking advanced action."  

Before the laymen left Philadelphia in the hope of better luck next General Conference they appointed a Central Committee to map strategy for the coming quadrennium. The Committee hired as its corresponding secretary one of Crooks' old friends--Dr. James Strong of Concordance fame--to travel and promote favorable resolutions among the conferences. They also adopted a budget and raised $5,720 in subscriptions over the next two years and formed branch committees in principal cities--Boston, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Indianapolis. Gilbert Haven of Boston was enlisted to produce a fresh defense of the movement. Haven's spicy and vigorous piece was published in eight installments in The Methodist later that summer. A pamphlet version was mailed to every preacher in the

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52 M.E. Church. General Conference, 1864, Journal, 409. "The prince of Methodist theologians, Richard Watson, whose Institutes you have made a ministerial text-book, distinctly asserts that those regulations, which are subsidiary to the great end of the church's commission, are intended, in Christ's plan, to rest upon the mutual concurrence of the ministry and the people." Ibid. See manuscript rough draft of Address in Crooks papers, Drew. A 48-page pamphlet, Proceedings, Addresses, etc of the Laymen's Convention of the M.E. Church held in Philadelphia, May, 1864 was published and widely distributed by order of the convention (Philadelphia: Collins, printer, 1864).

53 Ibid., 412. There was one cloud on the horizon, however. The Conference placed in the editorial chair of "the great official" an uncompromising opponent of the movement, Daniel Curry. Curry, who followed Simpson as President of DePauw, joined Crooks' own New York East Conference in 1857 and was well primed for the battle.

54 James Strong, manuscript "Report of the Corresponding Secretary to the Central Committee on Lay Representation, New York, May 1, 1864," in Strong papers, Drew. Crooks and Strong were colleagues in the struggle for establishing theological seminaries in the church in the 1860's.
Despite all these efforts The Methodist nearly went under during the winter of 1864. Inflation during the war years and sagging subscriptions of battle-weary Methodists wiped out their reserves and produced a financial crisis. Crooks estimated that $20,000 would be needed to secure the paper's future. In an effort to broaden support, Crooks offered to the friends of reform in Philadelphia to appoint a Philadelphia editor, to print a full page of news from the city, and to date the paper from the two cities. Bishop Simpson and the Philadelphia colleagues preferred to move the whole operation from New York to Philadelphia. Fearing a change of address might change the style and purpose of the paper, he and the paper's trustees determined to raise the needed funds on their own. Three months later Crooks wrote to his friend John McClintock that the financial crisis was over. Receipts from subscribers and advertising from January to June were more than $2,000 in advance of the receipts for the same months in 1864 and the price of paper had gone down!

It is clear to my mind [he continued] that with ordinary business skill, & the continued union of our friends, we shall make The Methodist a permanent addition to the press of our Church. What its value will be as a counterpoise to the excessive officialism of our Church, I need not argue to you. I think that one organ for free thought on those questions, which are best settled by

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56 Letters, Crooks to Simpson, March 3 and 9, 1865, Simpson papers, Drew; Simpson to Crooks, March 14, 1865, Crooks papers, Drew.
freedom of thinking & speaking is a very modest gadfly for American Methodism.\textsuperscript{57}

Another small breakthrough for the movement came that Fall. In reviewing the printed journal of the General Conference in the October, 1864 issue of his Quarterly Review, Whedon in effect challenged his editorial brethren to drop past differences and unite with the friends of lay representation.

The time has come [the former critic wrote] when we can say that we shall rejoice in the day [when we] shall see a body of true-hearted Methodist laymen, chosen by the pure suffrage of the Church, take their seats as a coordinate part of the great Representative Body.\textsuperscript{58}

Whedon's conversion called forth noble words from Crooks in an editorial in The Methodist, but he lamented the fact that few other editors had buried the hatchet.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} Letter, Crooks to McClintock, June 10, 1865, McClintock papers, Drew. For a fuller defense of "independent journalism" Methodist-style, see Crooks' private letter addressed "To all friends of The Methodist," 1871, in Crooks papers, Drew, and his address on "The Press, Secular and Religious" at the New Jersey Methodist State Convention, Trenton, Sept. 29, 1870, in Minutes of the New Jersey Methodist State Convention, Trenton, N. J., W. T. Nicholson, 1870, 143-45.

\textsuperscript{58} [Daniel D. Whedon], Review of Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1864, Methodist Quarterly Review (N. Y.), 46/4 (October, 1864), 680.

\textsuperscript{59} [Crooks], "Lay Representation," Methodist, 6/3 (Jan. 21, 1865), 20. However, the Methodist now no longer stood alone. The Western Christian Advocate, edited by John M. Reid, the Northwestern Christian Advocate under Thomas M. Eddy, and the Zion's Herald under Gilbert Haven joined the movement and helped turn the tide. But as Crooks put it, "the burden of planning, arranging, carrying forward, and bearing the brunt of the opposition fell to the supporters of The Methodist. With few exceptions all the documents issued by the laymen since 1860 were prepared in the editorial office of the Methodist on Nassau Street in New York. Crooks, Life of Simpson, 427. See also his letter to Oliver Hoyt, July, 1864, and his letter to Simpson, March 9, 1865. Crooks papers, Drew.
While the Methodist Episcopal Church was still debating lay representation in the General Conference, and long before such representation was conceived in the annual conferences, the southern church in its General Conference of 1866 voted to admit laymen both to the General and Annual Conferences—equal representation in the General Conference and four delegates for each presiding elder's district in the annual conferences. When the news reached Crooks' desk in New York he dashed off a notice for the next issue:

The passage of this measure by the Southern General Conference is another of the many indications that the drift of our Methodist Church life is towards lay representation. No matter how vigorous the opposition, it must yield to the current which is setting in this direction... The Advocate [taunted Crooks] may as well give up the struggle. The fates are against it.

The fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had voted for lay representation cut both ways in influencing the electorate of the Northern church. Some like Crooks thought the South had pointed the way; others like Daniel Curry of the Advocate were against anything the South was for.

As a last ditch effort to stem the tide of lay representation James Porter, one of the book agents of the church, published a seventy-two page "Tract for the Times" in the Summer of 1867 which purported to "calmly consider" the "injustice" and "impracticability" of lay representation. Porter took the arch-conservative position of Bond that laymen are Scripturally excluded from the conferences of the church. It was an exhaustive point by point refutation of the arguments of, as he says in the preface, a "few" reformers who have "teased" the church with "fallacious

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60 Methodist Episcopal Church, South. General Conference, 1866, Journal, 108-90. Reported adopted May 2, 1866.

61 [Crooks], "Lay Representation [editorial]," Methodist, 7/20 (May 19, 1866), 156. Correspondents' account of conference action, 153.

62 [Curry], "The Southern General Conference," CA, 41/21 (May 24, 1866), 164.
arguments." Crooks, appalled at Porter's lack of trust in the laity of the church, tempered his tone to avoid replying in kind lest it produce a backlash. He penned and printed his most elaborate defense of lay representation ever—a tightly argued, ten-installment series of articles published in The Methodist from August to October of 1867. His study of church history led him to believe that many of the evils of the past were due to clericalism. "The Ministry proceeds from the Church [i.e., the laity]," said he, "not the Church from the ministry." Protestantism and sacerdotalism to his mind were utterly incompatible. He grounded his argument upon the broadest principles, resting it philosophically on both reason and expediency; and Scripturally and theologically on the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers.

In the Fall of 1867 another convention of laymen met in New York. This time Crooks recruited not one but three bishops—Kingsley and Baker as well as Simpson. Curry of the Advocate, incensed to the point of frenzy, fired off a scorching editorial denouncing

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63 James Porter, Lay Delegation in the Methodist Episcopal Church Calmly Considered: Its Injustice and Impracticability (New York: N. Tibbals, 1867). "For the convenience of any who may wish to do so," Porter appended a handy model petition to the General Conference stating that the undersigned "is satisfied with our present economy, beg leave respectfully, but most earnestly, to protest against your taking any action whatever countenancing its introduction, or the continuance of the agitation of the question among us," 72. See Whedon's calm, but firmly dissenting, review, in Methodist Quarterly Review, 49:4 (October, 1867), 67:35.


65 "Lay Delegation Demonstration Meeting at Bedford Street Church," Methodist, 8:76 (Nov. 19, 1867), 46. Includes text of addresses by Bishop Simpson and Kingsley among others.
the "Bishops as Partisans." Crooks replied with spirit. He thought the church had "never intended that a preacher, in becoming a bishop, should abdicate his manhood," and become a "pompous nonentity." By the time the General Conference of 1868 met, the demand of laymen for representation had become so strong as to be irresistible. The parent church was being left behind. The several secessions from it had enfranchised their laymen. It was time to decide the question. A deputation of distinguished laymen representing the Central Committee on Lay Representation were invited to the platform, introduced by the presiding bishop, and presented their address which was ordered to be printed in the journal of the Conference. A few days later another delegation of laymen appeared on the platform and presented an address--this time laymen opposed to their representation in the General Conference.

Nearly the entire Conference was ready to grant lay representation when the people desired it, but there was a radical division of sentiment as to whether the authority to make the constitutional change was within its powers. The debate continued for several days. The final report provided for a general vote of the laity on the principle of lay representation in June of 1869 (all members not less than twenty-one years old were invited to vote by ballot for or against lay representation) and for a general vote of the clergy on the plan (which included a constitutional amendment

66 [Curry], "Bishops as Partisans," CA, 42/47 (Nov. 21, 1867), 372. See also continuation in next issue: "Lay Delegation Continued," CA, 42/48 (Nov. 28, 1867), 380.
67 [Crooks], "Our Bishops and Lay Representation," Methodist, 8/48 (Nov. 30, 1867), 382.
68 M. E. Church. General Conference, 1868, Journal, 610-14. The Central Committee arranged another laymen's convention which was held in Chicago concurrently with the General Conference. For proceedings, see Methodist, 9/21 (May 23, 1868), 161-63. Crooks attended, of course, and helped draft the petition to the Conference. See MS copy in his papers at Drew.
altering the Second Restrictive Rule) in their annual conferences of 1869 and 1870.70

Since women were eligible to vote, "Women for Lay Delegation" groups were organized in several cities and issued an "Address to the Female Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church."71 The Central Committee on

70 Ibid., 276-77. The "Pastoral Address" to the Members of the Church issued by the Conference included a paragraph on the referendum on lay representation, 636-37. William H. Perrine, Professor of Natural Sciences and Belle Lettres at Albion College, and a ministerial member of the Michigan Conference, attacked the plan of the General Conference of 1868 in his The "Wesleyan Axiom" Expounded; or, the Constant and Variable, the Obligatory and Optional in Church Government. A Plea for a Lay Delegation Thoroughly Scriptural, Wesleyan, and Democratic. No Monument to Snethen or M'Caine. (New York: [Methodist Book Concern], 1872, 36pp.). Although strongly favoring lay representation, he took issue with the plan for a joint lay-clergy general conference. He proposed instead a tri-cameral legislature for the church with separate houses for laity, clergy, and bishops.

71 "Address to the Female Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church," Methodist, 10/23 (June 5, 1869), 183, which was signed by the wives of all the important leaders--Mrs. Crooks, Mrs. McClintock, Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. Strong, etc. Frances E. Willard, in her Glimpses of Fifty Years (Chicago: H. J. Smith, Co., 1889), 618f, asserts that "the vote of women...forced open [the General Conference's] doors to the laymen." She was understandably bitter in 1888 when, after being duly elected a lay delegate, the male delegates, lay and clergy, refused to allow her to take her seat. Women did not receive full lay rights until the General Conference of 1900.

Crooks himself used his pen against lay rights for women. In 1891 James M. Buckley, editor of the Christian Advocate and unabashed women hater, recruited Crooks to write an article against the women. See letter, Buckley to Crooks, January 17, 1891 in Crooks papers: "I wish you would take the subject [of lay rights for women] into the deepest consideration," Buckley wrote Crooks, "and prepare for the Advocate the most convincing argument you can, showing the differences between the lay delegation movement and this one; throwing the whole weight of your influence against the movement." Crooks wrote and Buckley published the article, "After admission to Conference, what?" in the April 2, 1891 issue. (CA, 04/14, 221-22.)
Lay Representation printed and distributed a quarter of a million tracts and on the eve of the popular election in June of 1869 called a convention in Pittsburgh. Simpson again was the keynote speaker, more forceful and eloquent than ever.72 Crooks kept score in his paper as the reports from the polls trickled in. A disappointingly small number of laypersons (some 150,000) voted, but they favored the change, two to one. Crooks claimed a victory morally obligating the clergy to approve the constitutional amendment.73 Curry of the Advocate warned that the reformers were trying to frighten the ministers into voting the reform.74 Both sides girded their loins for the final battle.

Crooks asked to be relieved of his pastorate to devote full time to the struggle. Although he stayed close to his Nassau Street office in New York, he was in constant touch with his field marshal, Bishop Simpson, during those crucial days. As the results of the clergy vote came in it was apparent to both sides that it would be close.75 Curry, who was keeping

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73 [Crooks], "To the Ministers in the Annual Conferences," *Methodist*, 10/30 (July 24, 1869), 238. "The people to whom you have appealed to declare their opinion have given a clear and unmistakable answer. They are, however, without legal power to change the polity of Methodism, and can do no more. It now rests with you to put the judgment of the church into the form of law, and to make Lay Delegation an accomplished fact."

74 Curry, "The Vote--its significance," CA, 44/25 (July 13, 1869), 260. Curry as usual saw matters differently. The vote of the laymen demonstrated that they were not interested in the question--five-sixths of them, he said, "decline the responsibility of advising" the clergy. As for himself, he was more than ever convinced that the movement was of the clergy and not of the laity. "Accordingly, in the fear of God, and open unfidelity to the Church, we must oppose it, and if granted the opportunity, vote against it."

75 Simpson confided to Crooks in a letter dated Sept. 9, 1869: "I confess to very strong fears as to the result of the vote at the conference. We still have, I am afraid, more than a three-to-one vote in the West and South, but influence in the
his own tally in an arithmetic Crooks couldn't understand, reported with some confidence in mid-April that the trend continued, Lay representation would lose. Crooks was not worried; in fact, Simpson wrote him on April 18, 1870:

Dear Mr. Troy: We may yet be defeated. Be careful about exciting yet!  

A month later the race was even closer--fift, one votes to spare and only three conferences to go. Attention focused on Maine with the largest number of votes. Fortunately Simpson presided at the conference which cast the deciding vote--sixty for, thirty-one against. A week later, East Maine, again with Simpson in the chair, voted for the reform forty-four to fourteen. Lay representation was approved by a decisive three-fourths majority (4,915 to 1,597). Curry muttered darkly about improper "influences";

From Baltimore to Maine. I think there is no question as to Baltimore, Phila., Wilmington and N. Jersey Conferences. What I fear is the district beginning with Newark, N. J., and Central N.Y., and embracing all north and east. If that territory can be made right, or nearly so, we shall succeed." In another letter later the next month Simpson counseled Crooks against "publishing anything that may have the appearance of a concession to our opponents. We are doing well; if we use the diligence and make no mistakes, we will succeed." (Simpson to Crooks, Oct. 6, 1870). Crooks papers, Brev. See also Crooks' editorial "Stand Firm," Methodist, Ill., 14 (April 13, 1870), 14s.

"In Curry, "Vote on Lay Delegation," CA. 40 (April 14, 1870), 14s.

77 Letter, Simpson to Crooks, April 18, 1870.
78 Letter, Simpson to Crooks, April 15, 1870. Simpson earlier counseled Crooks: "I have been writing and arraigning to the utmost of my ability in every direction." Simpson to Crooks, Feb. 20, 1870. Crooks papers, Brev.
80 Letter, Crooks, editorial note on the vote, Methodist, Ill., May 17, 1870, 14s, complete tally last, 14s.
81 "[Crooks], editorial note on the vote, Methodist, Ill., May 17, 1870, 14s, complete tally last, 14s.
82 [R. D. Grant], General Conference, Ill., 14 (May 18, 1870), 14s.
Crooks smiled triumphantly. 82

The General Conference of 1872 in Brooklyn was an anticlimax to the roaring battle of the previous five quadrennia. It was fitting that Bishop Simpson should read the official report of the favorable vote of the clergy and laity on the matter. Without a ripple the Conference quickly completed the action by voting 283 to 6 to concur in the constitutional amendment. 83 The lay members who were elected according to the provisions of the 1868 plan led by James Strong were welcomed to their seats.

The great revolution—at least the first step—was achieved. Its friends like Crooks could only regret that the ratio of lay to ministerial delegates was not larger and that the plan did not allow lay members in the annual conferences. Between 1868 and 1872 there was a decisive turn around in sentiment among clergy and laity. Crooks commented later:

In the Conference of 1872 the lay delegates quietly took their seats beside their clerical brethren; the wounded itinerancy uttered no groans, and the heavens did not fall. 84

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82 [Curry], "Lay Delegation Question," CA, 45/23 (June 9, 1870), 180; [Crooks], "The Triumph of Lay Delegation," Methodist, 11/21 (May 21, 1870), 164.
84 Crooks, Life of Simpson, 428. Three years later Crooks resigned his editorship and returned to the pastorate. Upon the election of John F. Hurst of the faculty of Drew Theological Seminary to the episcopacy in 1880, Crooks, whom McClintock had been unable to lure away from his fighting post on The Methodist in 1867 when the Seminary was founded, assumed the chair of historical theology. His friends McClintock, Nadal, and Foster were gone, but James Strong who had fought by his side in the laymen's battle, was still at Drew. Crooks taught at Drew until his death in 1897. The Methodist merged with the Christian Advocate, October 7, 1892.