THE WAY WE WERE IN 1884

FREDERICK E. MASER

An eight-year old boy said gloomily, "I wish they'd invent something new—I've been looking at television all my life." The boy's remark illustrates how completely we have accepted this age of technology—believing, in a sense, that it has always been with us. Even we who were born before this apocalyptic era began, have difficulty remembering what life was like before the discovery of atomic energy.

My assignment—to relate how in 1884 the Methodist denominations celebrated the centennial of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore—is, therefore, more difficult than it appears. This is partly because we are dealing with a different era, a country facing different problems, and, in a sense, a different church than today, though remarkably similar in some ways to present-day Methodism.

The America of our Grandfathers

In spite of the rapid growth of its urban centers, America in 1884 still had a largely rural culture with great stretches of fertile land awaiting cultivation. Since the nation was considered a land of opportunity, immigration added nine million to the population between the years 1880 and 1900—most of the newcomers arriving from southern and eastern Europe, in sharp contrast to the earlier immigrants who had come from northern and western Europe.

The aftermath of the Civil War had brought with it a deep economic depression from 1873 to 1878, but by 1884 the country was in the first flush of that prosperity which it was expected would usher in some form of permanent recovery. Railroads were stretching across the country, agriculture and industry were growing. The expansion of manufacturing, moreover, was followed by the formation of labor organizations, beginning with the Knights of Labor in 1869. In endeavors to improve working conditions, strikes became commonplace. In 1886 there were nearly 1,600 strikes involving thousands of workers, with the eight-hour day as the most prominent of labor's demands.

In 1881 President James A. Garfield was assassinated and was succeeded by Chester A. Arthur. The new President surprised everyone by his strong stand in favor of removing federal appointments from partisan control to a civil service commission which would make appointments on the basis of examinations and provide indefinite tenure for successful candidates.
Arthur was succeeded by Grover Cleveland who continued the civil service emphasis, favoring also the lowering of the protective tariff. Cleveland was the first Democratic President since James Buchanan, a quarter of a century earlier. His election marked the formation of the solid south with the southern states henceforth voting the straight Democratic ticket.

For some time the country had opposed the Mormons and Mormonism, especially following its institution of polygamy in the territory of Utah under Brigham Young, and particularly following the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857 when some misguided Mormons attacked and destroyed a group of non-Mormon settlers on their way to California.

By 1882 the United States government had also enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act, prohibiting for a period of ten years the immigration of Chinese laborers into the United States. The Act was renewed in 1892, and in 1902 the suspension of Chinese immigrants was made indefinite.

In these years both religion and religious leaders were greatly respected, especially since the denominations did not enter forthrightly into political and economic arenas or generally take a strong stand on crucial moral issues except on temperance, Sabbath observance, popular amusements, and divorce.

Neither the automobile nor the aeroplane had been invented, and television and other technological creations were unknown. War no longer hung like a black cloud over the Union, and life was fairly tranquil for most people. The poor were told that America was a land of opportunity where even the humblest citizen might become the President of the United States, but not much material help was provided for them.

This was the country of our grandfathers a hundred years ago. This was the setting in which Methodism prepared to celebrate its centennial.

First Preparations for the Centennial of 1884

In the face of some opposition the Methodists in America had in 1839 celebrated the centennial of the rise of Methodism in England, and, in 1866, the centennial of the introduction of Methodism into America. For obvious reasons the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had taken no part in the 1866 observance. However, all of Methodism was agreed that some form of centennial observance should take place in 1884 to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America when, in 1784, American Methodism first became a separate denomination and entered upon “its God-given work as an independent, efficient, and unique organization.”

The initial step toward this goal was taken by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, meeting at Atlanta, Georgia in 1878. This conference passed a resolution that the centenary of the Christmas Conference of 1784 "be observed by a conference in which all branches of American Methodism should be invited to participate." The Board of Bishops was appointed as a committee "to open the subject to the other members of the Methodist brotherhood by correspondence." 2

Unfortunately, the bishops did not begin this correspondence, and for a time the whole matter lay dormant.

In 1880 the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church appointed a committee to report "a plan for the appropriate commemoration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church." 3 Before the conference adjourned this committee brought in a lengthy report. Among its salient features were:

The year 1884 be observed as the centennial of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

Centennial gifts be made for education, the extinguishing of church debts, the superannuates, missions, and home evangelization. A minimum of ten million dollars was asked for these purposes.

Each annual conference was to include on its program a centennial sermon in 1884, and on the last Sunday of 1883 each pastor was to speak on the causes to be supported.

A mass meeting was to be held in each district to consider the benevolent causes.

During Christmas week special services were to be held to interest children in the history of their church.

The year was to be one of consecration to the services of God with special efforts for the universal revival of pure religion to the end that scriptural holiness might be spread over all lands. This important emphasis was to begin with a Watch Night Service on December 31, 1883 and continue "as God shall help, throughout the entire centennial year." 4

After some discussion and an amendment offered by James M. Buckley, the whole matter was referred to the bishops who were to take such action as necessary before the General Conference of 1884. This plan involved only the northern church, and no suggestion was made here concerning a centennial conference for all Methodists.

The plan for holding a centennial conference finally developed among the American Methodist delegates to the First Ecumenical Methodist Conference held in London in 1881. Here a paper recommending the holding of a centennial conference was circulated among the Methodist

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2Ibid., p. vi. See also Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1878, pp. 137, 138.
3Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1880, p. 87.
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delegates for their signatures. Eighty delegates signed, including members of the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren in Christ. The paper was then widely circulated among Methodist bodies throughout America.

The response was immediate and enthusiastic. In 1882 the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, meeting at Nashville, Tennessee, recommended not only that the centennial year be observed by raising a fund of two million dollars for the causes of education, missions and church extension but also that a committee be appointed to represent the church for the proposed centennial conference.

In the meantime a committee of twenty-six was appointed by the bishops of the northern church and charged, among other duties, with opening correspondence with all Methodist bodies in the United States and Canada to ascertain whether or not they would participate in a centennial conference.

A meeting, at which representatives from both the northern and southern Methodist Episcopal Churches were present, was held in Philadelphia on March 25, 1884. This combined committee decided to hold a centennial conference in Baltimore beginning Tuesday, December 9 and closing Wednesday afternoon, December 17. They also appointed an executive committee to complete all arrangements.

Eventually seven Methodist bodies participated in the conference: the Methodist Episcopal Church; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of America; the Primitive Methodist Church, and the Methodist Church (of Canada). Two representatives of “Independent Methodist Churches” were also present. In addition, fraternal delegates were sent by the Methodist Protestant Church and by the Bible Christian Church. Neither the Evangelical Association nor the United Brethren in Christ joined the observance and may not have been invited.

The groundwork for the centennial conference had been laid, and the churches were ready to move forward, each in its own way.

Continuing Action

Before discussing the centennial conference itself, it might be well to discover how the northern and southern Methodist Episcopal Churches each advanced its own programs for observing the centennial as separate from their participation in the centennial conference, itself.

The Southern Church

It has been noted that the southern church hoped to raise two million dollars for the causes of education, church extension, and foreign missions. In 1888 a committee reported to the General Conference the results of this
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campaign, which was also linked with an effort to deepen the spiritual life of the membership. According to one authority:

The leading object of the centenary observance was declared to have been the spiritual improvement of the people. That in no small measure was believed to have been done. As for the two million dollars, considerable explanation was given to show that the goal had in fact been realized. The great bulk of this money, however, was raised and spent in local churches, and one gathers the impression that the connectional interests of missions, education, and church extension did not receive substantial strength from the offering. The report refers more than once to a period of “monetary stringency that paralyzed our industries.”

When one remembers that the church was seeking to raise these funds only two decades after a war that had devastated this whole section of the United States, one can well understand the “monetary stringency that paralyzed our industries.”

However, the southern church did take an important part in the centennial conference itself, and in no small measure contributed to its success and the spirit of cooperation and union generated by that great event.

The Northern Church

The northern church, as we have seen, bequeathed to the bishops a detailed plan to raise ten million dollars for a variety of causes linked with a plan for a centennial year of evangelistic effort to spread scriptural holiness over all lands.

The bishops tempered the enthusiasm inherent in the plan, setting forth a few realistic goals (some of which were never achieved) and then placed their strongest efforts behind the centennial conference.

In general, the bishops approved the raising of ten million dollars to be used for the Chartered Fund, the Board of Education, the Freedmen's Aid Society, the Missionary Societies, the Board of Church Extension, the Sunday School Union, and the Tract Society—in short, practically the “whole bit”—that is, every agency which could get its foot in the door.

The results of the campaign were not nearly so successful as had been the 1866 centennial campaign when vast sums were realized, numerous churches were established, and Drew University had been founded at Madison, New Jersey. It is, in fact, difficult to discover how much was actually raised in 1884 and how it was expended. One difficulty is that any funds which were given to an agency above the usual amount provided for its work was to be counted as a part of the centennial offering. In addition, the bishops had urged that the needs and claims of local educational institutions, under the patronage of the several annual conferences, be particularly commended to the liberality of the people. This kept the funding pretty much on the local level.

There is no report in the 1888 General Conference Journal setting forth the final figures of the campaign.

The spiritual emphasis was also watered down. The bishops changed the laudable wording of the original resolution that challenged the churches to spread scriptural holiness over all lands to a statement that the special religious services during the centennial year should be the chief function of the celebration.

Furthermore, the committee had originally suggested that a whole week be set aside during the Christmas season to interest the children in the history of the church. But the bishops decided this could be accomplished by a special program on Children's Day, an annual event celebrated throughout the church.

However, the bishops were enthusiastic about a centennial conference. They were more interested in that event than a fund raising campaign, holiness revival, or the development of an historical interest among Methodist children.

The Centennial Conference

In a brief paper it is not possible to set forth in detail the proceedings of the Centennial Conference. A volume was published in New York and Cincinnati in 1885 entitled Proceedings, Sermons, Essays, and Addresses of the Centennial Methodist Conference held in Mt. Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church Baltimore, Md., December 9-17, 1884. With a Historical Statement. It was edited by H. K. Carroll, W. P. Harrison, and J. H. Bayliss.

It omitted only the discussions that followed the papers and, with the cooperation of the various speakers, reduced the evening platform addresses from their original length to two thousand words each—a worthy achievement. The book, furthermore, contains a report of the daily business proceedings, the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the Conference, and, although it has no index, it contains a Table of Contents with the titles and authors of the various addresses, papers and sermons. The publication is well worth reading, including all seventy-four addresses, sermons and essays.

According to Methodist historians the conference was a smashing success if for no other reason than that it gave an impetus to the movement toward church union. It was one of the earliest evidences, following the Cape May Conference of 1876, of that deeper spirit of fraternity which would eventually result in 1939 in the union of three branches of Methodism to form The Methodist Church. A great deal of credit for this success must go to the delegates themselves who had evidently resolved to dwell together in brotherly love and who showed a remarkable fortitude in the face of a barrage of speeches, resolutions and recommendations.
The Opening Sermon

The opening sermon of the conference was given by Bishop Randolph Foster of the northern church. He was a former pastor, a college president, having been president of both Northwestern University and later Drew Theological Seminary (now Drew University), and, although he was allegedly harsh and arbitrary in the exercise of his episcopal powers, he was a recognized pulpit orator. According to reports,

For more than two hours the bishop held the unwearied attention of the Conference, and the power of the Lord was manifest in the utterance of his word and in the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the Conference. 4

It had been hoped that either the Senior Bishop of the northern church, Matthew Simpson, or the Senior Bishop of the southern church, George Foster Pierce, would deliver the opening sermon. Both men, however, had died within a short time of each other, not long before the opening of the conference. "We enter the conference," stated Bishop Foster, "through a draped portal." 7

The length of the bishop's sermon was not unusual for him. As a boy Edwin H. Hughes, later Bishop Hughes, heard him preach. His comment later in life was, "When the sermon began I was twelve years old; when it ended, I was two hours and twenty minutes older!" 8

The bishop chose two texts: one from II Chronicles 32:2-3 and one from Psalms 68:12-13. Early in his address he stated the purpose of the Conference:

If I rightly apprehend the spirit of the hour, we are here to-day not so much for reminiscence as for counsel; not so much for reciting the history of the past as for girding ourselves for the work of the future; and not so much for rejoicing over accomplished victories as for the formation of plans and the gathering of inspiration for the successful prosecution of the still greater work which yet lies before us. 9

The bishop then proceeded to make lengthy references to every conceivable subject which could be included under this broad outline. The doctrines of the church, the character and quality of its ministry, the importance of preaching and worship, the place of the laity and especially women in the polity of the church, the power of the pew which must rally to the pulpit, the horrors of intoxicants, the need to care for the children of the church and provide them with Christian nurture, the importance of the home for this purpose and the need to observe the Sabbath, the inadvisability of an overdose of catholicity which might engender weakness, the danger that Methodism was losing its hold upon the masses, the

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4Proceedings, p. 38.
7Ibid., p. 84.
9Proceedings, p. 86.
relations and obligations of capital and labor—all brought to a close with a rhetorical flourish that lasted several pages and ended

Methodists of America, behold the field; behold the enemy! Dropping all feuds, be valiant; quit you like men. Hasten the coming age. Let there be no laggards in our camps. Press the battle. Let it be known to all men that, where your colors fly, there is loyalty, courage, victory.10

The sermon, from which I may have inadvertently omitted some other subjects, is an excellent example of late 19th century pulpit oratory which was eventually and effectively curtailed in the next century with the advent of the radio and later television where listeners could easily stem the tide of such rhetoric by turning to another station.

The Papers and Addresses

Some of the papers presented at the conference are doctrinal in nature and give a picture of the theological thinking of that day; some are historical, outlining the work and personnel of the Christmas Conference, the relation of Wesley to American Methodism, Asbury’s Superintendency and what it did for American Methodism, and the rise and progress of Methodism in Canada. A few are visionary, such as “Methodism in 1784 and its Outlook” followed by “Methodism in 1884 and its Outlook.” A paper on “The Causes of the Success of Methodism” was followed by one on “The Possible Dangers to Future Methodism” and “Is Methodism Losing its Power Over the Masses?” The importance of the laity was noted in a paper on “The Place and Power of the Lay Element in Methodism.”

The most incongruous linking of a speaker and a paper was the selection of James M. Buckley to offer a paper on “What Methodism Owes to Women.” Since Buckley, a prominent editor, writer, historian and leader of the northern church was inextricably, completely, absolutely and horrendously opposed to giving women any place of authority and power in the ruling bodies of the church and was decidedly opposed to the ordination of women, why he was chosen as a speaker on this subject remains a mystery unless it was the purpose of the committee to stamp Methodism with Buckley’s viewpoint. His address is unadulterated male chauvinism. He attempts to show that Wesley was opposed to permitting women to preach and, although he exalts the spirituality of many of the women of Methodism, he makes it exceedingly clear that their place is not in positions of prominence or power nor in the pulpit.

The evening platform addresses were given at the same hour in various churches, and they centered in four great topics: on Wednesday evening, December 10, they stressed missions; on Friday evening, December 12, education; Sunday Schools were the center of interest on Monday evening, December 15; and on Tuesday, December 16, “The Mission of Methodism to the Extremes of Society.”

10Ibid., p. 107.
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A number of things stand out as one contemplates the Centennial Conference and its work. First, the high calibre of those taking part and of those who were delegates to the conference. Bishops, leading pastors, lawyers, professors, and historians all contributed to the success of the occasion. On the other hand, not a single woman had been chosen as a speaker, and not a single woman graced any of the delegations.

Furthermore, a number of important persons who were delegates did not attend, although no reason is given for their absence. From the Methodist Episcopal Church men like Bishops Warren, Foss, Hurst, Mallalie, the famous Bishop Taylor of Africa, Judge E. L. Fancher of New York, and numerous lawyers failed to make an appearance. From the Methodist Episcopal Church, South those who failed to attend included Bishops McTyeire, Keener, Parker and Hargrove in addition to numerous lawyers, state and municipal representatives and Governor Robert Lowry of Mississippi. However, G. D. Shands, Lieutenant-Governor of the state, was present and took an active part.

A second noteworthy fact was the optimism reflected in every speech, address and paper. Methodism, according to the Conference, was destined to play a greater and more important part in the future history of the world than in the past. Each speaker seemed to vie with all preceding ones in predicting the brilliance of Methodism’s future. The few warning notes that marked some of the addresses seemed only to place in greater relief the assurance of the future glory of Methodism in America and the world. C. H. Warren, for example, a distinguished pastor and later an editor in the northern church, said among other things:

So now the Christian nations rule the world. They have the brain; they have the wealth; they have the power; and the prophecy is being fulfilled, “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish.” Those powers which bow to the scepter of Christ have virtually established international law over all the peoples of the earth, so that the ambassadors of Christ are free to preach the Gospel to almost all the nations and tribes of our world. Then, many millions of the heathen world have been lifted up towards Christianity. India has laid aside its grosser heathen customs; and some of its most enlightened minds declare that Jesus already rules in India. Not British power, but the spirit of Jesus, his will and laws, which are the source of British power, dominate India too. In Japan the adoption of Christianity as the national religion has been openly advocated. Some of the most cautious and prudent observers in mission fields think Japan and China at no very distant day will adopt Christianity as their national policy. False gods are losing their hold on the peoples of the East. Thus we see the world prepared for the advance of Methodism in the coming century. 11

One is reminded of that camp meeting song with its innumerable verses but whose climactic verse is

The devil, Calvin and Voltaire  
May hate the Methodist in vain;  
Their doctrine shall be downward hurl’d,  
The Methodist will take the world. 12

11Ibid., p. 191. Italics added.
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The 1884 Centennial Conference seemed similarly convinced of this idea of Methodist world domination.

Unfortunately, the speakers seemed totally unaware, for example, of what effect the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 might have on Asia’s attitude toward Christianity. They seemed to have had no knowledge of the harsh, at times unjust, rule of the British in India. Not one word of criticism was leveled at British colonialism, and not one speaker lifted his voice against the arbitrary Exclusion Act by the United States government which prided itself on being the melting pot for all peoples.

In this respect Bishop Foster, who delivered the two-hour opening sermon of the Conference, seemed to have a better grasp than most on current conditions, especially in America. In his sermon Foster had given a grave warning that Protestant Christianity was losing it hold upon the masses.

The bishop had stated

There are signs that our Protestant Christianity is losing hold of what are called the masses, a word itself of bad omen; its meaning, plain and simple, is, that we are drifting away from humanity; that we are becoming aliens to our brother men. That the Protestant form of Christianity improves the general condition of those who come under its influence; that it builds a higher type of character in the individual; that it creates better homes, better governments, a truer and nobler civilization, can not be disputed; but no more can it be disputed that it has a tendency to separate the poor and rich at the altars of God. It is the religion of the respectable. This is its greatest weakness and danger. It lifts its adherents, and in lifting them segregates them. The Church becomes a separate community—a kind of distinct nationality. In providing for itself to meet its own wants it creates conditions which practically exclude the unsympathizing multitude. It ceases to have anything in common with them. By an inevitable law, as the churchly people rise above them, they drift away and fall, not simply into indifference, but into a latent—many times into an active—antagonism and hostility to the Church itself . . . The chasm is frightful, and is growing wider and wider.\textsuperscript{18}

The bishop’s statement might well describe the relation of The United Methodist Church to the so-called masses of the twentieth century. It is as current as today’s newspaper.

On the whole, however, in reading the Proceedings of the Centennial Conference one get the impression that neither the speakers nor the delegates were a part of the generation in which they were living. They seemed to be dwelling on an Olympian Mountain far above the coarse realities of the everyday world.

The Oxford League

The Centennial Conference also recommended the establishment of the Oxford League which later, under the leadership of John H. Vincent, still later Bishop Vincent, became firmly founded in the northern church. "Bible study, devotional exercise, reading of the Christian classics, and

\textsuperscript{18}Proceedings, p. 101.

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participation in Christian service programs were included in the statement of the League's purpose." The Oxford League continued as a useful youth movement until 1889 when it was merged with several other youth organizations to form the Epworth League "commemorating the birthplace of the founder of Methodism."

**Special Recommendations**

The Conference adopted a report on moral questions. The report centered in Temperance (the Conference advocated total abstinence for all people), The Lord's Day (the Conference noted that it could not expect the world to keep the Sabbath Day holy if the Church of God failed to do so); Divorce (the Conference advised the participating churches to perform no marriage ceremony for persons either of whom had been divorced on other than scriptural grounds); Popular Amusements (the Conference stated that the theater, the card-table, the dance, the wine-cup, these and other fascinating indulgences of a kindred character do not help, but hinder the work of God among men); the Class Meeting (the Conference urged that pastors and people, so far from allowing class meetings to lapse, study to increase their efficiency by making them a place alike for a deeper knowledge of God's Word and of the human heart, and for the fellowship of believers in Christ); Education (the Conference stated its belief that the educational systems of the country should be pervaded by the hallowed influence of the religion of the Bible and added that "we believe it to be one of the most solemn obligations of the Church of Christ to establish and maintain religious instructions of learning, that our children may therein learn the knowledge and fear of God, and, thus be prepared for the highest rights and functions of citizenship"); Centenary Collections (the Conference decided to continue the financial campaigns through 1885); Women's Work (the delegates recognized with appreciation and thankfulness the fact that the women in the churches had never been more untiring, while in the organization of missionary and other benevolent societies among them "we see the guiding hand and inspiring Spirit of God").

The longest resolution, however, was directed at the Mormons and Mormonism. Possibly because of the Massacre of 1857 already mentioned in a survey of our grandfather's America—a massacre that had occurred about thirty years before the Conference—and probably because of their emphasis on polygamy, the Mormons were berated in terms more fittingly applied to Attila the Hun than to a people who had themselves been driven westward by religious persecution.

We believe that Mormonism is contrary to the Word of God, irrational, out of harmony with the civilization of the 19th century, and hostile to the peace, prosperity,

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15 *Proceedings*, pp. 70, 71, 72, 73.
and perpetuity of the American government. It fosters immorality and defies law; it robs the poor; has paved the roadways of its power with carcasses of the helpless; calls lechery by the sacred name of love, and slavery of women by the divine name of marriage. Its fingers drip with the blood of massacre, and its purse has become plethoric by robbery.  

This is only the opening paragraph of a tirade, the criticism of which would be labor wasted and an exercise in futility.

The Great Achievement

Although the Conference probably resulted in many benefits to the participating churches, the one great achievement was the deepening of the spirit of unity and fraternity among Methodist bodies, particularly between the northern and the southern churches. On the seventh day of the Conference J. B. McFerrin of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South presented a paper which was unanimously adopted.

It stated among other things that the Conference had “strengthened the bond of brotherhood between the various branches of the Methodist family represented in the conference,” and then suggested ways to “utilize and make permanent the benefit already gained, and to extend and widen its influence in the future.” After several general resolutions it stated:

Resolved, 4. That we respectfully commend to the bishops of the episcopal, and the chief officers of the non-episcopal, Methodist Churches represented in this Conference to consider whether informal conferences between them could not be held with profit from time to time concerning matters of common interest to their respective bodies.

Resolved, 5. That we shall be greatly pleased to see these bonds of brotherhood and fellowship increased and strengthened more and more in the future.

Resolved, 6. That any occasion that may bring our respective Churches together in convention for the promotion of these objects will always be hailed with profound satisfaction.

The paper was signed by a number of persons and was followed by several supporting speeches. It was moved that the delegates adopt the resolution by standing and singing

Together let us sweetly live;
Together let us die;
And each a starry crown receive,
And reign above the sky.

The delegates were totally unaware of the new dimensions of space which would in the next century be demonstrated by the astronauts. To them Heaven was still just out of reach above the stars, the moon and the sky.

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16Ibid., p. 71.
17Ibid., pp. 67, 68.
18Ibid., p. 68.
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The delegates themselves must have been impressed by the busy character of Methodism. Well over seventy speeches and addresses crammed into nine days in addition to replies and discussions, the creation of the constitution of the Oxford League, the passing of a fistful of recommendations, and a great closing Love Feast allowed little time for anything else than meetings. Certainly there was no time for prayer, reflection, or recreation. One is reminded of the quatrain:

Mary had a little lamb—
It might have become a sheep;
Instead, it became a Methodist,
And died from lack of sleep.

There is no record that any of the delegates died from lack of sleep; there is no record either that they gained any profound religious insights, but their great achievement remained: a deeper comprehension of the possibility of a new and lasting unity among the various branches of Methodism. That achievement would bear fruit in the next century.