In June and July 1919 over one million visitors from around the world gathered at the Ohio State Fair Grounds in Columbus to attend the Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions. This Protestant missionary exposition in many ways reflected earlier world’s fairs held in the United States by featuring international pavilions, live ethnographic displays, advances in technology, and a miniature midway. Methodists as well as members of other denominations attended the event which emphasized the need for the continued expansion of Protestant missions around the world.

In preparation for the celebration, Methodist missionaries from the Board of Foreign Missions and the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension were asked to bring foreign and indigenous peoples and items such as native clothing, religious icons, silent films, and glass slides from their countries and regions of placement for public display at the exposition. During the event Methodist organizers displayed the latest gadgetry in electronic media to demonstrate the advancements of American technology and to promote these devices for use in local Protestant churches. This essay examines the contours of this three-week Protestant world’s fair and explores how the Methodist Episcopal Church used ethnographic and technological exhibits to display foreign and indigenous ‘Others’ and demonstrate through advanced technological means the connectivity of Methodism to American popular culture and Protestant missionary expansion.

I

John Wesley’s adage, “The world is my parish” served as a springboard for the global expansion of Methodist missions. The desire of the Methodist founder to spread scriptural holiness throughout England and the world materialized in the United States in 1816 through the intercultural exploits of John Stewart, an uneducated African-American missionary to the
Wyandotte Indians of northern Ohio. Three years following the journey of Stewart into northwest Ohio the Methodist Episcopal Church authorized the formation of The Missionary Society and established the headquarters of the organization in New York City. A century of intercultural evangelization resulted and the Methodist Episcopal Church expanded its missionary program beyond the United States, establishing a denominational presence in a number of countries including Africa, India, and China. As the one hundred-year anniversary of the founding of The Missionary Society approached, Methodist leadership desired to celebrate this occasion with a spectacular intercultural festival. The Centenary Celebration of 1919, a world’s fair for American Protestants, commemorated the century of missionary advance for the forces of Methodism.

To undertake the large-scale task of organizing and implementing a Protestant missionary exposition the Methodist Episcopal Church hired Dr. S. Earl Taylor, leader of the ecumenical Interchurch World Movement, to serve as Executive Secretary of the Centenary and Director-General of the celebration at Columbus. Taylor’s recognition as “a businessman fired with enthusiasm for the Gospel of Christ” and his organizational skills and manly determination provoked Methodist leadership to commission this former YMCA physical culture instructor and graduate of Drew Theological Seminary to organize the displays of Methodist intercultural work for the million visitors expected to attend the missionary exposition.

Taylor relished his task to make evident the global authority and influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church through ethnographic and technological exhibits displayed at the exposition. To foster a sense of anticipation throughout American Methodism for this event and to generate enough visitors to subsidize the over one million dollar price tag of the exposition, Taylor penned a “Personal Letter” published in the Boston-based Zion’s Herald as well as other Methodist publications. In this promotional piece he exclaimed:

Next to a journey around the world, I can think of nothing that will so fully show the great world-wide work of the Methodist Episcopal Church as a visit to the fairgrounds where the architecture and the life of the peoples of the world will be presented and where it will be possible to meet and see many of our strong native Christians from foreign fields. This will indeed be an event of one hundred years. It will not come again in your lifetime or in mine.

Methodist organizers staged the Centenary Celebration from June 20 to July 13 at the state fair grounds in the capital city of Ohio. Locating the event in Columbus was an appropriate choice of venue for ethnographic exhibits which displayed the expansion of Protestant foreign and home mis-

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2Zion’s Herald, June 18, 1919, 784.
sions. The city was chosen to host the exposition when the results of a
denominational survey indicated that one in twelve residents of Ohio attend-
ed a Methodist Episcopal Church and approximately one million Methodists
lived within a six-hour commute of the city. For those driving to the event
in ‘Methodist auto caravans’ over one hundred thousand road maps with
directions to the fair grounds were distributed free of charge to churches
across the United States. Zion’s Herald noted this denominational and inter-
faith pilgrimage to Ohio when the publication announced, “all Methodist
roads will lead to Columbus [where] hundreds of thousands of visitors of all
religious faiths and from every part of this and foreign countries are expect-
ed to attend.” When final attendance figures were tallied, ten thousand
Methodist clergy and over one million curious Methodists and non-
Methodists journeyed through the gates of the Protestant missionary expo-
sion.

The atmosphere at the festival reminded visitors of venues of popular
entertainment available at amusement parks or local carnivals. A reporter for
the YMCA periodical, Association Men, described the scene as he stepped
inside the gate of the fair grounds:

Hand organs grinding, crowds following elephants from the India building and
camels from the Egyptian quarter, or craning their necks to watch the flying
machines loop the loop like mad a mile high, and the pink lemonade and peanut
vender shouting like a circus expert, you at first wondered whether there was any
vital spiritual emphasis.

Once inside the complex the same reporter witnessed large groups of
people gathered in prayer circles along the grassy meadows of the grounds
fervently signing hymns of the church and offering testimonies of personal
conversion experiences to those passing nearby. Thus, for visitors who paid
the fifty-cent admission fee, the exposition suggested a blending of popular
entertainment and religious practice. One could ride the Ferris wheel, munch
on popcorn or drink lemonade, while simultaneously viewing ethnographic
exhibits of Methodist missionaries and listening to the sermons of exposition
evangelist Reverend Bob Jones.

The public space of the missionary exposition, normally dedicated to the
annual exhibition of rural artifacts and agricultural commodities, had been

"Official Reports and Records of the Methodist Centenary Celebration. State Fair Grounds,
Columbus, Ohio, June 20-July 13, 1919." Compiled by Alonzo E. Wilson, Director, Division of
Special Days and Events, 12. See also, Nancye Van Brunt, "Pageantry at the Methodist
Centenary," Methodist History (January 1997): 106. Methodist organizers also visited
Indianapolis, Louisville, and Baltimore as possible venues for the Celebration.

5Zion’s Herald, May 21, 1919, 655.


transformed into international pavilions filled with ethnographic and technological exhibits. Put on display in these eight large buildings were indigenous Africans, Asians, Europeans and an assortment of native peoples from countries occupied by the foreign and home missionary societies of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The following section examines the African and American pavilions, the two buildings that attracted the largest number of visitors during the fair. Inside these buildings American audiences were given the opportunity to gaze at the hundreds of live exhibits of peculiar yet captivating international peoples placed on public display.

II

By the summer of 1919 the display and performances of foreign and indigenous peoples at expositions in the United States was a familiar spectacle to the American public. Since the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, American audiences had gazed at displays of international peoples and cultural artifacts from exotic lands. World's Fair historian Robert Rydell has argued that the performances of international peoples in front of largely white audiences gave Americans "justification for long-standing racial and cultural prejudices." The African and American pavilions at the exposition provided white Methodists with the same opportunity to compare American culture with what little they knew of Africa and the indigenous peoples of the United States.

In his book Exhibiting Religion, John Burris indicates that organizers of expositions in the United States often placed foreigners on display as cultural artifacts that ultimately affected how visitors viewed and analyzed the savage 'Other' as different from what was considered civilized or familiar. Methodists at the Centenary Celebration also viewed strange peoples, cultural artifacts, and curious religious practices as they traveled throughout the grounds of exposition. Once they viewed and analyzed the peoples and objects on display they were required to interpret the similarities and differences of the exhibits and compare what was different or 'uncivilized' with what they considered familiar or 'civilized.'

As a result, Methodist organizers of the Centenary Celebration were in a precarious position. While Africans and indigenous Americans were exhibited as ethnographic objects, cultural oddities with strange and exotic practices, the exhibits were also intended to display the newly Christianized foreigner, a successfully converted former heathen reached with the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this way those who organized the Columbus

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exposition not only placed African and Native American peoples and practices on display, but also wrapped these exhibits with missiological purpose.

III

In his book, *Barbarian Virtues*, Matthew Frye Jacobson notes that many early 20th-century Americans learned what little they knew of Africa from Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* or from popular periodicals such as *National Geographic*. Jacobson argues that American audiences perceived peoples not dressed in the modern fashions of American culture as "naked savages" who inhabited forests described as empty spaces of "wilderness." Yet the allure and mysteries of Africa intrigued many white Americans. Those who attended the celebration in Columbus were required to negotiate between the popular understanding of Africa as a dangerous and uncivilized "dark continent" while at the same time attracted by the ethnographic displays of this mystical land with strange yet captivating peoples and cultural artifacts.

The editors and contributors for the denominational magazines of the Methodist Episcopal Church joined Burroughs and other authors of American periodicals in portraying Africa as a strange and dark land. A promotional advertisement on the African Building in the *Zion's Herald* explained:

> From the vast and mysterious Dark Continent, one of the most fertile missionary fields, has been gathered a wealth of material for the African exhibit. The exhibits which the Dark Continent sends to the Centenary Celebration bring to this great world its life and unusual attractions to the American people. Bringing with them some of their strange customs.

Officials from the Board of Foreign Missions decided that the most accurate method for displaying the peoples, objects, and religions of Africa was to allow Methodist missionaries from these locations to design the exhibits for the Columbus exposition. As a result, experienced missionaries gathered native peoples from exotic locations where they ministered and placed them on live display. They also confiscated personal items from African homes and industries to exhibit inside curios and along the walls of the exhibition hall.

The Africa Building was located between the larger American pavilion and the Chinese exhibition hall. On display inside the twenty-thousand square feet pavilion was an assortment of live exhibits on African peoples

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*Jacobson, 111.*

*Zion's Herald, May 7, 1919, 655.*
Methodist History

and religious practices from the regions of Muslim North Africa, the Congo, and Christianized South Africa. The displays in the building were well attended and during the three-week celebration the facility attracted over one hundred and eighty thousand spectators, more than any other international pavilion at the exposition.  

To afford visitors an authentic African environment the pavilion was staffed by sixty Ethiopians whose task was to explain the displays of the various peoples and cultures of the ‘dark continent.’ Upon entering the building American Methodists were exposed to a large exhibit of an African Kraal, home to a local chief and his five wives, complete with native animals and a collection of palm trees. In another section of the pavilion guests walked through a miniature desert, gazed at slave chain gangs, and witnessed a reenactment that depicted the practice of African men purchasing their wives. The visitor was fascinated by the uncivilized nature of these strange displays and convinced of the cultural normality that existed in the United States. One could imagine the disturbing practice of polygamy, a taboo in western culture, when gazing at the simple grass huts of Africa and comparing the primitiveness of the exhibit to their monogamous familial relationships and modernized homes in the suburbs of America.

One sightseer while traversing through the Africa Building documented this sense of primitiveness. While gazing through the curios filled with African spears and blankets made of tree bark he noted that the exhibits were “beautifully wrought by tribes who had little culture.” These artifacts or trinkets from small-scale societies appeared more as commodities for exhibition in a museum to American visitors than examples of technological and cultural progress. Attendees at the exposition could compare the technological prowess of the American flying machines performing maneuvers and mock battles high above the giant oval at the fair grounds to the primitive displays of spears and shields arranged in a curio at the Africa pavilion. Thus, for American visitors at the exposition artifacts and technologies on display from the United States represented an advanced and progressive civilization while the simple and primordial artifacts and technologies of the ‘dark continent’ kept Africa securely fixed to the Stone Age.

IV

The pavilion chosen to display peoples and artifacts from the regions claimed by the United States was located in the center of the other interna-
tional buildings. The locating of the American building as a central marker in the layout of the Centenary Celebration was not without thought and design. The official report of the exposition noted:

The American building, standing in the center of the Exposition grounds, typified the place which America holds in any world-wide enterprise. Today especially the eyes of the world are upon America.... Americanization and Christianization must penetrate every nook and corner of our great land. 16

The America Building contained exhibits from the Methodist Board of Home Missions and Church Extension on the social conditions of the European immigrant and the plight of the American Indian. Upon entering the building the visitor was immediately immersed in an urban scene, complete with a jostling crowd of actors representing real European immigrants from New York's Lower East Side. Directly to the left the visitor entered the Frances Willard Ginger Ale and Ice Cream Exhibit. This 'Methodist Oasis' offered samples of the prohibition drink, ginger ale, along with a billiard table for recreational use. Those who entered the saloon exhibit were able to catch a glimpse of the prominent role of Methodism in the drive toward prohibition and to imagine what these dens of iniquity would look like once Methodists were in control of the saloon culture.

The far end of the pavilion contained the Native American exhibit that showcased authentic indigenous homes and artifacts gathered and placed on display by Methodist missionaries from the American West. The authors of the Centenary Report indicated their fascination with these primitive yet enchanting dwellings when they noted the, "adobe hut spoke of the unknown Southwest and the deft and patient pottery maker revealed the charm of these ancient people." 17 The effectiveness of these Native American ethnographic exhibits was further enhanced by the display of Santa Clara Pueblos recruited from New Mexico by local missionaries to provide authentic representations and color to the pavilion. 18 The Report noted:

With picturesque teepees, the Plains Indians presented not merely a picture of the past, but showed their faces turned toward the future and that they will to take their places in American citizenship and render their contribution to American life. 19

Native Americans also performed at the outdoor frontier 'Wild West' exhibit. The Zion's Herald reported that authentic Indians and American cowboys were recruited to "give one a realistic view of the days when the

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16 "Official Reports," 121.
17 "Official Reports," 122.
18 "Zion's Herald, May 21, 1919, 656.
19 "Official Reports," 123.
West won its name for being wild and woolly.\textsuperscript{29} Representatives from the Wyoming tribe performed alongside American cowboys Wick Leonard and Jack Miller and were used to stage frontier stunts at the large oval near the giant motion picture screen. In addition to bronco busting and fancy rope spinning the Wyoming were used to hold up and capture an emigrant train of settlers.

Visitors at the 1919 exposition witnessed ethnographic displays of European immigrants and American Indian peoples that signified the continued need for Methodist missionaries to civilize and Americanize these individuals within the United States. Organizers and missionaries created these displays to demonstrate the work of Methodist reformers toward immigrant cultures and to emphasize the containment and evangelization of indigenous peoples of the American West. Through the creation and display of ethnographic exhibits visitors witnessed the progress and success of Methodist missionaries in urban centers and the wild and wooly American West.

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Displays of technology at the Centenary Celebration established the Methodist Episcopal Church as a frontrunner in the utilization of media within the local church. The construction and use of the "world’s largest" stereopticon and motion picture screen along with the projection of silent films as acceptable forms of display created a spectacle at the exposition which highlighted the media awareness of the Methodist Episcopal Church for other denominations within American Protestantism.\textsuperscript{21}

The use of stereopticon equipment and silent films was not unfamiliar to many in attendance at the Columbus fair grounds. Throughout the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries American Methodists had used slide projection systems in the local church to illustrate the exploits of missionaries, introduce intercultural travelogues, and project hand-tinted glass slides for educational classes. Churches projected these images onto inexpensive muslin screens or white sheets while a lecturer, church choir, or traveling quartet provided narration and musical accompaniment.

What made the Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions such an advanced technological event was the scope in which the Methodists used these forms of media. The amount of equipment used at the exposition was unprecedented for a religious gathering in the United States. Methodist participant Fred Smith remarked in his article for the YMCA periodical

\textsuperscript{29}Zion’s Herald, June 4, 1919, 709.
\textsuperscript{21}Burris, 3.
"Association Men" that, "21 moving picture machines and 50 stereopticon lanterns [were] at work most of the day and evening."22 This prolific use of projection equipment kept visitors entertained and impressed during their visits to the exposition fair grounds.

The event was heavily promoted in the Columbus area through the use of media. Guy Kinsley, Manager of Centenary advertising, used glass slides to advertise the exposition and noted in the official report of the celebration that over forty motion picture theaters in the Columbus area projected glass slides that publicized the opening day ceremonies of the missionary exposition.23 The sides of streetcars in Columbus announced the approaching festival and church billboards throughout Ohio marketed the Methodist celebration. As a result, local residents who attended motion picture theatres in Columbus and Methodists throughout Ohio were acutely aware that something significant was taking place at the state fair grounds during the summer months of June and July.

VI

The stereopticon system at the exposition used to throw images from glass slides onto the enormous picture screen was specially designed with a dual projection lens to allow Methodists in attendance the opportunity to "view in an impressive way" the global reach of Methodist missions.24 This unique equipment was built and tested in New York City and trial images were projected onto the side of a large building in Manhattan. The intricate design of the machine and the intense amount of heat emitted from the stereopticon required the projector to be simultaneously worked by six technicians. To prevent the destruction of the materials from the intense heat emitted from the projector's powerful arc lighting the glass slides and films were cooled by electric fans.25

Glass slides were sent though the stereopticon at a continuous clip to satisfy the tens of thousands of visitors who gathered at the large oval on the fair grounds or huddled in the Asbury motion picture hall. Celebration organizers, including motion picture and Methodist media advocate Christian F. Reisner, demanded that no dead time be permitted between slides in order to satisfy the immense crowds.

The picture screen used at the exposition was the largest ever constructed up to that time. The giant screen was made of thousands of large wooden planks and measured one hundred thirty-five feet or about eight stories in height. After viewing a film on the screen a writer for the Centenary Bulletin

24Zion's Herald, June 18, 1919, 787.
25West, 169.
indicated the incredible size of the images when he noted, “The blinking of a man’s eyes shown in a close up was plainly discernable two blocks away.” Images on the screen measured one hundred and fifteen feet and human-sized actors projected onto the large white square instantly became thirty feet tall and larger than life.

Viewers of these images were impressed by the technological prowess of the Methodist Episcopal Church. A reporter from the official newspaper of the Centenary Celebration, the Ohio State Journal noted, “When Johnny attends the Centenary exposition with dad and takes his seat in the oval at night, he will witness the largest pictures on the largest screen, projected by the largest and most powerful lantern ever made.”

Spectators viewed images of real life scenes of the missionary landscape. Many of the glass lantern slides measured five by seven inches and were hand-painted in natural colors to recreate the mountains, grasslands, and peoples of foreign lands. These still images gave Methodists in the audience a sense of physical presence or being on location with the missionaries while at the same time the pictures allowed viewers to imagine themselves as active participants on a journey to evangelize the world. Larger glass slides measuring five by twenty inches provided viewers with a panoramic glimpse of the missionized landscape. Each slide framed a specific location of Methodist missionary work and gave the viewer a sense of control over the foreign landscape. Captured on film, these slides afforded audiences the opportunity to gaze at actual lands and view “real life images of strange peoples of the earth photographed by men and women who lived among them.”

Missionary endeavors were not the only images projected onto the giant screen at the celebration. Each Sunday the exposition held worship services at the large oval with sermons proclaimed by Southern Methodist evangelist Bob Jones. Hymns and choruses from paper songbooks were transferred onto glass slides and projected to thousands in attendance at the racetrack turned church service. For Methodists who participated in the Sunday evangelistic services the projection of hymns and choruses onto the large picture screen suggested the viability of this form of worship for use in the local church. Rather than use hymnbooks the media specialists at the exposition encouraged progressive churches to project songs onto a screen. The use of this mode of worship at the exposition predates the current use of projection systems in many contemporary churches and suggests that this form of media was put to use almost a century ago.

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27 Ohio State Journal, June 25, 1919, 3.
28 Zion's Herald, June 4, 1919, 721.
Many Methodists and other Protestant visitors who attended the exposition were familiar with the use of motion picture technology in the local church. As early as 1898, itinerant evangelist and motion picture exhibitor Henry H. Hadley toured the east coast of the United States with his film equipment for use in revival services at Protestant churches. On one occasion when permission to use his modernized motion picture machine in the Methodist tabernacle at Ocean Grove, New Jersey was not permitted Hadley assembled a large tent in nearby Asbury Park, held outdoor revival services, and projected a version of the recently released Jesus film, the *Passion Play of Oberammergau* (1898). Hadley’s methods of evangelization through the use of technology did not stop following his tent revivals. By the end of the summer season and into the fall of 1898 he continued to exhibit his film on the life of Jesus inside the sanctuaries of Protestant churches throughout the northeast. 29

At the Centenary Celebration organizers used a variety of popular feature films recently released at cinemas in the local Columbus area as well as a number of ethnographic films recorded by Methodist missionaries on location throughout the world. Films produced in New York and Hollywood with nationally recognized movie celebrities and shown on the big screen confirmed for visitors that Methodism was not a staid old-fashioned denomination out of touch with American popular culture as imagined by some of its members and critics. Methodist organizers attempted to demonstrate the cultural relevance of the denomination throughout the duration of the three-week fair as dozens of feature films were shown free of charge to those inclined to sit in the darkened spaces of Asbury motion picture hall.

Feature films at the Centenary Celebration included popular silent era actors Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. The projection of Fairbanks’ film *He Comes Up Smiling* (1918) and Pickford’s *HowCould You, Jean?* (1918) provided Methodist audiences with the unique opportunity of viewing Hollywood feature films within the context of a religious celebration. Popular, though somewhat dated religious films also appeared at the exposition. The story of Christian martyrs in Rome was presented in the film *The Sign of the Cross* (1914) and the life of Jesus was exhibited in the popular film *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912). A British biographical film on the life of John Wesley entitled, *God and the Man* (1918) was also projected before eager audiences who desired to see their denominational founder portrayed on the silver screen.

One of the more recognizable film directors from Hollywood, D.W. Griffith attended and recorded portions of the celebration in honor of his

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deceased mother who had been a devout member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Griffith was known throughout the United States for his controversial film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and his highly innovative but financial disaster *Intolerance* (1916). To acquire the services of Griffith, Methodist media advocate Christian Reisner visited the director in 1918 at his home in California and requested his service as “advisor of the Methodist Church in its plan to spread its religious and moral teachings by use of the screen.” Griffith, while impressed by the magnitude of the event, was politically cautious to attach his name for use by the Methodist Episcopal Church. Even though he donated his time, sent his best camera operators, and provided equipment to record the ten thousand member Fourth of July parade and the popular pageant *The Wayfarer* a local Columbus newspaper quoted Griffith as saying, “I have been astounded beyond measure at the breadth, extent and scope of the entire scheme.” Yet he noted, “I have no commercial connection with the Celebration.” The use of Griffith’s name by Methodists and his filming of the exposition gave the church instant credibility with some Protestant denominations. Unfortunately, the films Griffith made of the exposition have not been located by the author.

At the Columbus exposition a number of missionary films were also projected in the various pavilions. Prior to the 1919 event, missionaries and denominational executives had been sent with motion picture cameras in hand throughout the world to record native peoples, practices, and religious customs. These films were then processed in the United States and projected at the exposition to provide representations of live people and moving landscapes that allowed viewers to be present in strange and unfamiliar distant lands. The Centenary Report indicated that missionary films interested those in attendance and functioned as real life scenarios as “many were reached with the direct appeal of film.” Missionary films projected at the Celebration included titles such as *Methodized Cannibals* and *Indian Life and Customs*. Silent films on Korea, Egypt, and Mexico were also presented to provide a sense of identity with the geography, people, and culture of these distant and exotic lands for viewers who never experienced life outside the United States.

VIII

The hundreds of ethnographic exhibits on display at the three-week Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions served as visual reminders of the impact and success of Methodist intercultural work on groups of people around the world. Reverend T. Ross Hicks in his *Zion’s*
Herald article recorded:

It has been a great world's fair with a living soul of spirituality. Wonderful and compelling in interest the various exhibits have been, with their relics and material representations of the characteristic physical, intellectual, and religious conditions of the various countries, the animated representations of these exhibits have been vastly more impressive.33

Other periodicals such as The Missionary Review of the World noted, following the celebration, "There were American Indians, once ignorant blanket warriors, now Christian preachers; and black faced Africans, whose hearts have been made white and whose minds have been educated."34 The impact and impressiveness of the exposition even reached into other Protestant denominations. The periodical, The Outlook, noted, "Most of the great denominational bodies sent their executives to the Celebration to study it with the view of utilizing in their own work such features as could be adapted to their own programs."35

The Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions was a costly and dynamic event that gathered together representatives of Methodist missionary societies from throughout the world. The use of modern technology impressed reporters and representatives from other Protestant denominations in America. For the organizers of the exposition, and for many Methodists who dropped their half-dollars into the receptacles at the front gate upon entering the Columbus state fair grounds, this three-week event signified that not only was Methodism progressive in its application of media, through the use of specially constructed stereopticons and popular silent films, but also spent time and money to construct the largest exhibition screen ever erected in the history of the world.

Richard Hughes Seager argues in his book The World's Parliament of Religions that without the inclusion and subordination of peoples from non-white global traditions the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 would have been "little more than an ingroup celebration by imperial nations of the West" and that the Chicago event "became an image of the world that suggested to many Americans how truly liberal, progressive, and enlightened they had become."36 Similarly, I would argue that the use of ethnographic exhibits complete with live displays of Africans and indigenous peoples from the United States demonstrated not only the power and influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church over the spiritual and physical well-being of African and American Indian peoples but also demonstrated to America that it was truly progressive and used any technological means necessary to fulfill John Wesley's proclamation: "The world is my parish."

33Zion's Herald, July 16, 1919, 916.