

**WILLIAM BELTON MURRAH:  
PRESIDENT OF MILLSAPS COLLEGE AND SOUTHERN BISHOP  
IN AMERICA'S PROGRESSIVE ERA**

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We live in an auspicious era! We live on a grand continent! In the mighty impulse that throbs in every department of human enterprise we may see the prophecy of more brilliant achievements than the past has ever yet recorded. But this prophecy is to have its fulfillment only when a thoroughly equipped scholarship shall come to the front and assert its right and power to lead in all great movements.

W. B. Murrah, *Inaugural Address*,  
President, Millsaps College, 1892-1910

William Belton Murrah (1851-1925), one of the most distinguished Methodist educators and bishops in the South during America's Progressive Era (roughly between 1890 and 1920), was an organizer and administrator rather than theologian. His life and ministry were dedicated to the growth of southern Methodism and he applied his organizational and administrative skills wherever needed most. So keen was his interest in higher education and so acute were his organizational and administrative skills, that he advanced the cause of Methodist higher education in the South more than anyone before him.

Murrah was born in Pickensville, Alabama, to the Rev. Dr. William and Mary Susan (Cureton) Murrah. He graduated in 1874 from Southern University, then one of the finest institutions in the South, where he studied not only arts and science, but also law and was a charter member of Southern's first fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha. Alfred F. Smith, familiar with Southern's reputation, wrote, "Throughout his student years he was receiving not only the intellectual enlargement which comes from a study of the classics, philosophy, history, and all that goes to the enlargement of the mind, but sitting under the inspiration of the mightiest men in the denomination, he was also imbibing the spirit of the Church."<sup>2</sup> Among those scholars were Allen S. Andrews, University President and Professor of Moral Philosophy and Oscar F. Casey, Professor of Latin and Greek Languages and Literature. Among the upperclassmen (class of 1873) whom Murrah may have emulated were outstanding personalities such as John Robert Allen, Robert Taylor

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<sup>1</sup> The author is indebted to Debra McIntosh, Millsaps College archives, and Dawn Patterson, United Methodist Archives, for special research assistance.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred F. Smith, "William Belton Murrah: A Bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," *Methodist Quarterly Review (South)* 74 (July 1925), 435.

Nabors, and Francis Marion Peterson, Jr., who like Murrah went on to become pillars of southern Methodism.

Soon after graduating, Murrah was admitted to the North Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. His early pastorates included: Vinton Circuit, 1875-1876; West Point and Okolona, 1876-1877; Como and Fredonia, 1877-1878; Oxford, 1878-1882; Winona and Vaiden, 1882-1885 (he also served as Principal of Winona High School, 1882-1884); and Aberdeen, 1885-1886.

At Oxford, Murrah met his future wife, Beulah Fitzhugh, daughter of educator Lewis T. Fitzhugh, a professor at the University of Mississippi who in 1886 would become President of Whitworth College and later the founder and first president of Belhaven College in Mississippi. William and Beulah married in 1881 and eventually had one son, William F. Murrah, born in 1889. Their son received his A.B. degree from Millsaps College in 1908. He received his A.M. from Vanderbilt University in 1909 and his LL.B. in 1912, then entered the practice of law in the Memphis firm of Fitzhugh and Biggs of which his uncle Guston T. Fitzhugh was a partner. In 1914 that law firm was dissolved and a new firm named Fitzhugh and Murrah was established.

In June 1886 William Belton Murrah was named Vice President of Whitworth Female College, in Brookhaven, Mississippi, in which post he remained until becoming president of Millsaps College. In 1887 he received the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Centenary College in Louisiana and in 1897 the honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Wofford College in South Carolina.

## I

While remaining Vice President at Whitworth, around 1890 Murrah became part of the triumvirate that was instrumental in organizing Millsaps College which opened at Jackson in 1892. Bishop Charles Betts Galloway, President of the Board of Trustees, and Major Reuben W. Millsaps, the school's chief benefactor, together led the fund-raising, while Murrah designed the academic program. A. F. Watkins declared, "The third of this illustrious triumvirate was Bishop William B. Murrah, the distinguished pastor and educator, to whose scholarship, judgment, and gifts of organization and administration were committed the destinies of the infant institution."<sup>3</sup>

Millsaps College was the property of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and organized by concurrent action of the Mississippi and North Mississippi Conferences. Murrah wrote, "The College has its remote origin in the general policy of the Methodist Church to maintain institutions under its own control for higher learning in the Arts and Sciences as well as for the

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<sup>3</sup> A. F. Watkins, quoted in Smith, 437.

special training of young ministers.”<sup>4</sup> Though under Methodist control, the College was non-sectarian in its admission of students.

Pursuant to the action of the two Methodist Mississippi Conferences, “Plans for a commodious main building were immediately procured, grounds were purchased and in a comparatively short time buildings were in process of erection. When it became evident that everything would soon be in readiness for formally opening the College for the reception of students, the Board of Trustees, at a meeting held in Jackson, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1892, began the work of organizing a faculty of instruction.”<sup>5</sup> Murrah was named President of Millsaps and served from 1892 to 1910. In his forward-looking inaugural address upon the opening of the institution, he stated,

Nothing is more enduring than an educational institution based upon right principles. . . . Its domicile may change; the original plan of its projectors may be modified; the demands of progress may require readjustments to meet altered conditions, but in its essential life and power it will live through the ages. . . . An educational institution especially should be surrounded by an atmosphere charged with lofty conceptions of man’s nature and destiny. . . . In accordance with the principles here announced, Millsaps College, bearing the name of its honored founder, begins its career to-day as an institution to promote the cause of Christian education.<sup>6</sup>

Murrah assured his audience that

our policy will be in harmony with the broad and liberal spirit of the great church under whose auspices the affairs of the college will be administered. Whatever is best in method and system will be adopted. Believing in the essential unity of truth, we shall not hesitate to carry our pupils into every department of legitimate research; but the Holy Bible, with its incomparable teachings and its sublime revelations of man’s origin and destiny, shall hold in this institution the supreme place of honor and authority.<sup>7</sup>

Murrah held,

There is a constant element in education that is unaffected by changed conditions, but methods and aims should broaden with the march of advancing civilization. An institution like an individual should be in sympathy with the spirit of progress that permeates every department of modern life and enterprise. To properly understand and thoroughly appreciate our social, moral, intellectual and material conditions, and to adjust ourselves to the actual demands of our times is, after all, the highest philosophy of life.<sup>8</sup>

He was especially progressive in his views toward the Millsaps College curricula, “We will ever honor the old classical method for what it has done, and

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<sup>4</sup> W. B. Murrah, “Origin and Location of Millsaps College,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, 4 (1901), 227.

<sup>5</sup> Murrah, 230.

<sup>6</sup> W. B. Murrah, *Inaugural Address Delivered by the Rev. W. B. Murrah, D.D., President of Millsaps College, on the occasion of the Opening of the Institution, in Jackson, Miss., September 29th, 1892* (Jackson, MS: The Clarion-Ledger Print., 1893), 1, 11, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Murrah, *Inaugural Address*, 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Murrah, *Inaugural Address*, 4.

cherish it for what it can yet do in promoting a liberal education; but since it was devised the world has made great progress in intellectual possessions, and our college curricula must embrace a more comprehensive scheme of instruction.”<sup>9</sup>

What type of college president was Murrah? In Marguerite Watkins Goodman’s *History of Millsaps College*, she wrote, “He was a man of quiet dignity, slow and deliberate in speech and manner, positive—almost peremptory—in facing serious issues, yet tender of soul when the occasion arose.”<sup>10</sup> *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* states: “As a college administrator he was energetic, resourceful and efficient, and under his leadership Millsaps college took high rank among the educational institutions of the state.”<sup>11</sup>

David M. Keys, in his “Historical Sketch of Millsaps College,” says of Murrah,

So strong was his personality and so significant the work that he did in assembling the first faculty, organizing the curriculum and formulating the educational policies of the institution, that he is commonly named in the triumvirate of founders, Galloway, Millsaps and Murrah. He merits the honor; for he secured the best trained men available, formulated a course of study in what were then the fundamentals of a liberal education, and instituted a regimen of intellectual activity that was challenging to faculty and students alike. . . . President Murrah was a man of great dignity and poise and of judicial temperament. He earned the respect and esteem of the students and greatly impressed them by his weekly lectures in the chapel. . . . When William Belton Murrah was made bishop in 1910, he resigned as president of the college and was elected president of the Board of Trustees, in which capacity he continued to exercise great influence in the affairs of the college until his death in 1925.<sup>12</sup>

The attractiveness and force of his personality cannot be underestimated. Alfred F. Smith, praising Murrah’s multitudinous virtues and merits, wrote that his “personality was his chief distinction.”<sup>13</sup>

For his original faculty and ever after, Murrah sought to secure the best academics available. Keys wrote, “Of the first nine men employed by him, four had the Doctor of Philosophy degree or were later to get it; all did graduate work at such universities as Hopkins, Vanderbilt, and Chicago. From almost the beginning he adopted the policy of giving leave to ambitious men for graduate study.”<sup>14</sup> Examples included, James A. Moore, Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy, who came from the faculty of Southern University to Millsaps College in 1894 and had obtained his Ph.D. at Illinois

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<sup>9</sup> Murrah, *Inaugural Address*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> Marguerite Watkins Goodman, quoted in George M. Harmon, *Millsaps College: Determining the Agenda* (New York: The Newcomen Society of the United States, 1985), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Anon., “Murrah, William Belton,” *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. XXIX (New York: James T. White & Company, 1941), 461.

<sup>12</sup> David M. Key, “Historical Sketch of Millsaps College,” *The Southern Association Quarterly* 10 (Nov. 1946), 564.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, 431.

<sup>14</sup> Keys, 564.

Wesleyan University in 1888; and Anthony M. Muckenfuss, Professor of Chemistry, Mineralogy, and Physics, who joined the Millsaps faculty in 1893 and obtained his Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University in 1895.

Murrah himself taught Bible and philosophy at Millsaps. So important was a solid foundation in the Bible that all freshmen attended his course of study in the English Bible, aided by George McKendree Steele's *Outlines of Bible Study* (1889). Murrah's course spanned both semesters of the freshman year. Steele was notable as both an outstanding clergyman and President of Lawrence University from 1865 to 1879. As Murrah's Bible course developed over the years, the course catalog for 1907-1908 stated, "The members of the Freshman Class are required to devote one hour a week to recitation, though they are expected to give a part of every day to the work of preparation. . . but it is not designed that the course shall take the place of the private and devotional study of the sacred Scriptures."<sup>15</sup>

All Millsaps students were required to attend morning worship in the College Chapel, "to hear the reading of the Sacred Scriptures and to engage in singing and prayer."<sup>16</sup> A chapter of the Young Men's Christian Association was organized shortly after the college's founding and all new students were encouraged to join. It became quite active in various endeavors, but "most important is the Bible Study Committee. The importance of studying the Bible is presented and every student is urged to engage in Systematic Bible work. Daily Bible study is felt to be of incalculable value in Christian living."<sup>17</sup> Further, with the college situated in Jackson, the capital of Mississippi, certain locational advantages were afforded. Among them, "Bishop Galloway, President of the Board of Trustees, resides here, and his lectures and special sermons delivered from time to time add greatly to the interest and profit of each session."<sup>18</sup>

Murrah encouraged the greatest possible flexibility in his faculty's approach to teaching: "We fully endorse the views of another as expressed in the following language: 'One teacher may instruct orally, another may use text-books; one may find his material in nature, another in literature; one may use science as his instrument, another mathematics or philosophy, but if they are all good teachers they will impart knowledge, energize mind and develop character.'<sup>19</sup> Keys adds, "Following the pattern established by President Murrah, the college has brought together able and well-trained men and theirs has been the work of developing the standards, the techniques, and the academic procedures that characterize an effective college."<sup>20</sup>

Created as a liberal arts institution, Millsaps added a department of natural sciences in 1893 and a law department in 1896. For several years the

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<sup>15</sup> *Register of Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi, for 1907-1908*, 42.

<sup>16</sup> *Register*, 88.

<sup>17</sup> *Register*, 90.

<sup>18</sup> *Register*, 81.

<sup>19</sup> Murrah, *Inaugural Address*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Keys, 566.

curriculum consisted totally of prescribed courses, as was customary up to that time. In the academic year 1900-1901, elective courses were first allowed, though English, foreign language, and mathematics remained the core curriculum. From the beginning, Millsaps was highly selective in those students admitted and in those retained and graduated. Emphasis was on providing a high quality education for outstanding students. When Murrah resigned in 1910, upon his election as bishop, enrollment at Millsaps numbered 245 students.

After erection of the main building in 1892, other structures followed steadily during Murrah's tenure as President of the college and President of the Board of Trustees: an astronomical observatory; a library; Webster science hall; the first dormitory (Founders Hall) and two additional dormitories (Burton and Galloway halls); and two fraternity houses. When "Old Main," the original administration building, was destroyed by fire in 1914, a new administration building was constructed and named Murrah Hall.

Among other notable achievements during Murrah's era, in 1901 Millsaps built the first golf course in Mississippi. In 1902, Mary Letitia Holloman became the first woman graduate of Millsaps. In 1908, Sing-Ung Zung, of Soochow, China, became the first foreign student to graduate from Millsaps. In 1913, Millsaps became the second institution in Mississippi to gain accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In 1924, the school joined the Association of American Colleges, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars, and the American Council on Education. Appraising the institution that Murrah built, Millsaps professor Alfred A. Kern affirmed, "How soundly he built is evidenced by the condition and the reputation of the college today. Its steady growth and its high academic standards are firmly based on the solid foundations which he laid."<sup>21</sup>

As President of a thriving Methodist institution of higher learning, Murrah was held in high regard among the leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He attended every General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, from 1886 until his final illness. He was a member of the Methodist Ecumenical Conference at Washington, DC, in 1891, and the similar conference at London in 1901. He was a fraternal messenger to the Methodist General Conference of Canada in 1902. Additionally, Wilbur Dow Perry recorded, "At the commencement at the close of the session of 1905-1906 the semi-centennial of the founding of the institution [Southern University, Murrah's alma mater] was celebrated. Rev. W. B. Murrah, afterwards Bishop Murrah, an alumnus, preached the commencement sermon."<sup>22</sup>

## II

In recognition of Murrah's organizational and administrative abilities, he

<sup>21</sup> Alfred A. Kern, quoted in Smith, 438.

<sup>22</sup> Wilbur Dow Perry, *A History of Birmingham-Southern College, 1856-1931* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1931), 50-51.

was elected a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in May 1910 during the Church's General Conference at Asheville, North Carolina. Smith writes, "The Church never had occasion to regret the choice. Into the position of a chief pastor he carried a pastor's heart and a pastor's concern. To all the people he was a brother, strong and helpful. He was without ostentation or forbidding manner. He was as naturally a sympathizing friend after his elevation as before. With manliness too great to be dimmed by his office, he held the unwavering regard of the men in the ranks."<sup>23</sup>

Murrah toured the world twice during 1911-1913 inspecting Methodist mission stations and studying conditions with emphasis on the Near and Far East. He was accompanied by his wife, who kept a record of their travel.

During the years 1910-1914, Murrah was also deeply involved behind-the-scenes in the legal battle between the southern Methodist College of Bishops and the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust, over the issue of control of the Methodist-affiliated university.<sup>24</sup> In June, 1910, he declined election to the Vanderbilt Board of Trust. Moreover, during the height of the conflict, he was Bishop of the Tennessee or "Old Jerusalem" Conference, in which the controversy was centered. Bishop Eugene R. Hendrix, Chairman of the Vanderbilt Board of Trust, had complained in 1910 that any meeting of the southern Methodist Church regarding Vanderbilt held outside of Tennessee, the state in which Vanderbilt was incorporated, would be illegal.<sup>25</sup>

The College of Bishops' litigation began when, as Cullen T. Carter states,

Therefore, a bill was filed in Chancery Court at Nashville, Tuesday morning, October 25 [1910], by A. B. Anderson, Attorney-General, on relation of A. W. Wilson, W. A. Candler, H. C. Morrison, E. E. Hoss, James Atkins, Collins Denny, J. C. Kilgo, W. B. Murrah, W. R. Lambuth, R. G. Waterhouse, E. D. Mouzon, and J. H. McCoy, bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and supervisors of Vanderbilt University; N. E. Harris, V. A. Godbey, and A. W. Biggs, against the Board of Trust of Vanderbilt University and Claude Waller, J. A. Robins, and R. F. Jackson, who claim to be members of the Board of Trust.<sup>26</sup>

Preliminary proceedings were held that morning. "The case was argued for nearly an hour on Tuesday morning, October 25, before Chancellor John Allison. The complainants were represented by Judge E. C. O'Rear of Kentucky, and Messrs. A. W. Biggs and G. T. Fitzhugh. The defendants were represented by Messrs. Vertrees and Vertrees, John Bell Keeble, Stokes and Stokes, J. C. Bradford, and C. C. Trabue."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Smith, 439.

<sup>24</sup> For an extensive discussion of the significant oversight role of the College of Bishops in relation to Vanderbilt University, see John O. Gross, "The Bishops Versus Vanderbilt University," *Methodist History*, 12 (April 1964), 23-34.

<sup>25</sup> Gross, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Cullen T. Carter, *History of the Tennessee Conference and a Brief Summary of the General Conferences, the Methodist Church, from the Frontier in Middle Tennessee To the Present Time* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1948), 340.

<sup>27</sup> Carter, 342.

The law firm headed by Guston T. Fitzhugh and Albert W. Biggs, and in which Murrah's son was employed, represented the College of Bishops. Fitzhugh was Bishop Murrah's brother-in-law and attorney for many large interests, increasingly specializing in matters of equity. Biggs was President of the Tennessee Bar Association in 1912-1913. The College of Bishops prevailed in the Chancery Court of Tennessee. However, when the Vanderbilt appeal reached the Tennessee Supreme Court, the lower-court decision was reversed and Methodist control of Vanderbilt University was lost in 1914. The only right the Bishops succeeded in retaining was the right to confirm or reject nominees to the Vanderbilt Board of Trust. This failed to satisfy the General Conference, which then decided to sever completely its ties to Vanderbilt. One may question the wisdom of this decision.

Gross writes, "At the General Conference of 1914, the Vanderbilt case was the most important item on the agenda. The whole church had been stirred by the controversy. Feelings ran deep. Many delegates came to the conference ready to break all ties with the university. Another sizable group wanted to seek an amicable solution."<sup>28</sup> So arduous was this protracted litigation that, at the 1914 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Carter writes, "Bishop E. E. Hoss, who had given himself unreservedly in the Vanderbilt University case, was given complete rest for a year to occupy his time as he deemed best."<sup>29</sup>

Fortunately, the case was not a total loss. When the charter of Methodist-controlled Emory University in Georgia was granted in 1915, with Bishop Murrah and Guston T. Fitzhugh among the parties thereto, previous weaknesses in Methodist control revealed in the Vanderbilt case were remedied in the Emory charter. Murrah and Fitzhugh were members of Emory's first Board of Trustees. The Emory articles of incorporation, with only slight amendment, remain essentially unchanged today.

During this period of dispute the 1914 Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was held at Pulaski, Tennessee, with Bishop Murrah presiding.<sup>30</sup> The 1915 Tennessee Conference was held at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, with Bishop Murrah presiding for the second consecutive year. Repercussions of the Vanderbilt controversy had not ended. It has been written that Murrah's "poise, judicial temperament, gentlemanly bearing and ability to decide questions and without creating friction enabled him to conduct the business of annual conferences with entire satisfaction."<sup>31</sup> Alfred F. Smith wrote:

Every Conference session where he presided had a new lesson in the art of being a

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<sup>28</sup> Gross, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Carter, 361.

<sup>30</sup> Murrah continued to reside in Jackson, Mississippi, until 1914 when he relocated his family to Memphis, Tennessee. Incidentally, Jackson's Murrah High School is named in his honor.

<sup>31</sup> Anon., "Murrah, William Belton," 461.

gentleman. . . . No discords arose in any Conference while he had charge of it. He knew how to steer the course of procedure safely through the varying views and passions of men. Trouble was avoided by foreseeing it, and agitation was escaped by providing in advance for calm and wise measures. No personal ends were ever sought, and the Conferences knew he had only the kingdom of God in his plans.<sup>32</sup>

Murrah was also a staunch supporter of financial aid to missions. Smith wrote, "His published observations and private notes concerning the Conferences and mission fields in Korea, Japan, and China, over which he had supervision for a time, disclose how deeply he studied the problems of the missionaries and how fully he entered into the spirit of their labors."<sup>33</sup> Despite wartime conditions in Europe, life in the mid-South was relatively unaffected, church affairs ran smoothly, and in 1915 the Tennessee Conference Board of Missions stated:

Our own Tennessee Conference is peculiarly free from the serious disasters and financial depressions. Our section of country 'flows with milk and honey,' and we should give thanks and express gratitude to God for these favors by gifts of men and money to expand his kingdom to the ends of the earth. While a large portion of the world is engaged in terrible and cruel war and the missionary contributions are thereby reduced to the minimum, we should do our best to supply this deficiency.<sup>34</sup>

However, by 1918 the situation had changed markedly. Carter reports:

It was the darkest year in the history of the church since the General Conference of 1858, in Nashville, Tennessee. Then the church was facing a bitter war between the States. At this time the church was suffering on account of the First World War which was in its most fierce stages. Some were saying that the church was impotent in a crisis like the present, and others were saying that the church had lost its authority. Others said that this war would be the finish of the church, and that social clubs would take its place in the future. There were other dire prognostications of the church in the religious and secular press.<sup>35</sup>

One of the early actions to meet the challenge was to strengthen the College of Bishops. In 1918, the College contained the largest number of bishops in its history: Eugene R. Hendrix; Joseph S. Key (retired); Warren A. Candler; Henry C. Morrison (retired); E. Embree Hoss (retired); James Atkins; Collins Denny; John C. Kilgo; William B. Murrah; Walter R. Lambuth; Richard G. Waterhouse (retired); Edwin D. Mouzon; James H. McCoy; John M. Moore; William F. McMurry; Urban V. W. Darlington; Horace M. DuBose; William N. Ainsworth; and James Cannon, Jr.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Smith, 439.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, 439.

<sup>34</sup> Tennessee Conference Board of Missions, quoted in Carter, 367.

<sup>35</sup> Carter, 377.

<sup>36</sup> Carter, 378.

## III

Thereafter, Murrah administered Methodist affairs in several large geographic regions of the South. From 1918 to 1922 he presided over the three conferences in Missouri and the Denver conference. He was active in the American Methodist Missionary Centenary fund-raising movement, which culminated in 1919. The movement sought to raise \$120,000,000 and succeeded in securing pledges of \$160,000,000 for missionary work. At the time of Murrah's fatal illness and death in Memphis, he was supervising the Alabama, North Alabama, and North Georgia conferences, three of the largest in the southern Methodist church.

Near the end of Murrah's life and ministry, Carter writes:

The question of the unification of American Methodism had been before the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, since 1922 and earlier. It did not become a disturbing question until the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church on May 7, 1924, in Springfield, Massachusetts, adopted the plan of unification presented by the Joint Commission of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The vote in favor of the plan was overwhelming—802 to 13.<sup>37</sup>

The southern church, however, was not ready to accept it. Murrah's love of Methodism suggests he was amenable to unification. One wonders whether his organizational and administrative skills, had he lived, would have helped to achieve unification prior to 1939.

Bishop Warren A. Candler said of Murrah, "As a bishop of the Church he was careful, painstaking, and safe in his administration. In this high office he met the expectations of his friends and won the admiration and affection of his brethren. His work was approved by the Church and blessed of God. In expounding the laws of the Church his decisions were clear, and his brethren never found one to reverse."<sup>38</sup>

Smith observed, "Bishop Murrah's friends think, and he probably also thought, that his greatest work was achieved in the schools. For that kind of service he was almost perfectly adapted. He had the gift of teaching. He gave to it the major part of his strength and time—twenty-four years, six at Whitworth and eighteen at Millsaps. Into those institutions, especially Millsaps, he built enduring qualities. In the lives of his associates, in the faculty members, and in his pupils he deposited an influence valuable beyond calculation."<sup>39</sup>

Murrah published relatively little, but was highly influential concerning a number of public issues, in a restrained and dignified way. "He was courtly, affable and dignified in his bearing, an eloquent public speaker, a profound thinker and wise counselor and his advice was valued highly in civic and

<sup>37</sup> Carter, 402-403.

<sup>38</sup> Warren A. Candler, quoted in Smith, 439.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, 438-439.

educational as well as in religious matters.”<sup>40</sup> Smith concludes, “When a full accounting of the progress of Southern Methodism in the first quarter of our century is written, the name of Bishop William Belton Murrah will often recur and a position of first rank will be assigned him. His worth was recognized while he lived, and it grows not less but larger since his departure.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Anon, *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 461.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, 441.