

# General Conference of 1824

by Nathan Bangs

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*The General Conference of 1824 is a gathering of Methodist leaders to discuss and address various issues and concerns within the church, with a focus on Church government, administration, and the spread of the gospel.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 1 Corinthians 14:40, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 2:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:25, 1 Timothy 4:13, 1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Peter 4:10

**Topics:** "Church Governance", "Methodist History"

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## Description

The conference in Baltimore, led by Bishops McKendree, George, and Roberts, commenced with readings from the Holy Scriptures, singing, and prayer. Delegates from various annual conferences presented their certificates of election. The conference addressed issues such as the relationship with the British Wesleyan Methodist conference, the establishment of missions, the regulation of slavery within the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the creation of new conferences. Resolutions were passed to strengthen the episcopacy, improve pastoral duties, and address the concerns of the Canada conference. The conference concluded with the election and consecration of two new bishops, the appointment of a delegate to the Wesleyan Methodist conference, and the adoption of an address to the Wesleyan Methodist conference in England.

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## Transcript

This conference assembled, on the first day of May, in the city of Baltimore. Bishops McKendree, George, and Roberts were present, and the former opened the conference by reading a portion of the Holy Scriptures, singing, and prayer. The following delegates presented the certificates of their election by the several annual conferences:

New York Conference: Nathan Bangs, Laban Clark, Freeborn Garrettson, Samuel Luckey, Stephen Martindale, Samuel Merwin, Daniel Ostrander, Phineas Rice, Marvin Richardson, William Ross, Peter P. Sandford, Arnold Scholefield, Eben Smith, Henry Stead, John B. Stratten, Ebenezer Washburn.

New England Conference: Ebenezer Blake, Wilbur Fisk, John W. Hardy, Elijah Hedding, Benjamin Hoyt, Edward Hyde, David Kilbourn, John Lindsey, Joseph A. Merrill, Timothy Merritt, Enoch Mudge, George Pickering, Elisha Streeter, Eleazar Wells.

Genesee Conference: John P. Alverson, Joseph Baker, Israel Chamberlain, Wyatt Chamberlain, George W. Densmoor, Loring Grant, James Hall, Gideon Lanning, Benjamin Paddock, George Peck, Fitch Reed,

Isaac B. Smith.

Ohio Conference: Russel Bigelow, Charles Elliott, James B. Finley, Greenbury R. Jones, James Quinn, Martin Ruter, John Sale, John Strange, Charles Waddel, John Waterman, John F. Wright, David Young, Jacob Young.

Kentucky Conference: John Brown, Peter Cartwright, Richard Corwine, Charles Holliday, Marcus Lindsay, George McNelly, Thomas A. Morris, Jonathan Stamper.

Missouri Conference: William Beauchamp, John Scripps, David Sharp, Samuel H. Thompson, Jesse Walker.

Tennessee Conference: Hartwell H. Brown, Thomas L. Douglass, George Ekin, Joshua W. Kilpatrick, Thomas Madden, William McMahon, Robert Paine, Thomas Stringfield, John Tevis.

Mississippi Conference: Daniel De Vinne, Alexander Sale, William Winans.

South Carolina Conference: James O. Andrew, Henry Bass, William Capers, Samuel Dunwody, Samuel K. Hodges, William Kennedy, Lewis Myers, James Norton, Lovick Pierce, Nicholas Talley, Joseph Travis.

Virginia Conference: John C. Ballew, William Compton, Benjamin Devaney, Ethelbert Drake, Henry Holmes, John Lattimore, Caleb Leach, Hezekiah G. Leigh, Lewis Skidmore.

Baltimore Conference: John Bear, Robert Burch, Christopher Frye, Joseph Frye, Andrew Hemphill, Daniel Hitt, James McCann, Nelson Reed, Stephen G. Roszel, Henry Smith, Joshua Soule, John Thomas, Richard Tydings.

Philadelphia Conference: Ezekiel Cooper, Manning Force, Lawrence Lawrenson, Lawrence McCombs, Jacob Moore, Thomas Neal, Charles Pittman, John Potts, Joseph Rusling, James Smith, John Smith, Thomas Ware Alvard White.

From the time that Dr. Coke had last visited us, in 1804, no personal intercourse had been kept up between the European and American connections, though friendly epistolary salutations had been exchanged. In 1820, as we have before seen, a delegate, Dr. Emory, had been sent to the Wesleyan conference in England, and had borne with him a request that a personal intercourse might be established, at such times as should be mutually agreeable. In conformity to this request our British brethren sent the Rev. Richard Reece as a representative to this General Conference, accompanied by the Rev. John Hannah and his ministerial companion. As these respected brethren had arrived in the city of New York in the month of March, they had spent the intervening time in visiting Boston, Lynn, New Haven, Philadelphia, and other places, where they had endeared themselves to the people by their Christian and ministerial deportment, as well as by their evangelical labors in the pulpit, and on the platform at several of our anniversaries.

On the second day of the conference they were introduced by Bishop McKendree, when Mr. Reece presented the following address from the Wesleyan Methodist conference, which was read by the secretary, Dr. Emory: --

"To the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church assembled at Baltimore, in the United States of America

"Dear Brethren: -- The time has arrived which calls us, in pursuance of a resolution unanimously passed in the conference of 1820, held in Liverpool, to commission a deputation from our body, to attend your ensuing General Conference, to convey to you the sentiments of our fraternal regard and affectionate attachment, and to reciprocate that kind and friendly office which, on your part, was performed by the visit of one of your esteemed ministers, the Rev. John Emory.

"The increased interest in your spiritual welfare which the establishment of this mode of direct and official communication between the two great bodies of Methodists has naturally excited in us, and reciprocally, we believe, in you, is to us the first proof of its beneficial tendency, and a cheering indication of its future advantages. For why should the ocean entirely sever the branches of the same family, or distance of place, and distant scenes of labor, wholly prevent that interchange of the sympathies of a special spiritual relationship which cannot but be felt by those who, under God, owe their origin to the labors of the same apostolic man, bear testimony to the same great truths before the world, and whose efforts to spread the savor of the knowledge of Christ, on our part, through the British empire, and on yours through the population of those rising states which have derived their language, their science, and their Protestantism from the same common source, Almighty God has deigned so abundantly to bless?

"We received with heart-felt joy the messenger of your churches, the Rev. John Emory, bearing the grateful news of the progress of the work of God in your societies, and were refreshed by the expressions of your charity. We now commit the same charge to the faithful and beloved brethren whom we have appointed to salute you in the Lord, that nothing may be wanting on our part to strengthen the bond of brotherly love, and to call forth mutual and united prayers for each other's welfare, by a mutual knowledge of each other's state.

We are on the point of closing the sittings of the present conference; in which the perfect harmony of the brethren assembled has afforded matter for the most devout and grateful acknowledgments to God, both as it is the indication and the result of that entire affection and unity which exist among our Societies throughout the united kingdom. Through the mercy of God, we have rest on every side; the discipline we received from our venerable founder is still enforced with unabated zeal, and, under a conviction of its agreement with the word of God, cheerfully observed; the value of those apostolic doctrines which distinguish us in the old and new world was never, we believe, more powerfully felt among us, and never were they with greater fidelity exhibited in our public ministry; and, as a crowning blessing, numbers are yearly added to us and to the Lord, and the light and influence of the gospel are yearly extending, by the divine blessing upon the labors of the brethren, into the still dark and uncultivated parts of our beloved country. 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake.'

"You will also, dear brethren, partake of our joy in the success with which it has pleased God to attend the labors of our brethren in our different foreign missions.

"The leading particulars of their state and prospects you will have learned from our Magazine and annual reports, and it will therefore suffice to state, that, in this department of the work of God committed to our charge, upward of one hundred and fifty of our preachers are employed; and that the zeal and liberality with which our people and the friends of religion generally co-operate with us in this hallowed work, answer to every call, and seem only roused to greater activity and enlargement as the sad condition of the pagan world is by new developments displayed before them. In the formation of regular missionary societies in your Church, to promote the universal establishment of the kingdom of our adorable Saviour,

and 'to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,' we have greatly rejoiced; and in those encouraging dawns of large success among the aboriginal tribes of your native continent, which have cheered the early efforts of those devoted men whom you have ordained to this blessed service. In addition to the doctrines in which we have been instructed, God has in his mercy given to us, as Methodists, a discipline adapted in a very special manner to missionary operations, to build up and establish infant religious societies among heathen, and to call forth in every place a supply of laborers for extending the work, and enlarging the cultivated field into the untilled and neglected wilderness. In the spirit of our great founder under God, who regarded the whole world as his parish, let the Methodists of Great Britain and America regard the whole world as the field of their evangelical labors; and, mindful of this our high vocation, let us enter in at every open door, trusting in God to dispose the hearts of our people to provide the means necessary to carry our sacred enterprises into effect; striving together in our prayers, that from us the word of the Lord may 'sound forth to nations and kingdoms of men, of all colors and climates, now involved in the ignorance and misery of pagan idolatry, and sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.'

"More fully to declare unto you our state, and to be witnesses of 'the grace of God in you,' we have appointed, and hereby do accredit as our representative to your approaching General Conference, the Rev. Richard Reece, late president of our conference, and have requested the Rev. John Hannah, one of our respected junior preachers, to accompany him on this service. 'Beloved in the Lord and approved in Christ,' we commit them to the grace of God and to your brotherly affection. We earnestly pray that your approaching assembly may be under the special guidance and benediction of our common Head, and that all your deliberations may issue in the lasting union and prosperity of your numerous and widely extended societies; that you may increase in faith and love; and that your labors may, year after year, continue to enlarge and establish in the western world the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 'to whom be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.'

"Signed in behalf of the conference,

"H. Moore, President. "Sheffield, August 11, 1823."

After the reading of the address, Mr. Reece delivered the following: --

"Mr. President: -- The paper which has just been read is an expression of the sentiments avowed by the British conference, and in which I heartily concur; -- sentiments of affectionate concern for the prosperity and advantage of our brethren on this side of the Atlantic. It afforded us much satisfaction to receive from you, by your excellent deputy, the Rev. John Emory, an overture to more frequent intercourse and closer fellowship of brotherly love. Wesleyan Methodism is one everywhere, one in its doctrines, its discipline, its usages. We believe it to be the purest, simplest, most efficient form of Christianity that the world has known since the primitive days. Doubtless it is that which has had the sanction of Almighty God, in its rapid and extended success, beyond any other in modern times. It commenced, nearly a century ago, in the mother country, in one of her universities, with a few young men, 'chosen vessels, meet for the Master's use.' Then it was the 'cloud little as a human hand;' now it has spread widely, and is still spreading, over both hemispheres, while its fertilizing showers are descending upon Europe, America, Africa, and Asia, producing fruit wherever they fall -- the fruit of knowledge and holiness. Methodism is our common property. We are alike interested in its preservation and diffusion. It is a sacred trust committed to us. It is a heavenly treasure which we have to dispense for the benefit of man. Its spirit is not sectarian, but catholic, and embraces Christians of every denomination who hold the essential truths of the gospel, and

'love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' Your brethren in England were never more concerned to preach its distinguishing doctrines of justification by faith, the direct witness of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, and salvation from all sin in this life, with simplicity, fidelity, and zeal, than at present; -- never more concerned to enforce its discipline with firmness and love, and to 'train up' a people in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord;' -- never more careful that it do not deteriorate in their hands, but that it be transmitted, pure and entire, to 'faithful men' who shall succeed to their labors: .for which purpose they are anxious in their instruction and strict in their examination of the rising race of preachers, that these may be sound in the faith and lovers of our discipline. Many of them are all we can hope, young men whose 'profiting' has 'appeared unto all,' and to whom we can commit the deposit without anxiety; believing that they will 'obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful.'

"The result of this care and pains to preserve a pure and effective ministry has been and is seen in the blessing of God upon our labors, in an extension of his work through every part of our country, where 'great and effectual doors' are opening into new places, and the Lord is 'adding to his church daily such as are saved.' The members of our society are also improving in personal holiness and zeal for good works. They are more ready to concur with us in spreading the gospel abroad among heathen nations, as well as in tightening the 'cords' of our discipline at home. On the whole, our prospects were never more bright, nor had we ever more reason to be encouraged.

"My opportunities of intercourse with you since my arrival in this country, together with the satisfaction I have had in attending two of your annual conferences, where I met with many of my American brethren, render this one of the most interesting periods of my life. I have witnessed the disinterested and laborious zeal which distinguishes your character and conduct. I have seen the fruit of your labors in the excellent societies in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Winchester, and this city. The doctrines and discipline of Methodism, when rightly applied, do, under the blessing of God, produce a Scriptural conversion, and form the genuine Christian character everywhere; and either at home or abroad, I find that a Methodist, who lives according to his profession, is a 'fellow-heir' of the same ' grace of life.' My prayer is, in accordance with the prayers of the body whom I represent, that you may go on and prosper, until, as the honored instruments of God, you have diffused gospel light and life through e very part of this vast continent, and every class of its interesting population, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be everywhere glorified in his disciples. Amen."

After the delivery of these addresses, and adopting rules for the government of the deliberations of the conference, the following communication was received from the bishops, and referred to appropriate committees "To the delegates of the several annual conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in General Conference assembled.

"Dear Brethren: -- We have thought it advisable, at the opening of this General Conference, to communicate to you our? views in relation to some of the subjects which will properly come before you. Assembled as you are from various parts of the continent, and having been associated with societies of people not entirely the same in manners and customs, it cannot rationally be expected that your views On every subject should be uniformly the same. But, after candidly considering and discussing such points of interest to the Church as may require your attention and decision, we trust you will be able to unite in such measures as shall best serve for the prosperity of our Zion and the glory of God.

"During the last four years we have not been favored with extraordinary revivals of religion, yet the work of God has gradually advanced, and we have had constant accessions to the Church, both of ministers and

members, as well as an increase of circuits and districts. On the whole, we are happy to say, that amidst all our difficulties and obstructions, our prospects are encouraging, and we are permitted to hope that the great Head of the church will prosper our way and crown our labors with abundant success.

"Your superintendents have endeavored to do what was in their power toward supplying the annual conferences with their official services, and have in most instances succeeded; but, owing to a failure of health in some of them, and to other uncontrollable circumstances, two cases have occurred in which the conferences were under the necessity of providing for themselves. And as the present health of your superintendents is more likely to decline than increase, while their labor will become every year more extensive, the subjects of administration, and the propriety of increasing the number of superintendents, will claim your early attention.

"In the progress of this work new doors have been opened for the spread of the gospel, the borders of our Zion have been enlarged, and the number of circuits and districts so increased as to render it necessary that there should be some alterations in the form of the annual conferences. The way seems to be prepared for dividing some in order to form new ones, and for making some changes in the boundaries of others, so as to render them more convenient.

"On the subject of Church government some of our friends have entered into various speculations, and it seems probable that memorials will be laid before you both from local preachers and private members. In order to give full satisfaction, as far as possible, on this point, it may be expedient to appoint a committee of address, to prepare circulars in answer to such memorials as may be presented.

"In fixing the boundary lines of the annual conferences, it must not be forgotten that a part of our charge lies in Canada, beyond the limits of the United States. The situation of our brethren in that remote part of the country seems to present to view a subject distinct in itself; and the most judicious measures to secure their prosperity and welfare will claim the exercise of your united counsel and wisdom.

"The Book Concern, considered in a moral and pecuniary point of view, is an important establishment in our Church, and will be, if proper exertions should be made in the circulation of books, not only a source of relief and support to our itinerant ministry, but a most effectual medium of conveying light and knowledge to the thousands among whom we labor, and perhaps to multitudes who do not attend our preaching. If any improvement can be made in its present plan of operation, so as to render it more extensively useful than it now is, it is desirable that it should be done.

"In the course of your deliberations, the local district conference, the financing system, and the proper instruction and education of children, may require some attention, as well as several other subjects not necessary now to mention.

"The importance of supporting the plan of an itinerant ministry, and of maintaining union among ourselves, cannot have escaped your recollection. They are subjects involving the vital interests of the Church, and our prayer is, that the wisdom of the Most High may guide us in such a course as shall be favorable both to the one and to the other."

Among other things which engaged the attention of this conference, was the subject of a lay delegation. This came up for consideration by the presentation of a number of memorials and petitions from local preachers and lay members, praying for the General Conference to grant them "the right," as they termed it, of a voice in the legislative department of the Church. The committee to whom these documents were

referred presented the following report, which, after an able and full discussion, was adopted by the conference: "Resolved, by the delegates of the several annual conferences in General Conference assembled,

That it is inexpedient to recommend a lay delegation.

Resolved, &c. That the following circular be sent in reply to the petitioners, memorialists, &c.,

"Beloved Brethren: -- Several memorials have been brought up to the General Conference, proposing to change the present order of our Church government. By one or more of these it is proposed 'to admit into the annual conferences a lay delegate from each circuit and station, and into the General Conference an equal delegation of ministers and lay members:' or, 'to admit a representation of local preachers and lay members into the General Conference, to be so apportioned with the itinerant ministry as to secure an equilibrium of influence in that body:' or, 'that the General Conference call a convention, to consist of representatives from each annual conference and an equal number of representatives chosen by the members of each circuit or station, to form a constitution which shall be binding upon each member of our Church:' or, 'that a representation of the local preachers and the membership be introduced into the General Conference,' either by electing delegates separately, or that the membership be represented by the local ministry, they being elected by the united suffrage of the local preachers and lay members.

"To these memorials, as well as to others praying the continuance of our government in its present form, we have given an attentive hearing in full conference, and, after much reflection, we reply: --

"We are glad to be assured that there exists but one opinion among all our brethren respecting the importance of our itinerant ministry, and that they who desire a change, whether of the form of the General Conference alone, or of the annual conferences also, are moved to solicit it rather by their zeal to support the itinerancy than for want of attachment to it. They would relieve the preachers of the delicacy of fixing the amount of their own salaries; and as in this matter they could act more independently, so they would also provide more liberally.

"We respectfully acknowledge the candor of brethren, who, although they intimate that it is unseemly for the preachers to determine their own salaries, yet do not pretend that their allowance is excessive, or that they claim a right to demand it. It is true that the deficiency of quarterage is so general, in such large proportions, that the conference collections and the dividends from the Book Concern and chartered fund have never been sufficient to supply it; and, indeed, the conference stewards usually settle with the preachers at a discount of from thirty to sixty per cent.

"But we presume that these facts have been generally known; so that whatever injury may be sustained from the scantiness of our support is attributable, not to the improvidence of the rule which limits the amount, but to some other cause; and whatever that cause may be, we at least have no information that the people refuse to contribute because they are not represented. Indeed, it would grieve us to know this: for even though they should refuse to acknowledge us as their representatives in the General Conference, they cannot do less for the love of Christ than they would oblige themselves to do out of love for authority.

"We rejoice to know that the proposed change is not contemplated as a remedy for evils which now exist in some infraction of the rights and privileges of the people, as defined to them by the form of Discipline; but that it is offered, either in anticipation of the possible existence of such evils, or else on a supposition of abstract rights, which, in the opinion of some, should form the basis of our government.

"The rights and privileges of our brethren, as members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, we hold most sacred. We are unconscious of having infringed them in any instance, nor would we do so. The limitations and restrictions which describe the extent of our authority in General Conference, and beyond which we have never acted, vindicate our sincerity in this assertion. By those 'restrictions' it is put out of the power of the General Conference 'to revoke, alter, or change our articles of religion;' or to revoke or change the general rules, or 'to do away the privileges of our members of trial before the society or by a committee, and of an appeal.' The general rules and the articles of religion form, to every member of our Church distinctively, a constitution, by which, as Methodists and as Christians, ye do well to be governed; and we, assembled together to make rules and regulations for the Church, most cheerfully acknowledge that the restrictions above mentioned are as solemnly binding upon us as the general rules are upon both us and you individually.

"These restrictions are to you the guarantee of your 'rights and privileges;' and while we shall be governed by these, as such, we will also regard them as the pledge of your confidence in us.

"But if by 'rights and privileges' it is intended to signify something foreign from the institutions of the Church, as we received them from our fathers, pardon us if we know no such rights -- if we do not comprehend such privileges. With our brethren everywhere we rejoice, that the institutions of our happy country are admirably calculated to secure the best ends of civil government. With their rights, as citizens of these United States, the Church disclaims all interference; but, that it should be inferred from these what are your rights as Methodists, seems to us no less surprising than if your Methodism should be made the criterion of your rights as citizens.

We believe the proposed change to be inexpedient:

Because it would create a distinction of interests between the itinerancy and the membership of the Church.

Because it presupposes that either the authority of the General Conference 'to make rules and regulations' for the Church, or the manner in which this authority has been exercised, is displeasing to the Church, the reverse of which we believe to be true.

Because it would involve a tedious procedure, inconvenient in itself, and calculated to agitate the Church to her injury.

Because it would give to those districts which are conveniently situated, and could therefore secure the attendance of their delegates, an undue influence in the government of the Church.

"With respect to lesser matters mentioned in the memorials, we respectfully refer you to the revised copy of the Discipline, forthwith to be published."

The subject of education came before this conference with increased weight, and its importance was duly appreciated. The views of the conference in relation to this subject may be seen by the following extract from the report of the committee to whom it had been referred, and which met with the hearty concurrence of the conference: --

"In considering this subject, your committee have been happy in believing that no arguments were necessary to impress this conference with a sense of its importance. The cultivation of the human mind, with a view to prepare it for the full exercise of its powers, and thereby to render it capable of answering

the noble purposes of Its creation, may be reckoned among the first and greatest objects of a civilized community. The nature of this work is such that it requires an early commencement, and hence, in every enlightened nation, the education of children has been deemed necessary to the well-being of societies as well as individuals, and Christian people have held it among their most sacred duties. In the early establishment of Methodism, in the very beginning of our religious institutions as a Christian denomination, it was recommended to our people, made the duty of our ministers, and the fruit of it already realized sufficiently shows its utility.

"Your committee, nevertheless, are fully impressed with the unpleasant fact, that this subject, so intimately connected with the vital interests of our Church, and with the salvation of so many thousands of souls, has been, and is at this moment, much neglected. While we are happy in believing that in many duties and labors we have done much more than several other denominations, we think it must be admitted that in the instruction of children some of them have exceeded us. And unless effectual measures can be adopted for securing proper attention to the rising generation under our care, we may anticipate unhappy consequences. The children of our hearers, and especially those of our Church members who have received baptism at our hands, may be considered as standing in a relation to us different from that of children in general, and fully entitled to all the attention from us which their age and situation require. If properly taught and educated, they will be prepared to become valuable members of our societies, and heirs of salvation; but, if neglected, we may expect them to become vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction.

"On the subject of schools and seminaries of learning, your committee have obtained all the information their limited time and means would allow, and are of opinion that in this also we are deficient. In 1820 a resolution passed the General Conference, recommending that each annual conference should establish a classical seminary within its own boundaries and under its own regulations. Three or four seminaries have been established in conformity to this resolution, some of which are in successful operation, and it is, in the opinion of your committee, desirable that such an institution should flourish under the patronage of each annual conference in the Union.

"Our Church contains multitudes of young men, not called to the ministry, who are qualified to teach, and many of whom would be more useful in such employment than they can be in any other. If these, as well as some of our local preachers, were made sensible of the good they might do our Church, even as teachers of schools, it is believed there would be no difficulty in supplying numerous schools of our country with teachers who would be in favor of the doctrine and discipline of our Church.

"In closing these remarks, your committee beg leave to offer, for the consideration of this conference, the following resolutions, namely

That, as far as practicable, it shall be the duty of every preacher of a circuit or station to obtain the names of the children belonging to his congregations, to form them into classes, for the purpose of giving them religious instruction, to instruct them regularly himself, as much as his other duties will allow, to appoint a suitable leader for each class, who shall instruct them in his absence, and to leave his successor a correct account of each class thus formed, with the name of its leader.

That we approve of the resolution, passed in the General Conference of 1820, on the subject of seminaries of learning, and hereby recommend that each annual conference not having a seminary of learning use its utmost exertions to effect such an establishment.

That it shall be the duty of every traveling preacher in our Church to keep in mind the importance of having suitable teachers employed in the instruction of the youth of our country, and to use his influence to introduce teachers into schools whose learning, piety, and religious tenets are such as we could recommend."

As it was the constitutional duty of the managers of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church to report the doings of the society for the four preceding years, and the state of the funds, a report was presented by the treasurer, in which it appeared that the whole amount collected for missionary purposes, from the commencement of the society to that time, was \$14,716 24<sup>¢</sup>, and expended during the same period \$11,011 40<sup>¢</sup>, leaving a balance of \$3,704 83<sup>¢</sup>. This shows the feeble manner in which the society commenced its operations, and how long it was, notwithstanding the favorable manner in which it had been received by the annual conferences, before the people generally came fully into this great and good work.

The managers conclude their report to the conference in the following words: --

"In thus submitting to the General Conference a concise view of the transactions of the society, the managers cannot but express their gratitude to God for permitting them to be the humble instruments of aiding, in the management of the concerns of this society, in any measure, to extend the empire of truth and righteousness in our world; at the same time pledging themselves that, while the conference shall continue its operations for the noble purpose of evangelizing mankind, and of bringing them under the yoke of Jesus Christ, they will use their best endeavors to promote the same blessed object, by a faithful discharge of their duties as managers of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

"New York, April 23, 1824."

This report, together with the entire subject relating to missions, was referred to a committee, whose report, which was concurred in by the conference, was as follows: --

"The committee view with pleasure the success attending our missionary exertions for the last four years; and think that we are loudly called upon to make our acknowledgments to the God of missions, for the special manner in which it has pleased him to own our efforts.

"We began feeble, but God has strengthened us. We began fearful, but God has encouraged and assured us. So limited was our knowledge, and so numerous the claims upon our benevolence, that we scarcely knew to what particular point to direct our first attention. God, however, we humbly trust, has given a direction to our labors which has been highly important and beneficial, not only on account of immediate effects, but because a great and effectual door has been opened for the further prosecution of our missionary plans.

"By avoiding that prodigality of expenditure so evidently seen in some, and that partiality of appropriation so manifest in others, and by observing economy and prudence in the management of our missionary affairs, we cannot fail, under the continued blessing of God, to succeed in the great work of evangelizing even the barbarous nations around us.

"While an eye to economy is had in the appropriation of the funds of the institution, your committee are of opinion that the missions among our Indians ought to be prosecuted with increased vigor, laying a proper foundation for facilitating their future conversion in the education of their children; and that, for every

missionary station, men should be selected as missionaries of hardy constitutions, of enterprising spirit, able and willing to labor, to sacrifice all for God and his cause.

"But, in the midst of all these labors abroad, we should not forget that much remains to be done within the bounds of our respective conferences. While Zion is lengthening her cords and enlarging her borders, she ought also to strengthen her stakes, otherwise her enlargements will be her weakness. Let all the intervening sections of our country not inclosed in our fields of labor be examined, and, if Providence open the way, be occupied. Let missionaries be appointed, whose duty it shall be, not to wander over a whole conference, nor to preach generally, if at all, in old societies made ready to their hands, except in places where societies are very small; but to fix upon certain places still in the enemy's hands, and where there is rational ground of success, and then, by siege or assault, as the case may require, carry, in the name of the Lord, the strong holds of prejudice and sin. When this is done, let it be taken into a regular circuit, and the missionary be at liberty to pursue a similar course in other places. In this way, if we are steady and faithful to our purpose, we shall be enabled, by the divine blessing, ultimately to establish ourselves in all the sections of our country, until the power of our doctrines and the purity of our discipline shall renovate every part.

"Your committee take the liberty further to state, that, in their opinion, an open and candid statement of the condition of the missions will be profitable, not only as it will convince the public that we mean to act in good faith, but because the information so communicated, from time to time, will gladden the hearts of thousands who have contributed, or may by this means be induced to contribute, to this benevolent object."

The American Colonization Society presented certain documents to the conference, which were referred to a committee to consider and report thereon, and the following was concurred in by the conference: --

"That the General Conference are not in possession of sufficient information relative to said society to render it proper for them, in their official capacity, to adopt any measures on the subject, farther than to recommend it" (that is, the colony at Liberia) "to the notice of the proper authorities of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as a suitable field for sowing the good seed of the kingdom of God. Under this view of the subject, the committee recommend the adoption of the following resolution, viz.: --

"That it is expedient, whenever the funds of the Missionary Society will justify the measure, for the episcopal to select and send a missionary or missionaries to the colony in Africa now establishing under the auspices of the American Colonization Society."

It would appear from the above report that the American Colonization Society had not yet sufficiently developed its character and objects to enable the conference to act intelligibly and safely in furtherance of its views, or fully to endorse its measures. Its subsequent history, however, has removed the cause of those doubts which excited this hesitancy, and the conference has since, by sundry resolutions, entered heartily into the measure of endeavoring to plant a colony of American freemen of color, with their own consent, on the western coast of Africa. These things belong more appropriately to another period of our history, and will therefore be noticed in their proper place.

Various enactments had been passed, from one General Conference to another, with a view to regulate the practice of slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church, an evil this which it seemed impossible to control, much less to eradicate from the ranks of our Israel. From the organization of the Church, in 1784,

slavery had been pronounced an evil, and, as before remarked, a variety of expedients had been resorted to for the purpose of lessening its deleterious tendencies where it seemed unavoidably to exist, to meliorate the condition of the slave where his civil bondage could not be removed, and entirely to prevent our preachers and people from holding slaves at all in those states and territories which permitted emancipation. Finding, however, that the evil was beyond the control of ecclesiastical law, as to its eradication from the Church, and wishing to render the condition of the slave as comfortable as possible, by holding his master immediately responsible to the proper tribunals of the Church for the manner in which he treated his slave, as well as to extend to the colored members of our Church all the privileges compatible with their civil and ecclesiastical relations, this General Conference so modified the section in the Discipline on slavery as to read as follows: --

Question What shall be done for the extirpation of the evil of slavery? "

Answer.

We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery: therefore no slaveholder shall be eligible to any official station in our Church hereafter, where the laws of the state in which he lives will admit of emancipation, and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom.

When any traveling preacher becomes an owner of a slave or slaves, by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in our Church unless he execute, if it be practicable, a legal emancipation of such slaves, conformably to the laws of the state in which he lives.

All our preachers shall prudently enforce upon our members the necessity of teaching their slaves to read the word of God, and to allow them time to attend upon the public worship of God on our regular days of divine service.

Our colored preachers and official members shall have all the privileges which are usual to others in the district and quarterly conferences, where the usages of the country do not forbid it. And the presiding elder may hold for them a separate district conference, where the number of colored local preachers will justify it.

The annual conferences may employ colored preachers to travel and preach where their services are judged necessary, provided that no one shall be so employed without having been recommended according to the form of Discipline."

So it remains, unaltered, to the present time.

The following are the resolutions of the committee on the episcopacy, which were adopted by the conference: --

That we approve generally of the conduct of the superintendents in the administration of the government for the last four years; and that their zeal and exertions to promote the cause of God and the interests of the Church, under the circumstances in which they have been placed, merit the grateful acknowledgments of the General Conference and of the whole Church.

That Bishop McKendree be, and hereby is, respectfully requested to continue to afford what aid he can to the episcopacy, consistently with his age and infirmities, when and where it may best suit his own convenience; and that the provisions of the last General Conference for meeting his contingent expenses

be continued.

That the episcopacy be strengthened by the election and ordination of two additional bishops at the present session of the General Conference.

That it is highly expedient for the general superintendents, at every session of the General Conference, and as far as to them may appear practicable in the intervals of the sessions, annually to meet in council, to form their plan of traveling through their charge, whether in a circuit after each other, or dividing the connection into several episcopal departments, as to them may appear proper, and most conducive to the general good, and the better to enable them fully to perform the great work of their administration in the general superintendency, and to exchange and unite their views upon all affairs connected with the general interests of the Church.

That the book agents and book committee in New York shall be a committee to estimate the amount necessary to meet the family expenses of the bishops, which shall be annually paid by the book agents out of the funds of the Book Concern, and that the above resolution be incorporated in the Discipline."

In accordance with the third resolution in the above report, the conference proceeded, on the twenty-sixth day of its session, to ballot for two additional bishops. There were one hundred and twenty-eight voters present, and on counting the votes for the first time it appeared that no one had a majority. On the second balloting the Rev. Joshua Soule had sixty-five, and on the third the Rev. Elijah Hedding sixty-six, out of one hundred and twenty-eight votes. They were accordingly declared duly elected, and having signified their acceptance of the office, they were, after an ordination sermon by Bishop McKendree, at 12 o'clock on the 27th, consecrated by prayer and imposition of hands, Bishop McKendree acting as the officiating minister.

The conference passed a resolution authorizing the bishops to appoint a delegate to visit the Wesleyan Methodist conference at its session in July of 1826. This, however, was not carried into execution, in consequence of which we had no representative from England at our conference in 1828.

The affairs of Canada once more engaged the attention of the conference, but without coming to any conclusion satisfactory to the Canada brethren. A petition was presented from a portion of the preachers in the upper province, to be set off as an independent conference, with the privilege of electing a bishop to reside among them and superintend their affairs. The following resolutions contain the result of the deliberations upon this subject: --

That there shall be a Canada conference under our superintendency, bounded by the boundary lines of Upper Canada.

That a circular shall be addressed to our preachers and members included within the bounds of the Canada conference, expressive of our zeal for their prosperity, and urging the importance of their maintaining union among themselves.

That a respectful representation be made to the British conference of those points in the late agreement between the two connections which have not, on the part of their missionaries, been fulfilled."

As before said, these measures were by no means satisfactory to those in Upper Canada who were desirous of having a separate and independent church organization in that province. Accordingly, on the return of the delegates who had attended the General Conference, a spirit of dissatisfaction was widely

diffused,<sup>1</sup> the local preachers were convened, a conference organized, and a declaration of their grievances, rights, and future mode of operations published and circulated. All this took place before the Canada annual conference assembled. On the assembling of the conference, however, in Hallowell, Bishops George and Hedding being present, mutual explanations made, and pledges given by the bishops to sanction measures for a separate organization in Canada hereafter, peace was measurably restored, and all things went on as heretofore.

The constitutional term of the Rev. Thomas Mason, as assistant book agent, having expired, the Rev. John Emory, D. D., was elected to fill the vacancy, and Nathan Bangs was reelected as the principal.

It was manifest to all that the increased duties of the preachers, in consequence of the introduction of sabbath schools, the organization of the Missionary and Tract Societies, and the increase of members in the larger towns and villages, rendered it expedient, that every part of the work might be duly and seasonably performed, that the circuits should be shortened, and that each thriving village should be privileged with preaching every sabbath, otherwise it was impossible to establish a permanent congregation, more especially in those places where other denominations had established congregations and a resident ministry. It had been long evident to many of our ministers and people, that, for the want of having a preacher stationed in all important places, we had lost much of the fruits of our labor, and must, unless an adequate remedy were provided, continue feeble, if not retrograde from the standing we had already attained. This subject, it seems, presented itself before the committee on the itinerancy, together with others which relate to the duties of the pastoral office; and the following resolutions, concurred in by the conference, will show the views which were entertained in reference to these matters: --

That the superintending preachers be instructed so to lay out their work that there may be sufficient time allowed each preacher for the faithful and extensive discharge of all his pastoral duties, in promoting family religion and instructing the children.

That all our preachers observe that order of public worship pointed out in the twenty-third section of our form of Discipline; and that in the administration of the ordinances, and in the service for the burial of the dead, they invariably use the form in the Discipline; and in dismissing the congregation, the apostolic benediction; that they also attend uniformly to the order prescribed in chapter i, section 24, in regard to singing the praises of God in our congregations.

That the Lord's prayer be used upon all occasions of public worship, at the close of the first prayer, and that it be strongly recommended to all our people to introduce it into their private and family devotions.

That the preachers be particularly examined on these several subjects at each annual conference."

There were no less than five new conferences created this year, making seventeen in all.

Before the conference adjourned, which it did on Friday, May 29th, to meet in the city of Pittsburgh, May 1, 1828, the following address to the Wesleyan Methodist conference was adopted

"Dear Fathers and Brethren: -- In reciprocating the kind and affectionate sentiments contained in your communication to us, sent by the hands of those whom you had chosen to be the messengers of the churches, we feel an indescribable pleasure. Many are the associations that press upon us, and the emotions that affect us, in this pleasant interchange of affectionate regards. We look to England as the birthplace of that man, who, under the guidance of Heaven, was the founder of a great and flourishing

church. It was there that the infant societies were nourished, and it was thence that the word of God was sent forth, even unto us. After we had flourished for some time under your fostering care, a mysterious chain of providences led to a separation of our societies in this country from the mother Church. But the scion that was planted here has been watered and blessed of God; and though probably still inferior in solidity and strength, yet in the number and extent of its branches, and the abundance of its fruits, it vies with the parent stock. In this we rejoice, and are grateful to the great Head of the church, to whom alone the praise belongs. But it greatly increase our joy to know that our British brethren rejoice with us, and that the parent Church, with which we hope ever to be identified by the same holy doctrines and the same salutary discipline, is still flourishing, increasing, and abounding in every good work.

"For this our increase of consolation we have been greatly indebted to our justly esteemed brother and father in the Church the Rev. Richard Reece, and to his associated companion, the Rev. John Hannah, whom you have sent to declare your state unto us, and the interest you feel in our prosperity. We received them as your messengers, and as brethren beloved. Their presence with us has drawn the cords of brotherly love still closer, has seemed to introduce you more immediately before us; and in all our intercourse with them, both social and public, we have been made to feel, more sensibly than ever, that in doctrine and discipline, in experience and practice, and in the great object of evangelizing the world, the British and American Methodists are ONE. And we devoutly pray that they may ever so remain.

"We are, with you, dear brethren, endeavoring to maintain the purity of our doctrines, and are not conscious that we have suffered them in any instance to be changed or adulterated in our hands. As they are the doctrines which have proved to so many, both in Europe and America, the power of God unto salvation, we deem them to be the gospel of God our Saviour; and while he owns them we have never give them up. With you, too, we prize and practically vindicate the general rules of our Church, and the pristine institutions and usages of Methodism. We are also following you, though at an humble distance, in your missionary exertions. But such is the extent, and increasing extent, of our work here, that we cannot find means or men for foreign missions. The increase of our population is perhaps unparalleled, and it is widely scattered over an extensive continent. To keep pace with it, under such circumstances, requires much labor and much privation. In addition to this, the Lord, as you have heard, has opened for us a great and effectual door among the aborigines of our country. These we dare not neglect. They are our neighbors, and we must minister unto them; they have been injured, and we must make them reparation; they are savages, and must be civilized; heathen, and must be converted. All this shall be done if God permit. We have the work much at heart, and hope and pray for success. In addition to this, we have entailed upon us, in several of our states, a degraded and enslaved population, whose situation is making, if possible, a still stronger claim upon our Christian philanthropy. And, finally, the way seems to be opening for missionary exertions in Mexico and South America.

"With these fields of labor in the midst of us and round about us, you cannot expect us to join you in the great and good work in which you are engaged in the East. Still we hope the tune is not far distant when we shall join hands on the Asiatic shores of the Pacific Ocean. We are constantly advancing in our labors toward the West, and you are extending in the East, not only on the continent, but over the islands of the sea. Is it chimerical then to suppose, that at some future day we shall have encompassed this earth, and girded it round with glorious bands of gospel truth? O no; faith says it shall be done. And this faith is not without works; certainly not on your part, for we hear from you that you are laboring assiduously in this great cause, imitating the illustrious example of enterprise and diligence which so eminently marked the great founder of Methodism. You aim at great things, and you accomplish them, We admire the exertions

of your ministers, and the liberality of your people. In our labors as ministers we hope we are not far behind you; but, as a people, we do not yet equal you in active Christian benevolence. In this respect, however, we are improving. Our people are becoming more alive to the importance of greater and more systematic exertions in the cause of the Church. And while we are enlarging our work, and multiplying our numbers, we trust we have not forgotten that the great design of Methodism, the ultimate end of all its institutions, is to raise up and preserve, in the midst of a sinful world, a holy people. Without this, numbers and influence are nothing. We deprecate more than any thing else that ecclesiastical pride which builds itself up upon the numbers and popularity of the church, while that church is sinking in the spirit and tone of its divine life. From such a state of things, we on both sides of the water are doubtless united in saying, Lord, preserve us; make us holy, and make us instrumental in spreading holiness throughout the earth.

"We congratulate you, dear fathers and brethren, on the general prosperity that attends you, both in your labors at home and in your missions abroad; but especially on account of the perfect harmony which you inform us prevails among you; and we pray that it may ever continue. Of ourselves, though we are not able to say quite as much, yet in our present General Conference, which is now nearly closing, amidst some differences of opinion concerning the modes of administration, we find that we harmonize in the essential principles of Methodism. From this we are encouraged to hope, as intimated in his parting advice to us by your esteemed messenger, the Rev. Mr. Reece, that our minor differences of opinion on other subjects will soon be swallowed up in our attachment to the common cause. You too, in former days, have had your difficulties; but those days have passed by, and peace and union now cheer you with their benignant rays. And we are hoping that, before we shall have arrived at your age and maturity as a church, we shall overcome any little difficulties that may now attend us.

"Brethren, pray for us. And may the God of peace dwell with us, and dwell with you. Finally, may this great army of the faithful, who in two grand divisions are now carrying on the warfare in both hemispheres, so acquit themselves in the church militant below, as ultimately to unite with the church triumphant on high, where no ocean shall roll between, and no reciprocal messengers of love shall be needed to recount their victories and triumphs.

"We are, dear fathers and brethren, yours in the bonds of ministerial labor and Christian love.

"Signed in behalf of the conference, "Enoch George, President. "Baltimore, May, 1824."

"NOTE. -- In the address sent to England a few verbal alterations were made, which should have been inserted in this, but were inadvertently omitted. This, however, is substantially the same with the one sent."

N. B. The above address was written by the Rev. Wilbur Fisk.

#### ENDNOTE

1 It is probably due to the interests of truth, as well as to the characters of the living and the dead, to say, that the chief agent of this movement was the Rev. Henry Ryan, who afterward withdrew from the Church, and attempted to establish a separate party.

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