

THE EPISCOPAL ADDRESS

OF THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

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Following the usual custom, the presentation of the Episcopal Address is made on the opening day of the General Conference. It is a review of the life and thought of the Church and her relation to contemporaneous living as expressed through the minds of the Bishops of the Church. The Bishop who writes the address is chosen by ballot by the Council of Bishops. The entire Council carefully reviews the address and the same is signed by them.

The Episcopal Address was read by Bishop Gerald Kennedy, Sunday night, April 26, 1964. See Journal page 233.

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THE EPISCOPAL ADDRESS

To the Methodist General Conference; to the ministers, the members, and the friends of The Methodist Church around the world: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

“He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross.”

Our dear brethren, with the Apostle's words to the church at Colossae, we greet you.

IN MEMORIAM

Since last we met, members of our episcopal family have left us to join that multitude “which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” They were “men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies.” Those of us who walked with them in close fellowship feel deep sorrow in our hearts and experience great loneliness. They were precious to all the Church and we pause in quietness to hear their names and remember their witness.

Robert Elijah Jones (May 18, 1960)
Ralph Spaulding Cushman (Aug. 10, 1960)
Bachman G. Hodge (Jan. 5, 1961)
William T. Watkins (Feb. 6, 1961)
Roberto Elphick (May 6, 1961)
Bowman Foster Stockwell (June 5, 1961)
George Amos Miller (Oct. 13, 1961)
Hiram Abiff Boaz (Jan. 2, 1962)
John Wesley Edward Bowen (July 12, 1962)
A. Frank Smith (Oct. 5, 1962)
G. Bromley Oxnam (March 12, 1963)

Julio M. Sabanes (Aug. 29, 1963)

John Gowdy (Sept. 9, 1963)

John M. Springer (Dec. 2, 1963)

Clare Purcell (Feb. 8, 1964)

Theodore Arvidson (March 12, 1964)

The Episcopal Address, while written by one man, is the united word of the Council of Bishops to The Methodist Church. It is not our purpose to define all the contemporary issues, promote all the worthy causes, or list specific programs for action in the address. We believe the Church expects us to share our hopes and our judgments, and to speak out of our love for The Methodist Church. We believe that no man can receive a higher honor on this earth than to be a lively part of its fellowship.

The Church has seen fit to give us certain responsibilities and authority. We are but fallible men and our judgments are always imperfect. But if we know our hearts, we desire to be good servants of Jesus Christ and his Church. The kindness of our brethren lifts up our hearts and the prayers of our people hold us steady. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.

We would speak to you about our heritage, our contemporary responsibilities and our future opportunities. We want to consider our world with its terror and its glory. We would remind ourselves who we are and what God's purpose for us may be. We would recapture, if we can, the sense of our mission. We want to become aware of the sources of spiritual renewal which God makes available to all Christians.

YESTERDAY

The Wesleyan Revival was, among other things, a demonstration that when plain men could say in the words of their Founder, "We have felt our hearts strangely warmed," thousands were converted. While our fathers were good organizers, they regarded organization as a means to fulfill the evangelistic purpose. Their success was a testimony to the power of witnessing to Christian experience and another example of how the preaching of the Word of God saves men by faith.

If we turn to the American beginnings, we find a tremendous confidence in the proclaiming of the Word. In Bishop Francis Asbury's *Journal*, three phrases are repeated almost to the point of monotony. They are: "I rode"; "I was not well"; "I preached." His travels were almost unbelievable, and his ill health was a hindrance but never a defeat. The main thing was his preaching with its under-

lying assumption that the Word is all-powerful and when set loose, it will spread holiness and reform the Continent.

Let us remember John Hunt, the young Wesleyan missionary to Fiji, then known as the Cannibal Islands. There in the midst of the cruelty, the bestiality, the stench of burning human flesh, he began in 1839 the writing of letters which became his book on *Entire Sanctification*. He won Fiji for Christ because he believed that God willed the conversion of the world.

There was Louis S. Jacoby, our first missionary to Germany, who arrived in the land of the Reformation one year after Marx and Engels published their *Communist Manifesto*. He preached his first sermon on Sunday evening, December 23, 1849, in a Bremen dancing saloon. Here is his mood as he began a great work:

"I trembled before I commenced to preach as I was used to do when I had the chills and fever. I was a poor plain home-made preacher, and in this city there were great celebrated preachers; but there was one thing that encouraged me: I had not sent myself; I was fully convinced the Lord had sent me to Germany."

Let us not forget Bishop William Taylor and his missions around the world. Sent as a missionary to California where he could "sing up" a congregation on the streets, he ministered with power for seven years. Then it was east again and hence to Australia where he inspired Methodism's great period of growth and always closed his evangelistic missions with an appeal for tithers. Back and forth and around the world he traveled, starting work which became four Annual Conferences in India, three Conferences on the west coast of South America and thirty-four mission stations in Central Africa. There has never been another like him.

Methodist theology is austere and objective. Wesley's suspicion of the mystics has saved us from a soft and sentimental encouragement to lose ourselves in some vague, subjective ocean. We have held to the sharp New Testament doctrine that God is a Person who confronts us and deals with us as persons. The heart of the Christian experience is meeting. We are not to wallow around in our own emotions or spend time merely emphasizing our troubles and enumerating our problems. In a day when psychological analyzing is all the vogue, we should remember that our Lord promised we would find our lives by losing them for his sake and the Gospel's. Wesley's sanctified common sense and single-minded service challenge the contemporary spiritual flabbiness.

We believe in spiritual and physical discipline and we

do not believe there is anything pious about inefficiency. But it is our opinion that we spend too much time at the General Conference tinkering with our machinery. The president of the Carnegie Foundation has reminded us that almost always the last act of a dying corporation is to issue a new and enlarged edition of the rule book. An excessive attention to rules and laws may be in itself a sign of sickness.

We believe that our polity is uniquely fitted to serve this moving, restless generation. The discipline spirit of the Circuit Riders is our example. The Episcopalian Dean Hodges said that the great days of the Church were those of the missionaries, the monks, and the Methodists.

The membership of The Methodist Church in the United States is now 10,153,003. During the past quadrennium we have received 1,367,507 members on profession of faith, 381,315 from other denominations, or a total of 1,748,822 new members. The world membership of The Methodist Church is 11,158,202. Every Sunday morning there are approximately 3,689,167 persons in Methodist Sunday Schools.

We organized 496 new Methodist Churches in the United States in the last four years. The total number is now 38,990.

Our annual budget is more than \$500,000,000.

Methodists gave \$61,822,019 to missions from 1960 to 1964. Our total benevolence giving was \$345,751,749. We operate 325 hospitals and homes. We maintain 135 educational institutions.

At this time there are nearly 30,000 Methodist pastors. We have 1,555 Methodist missionaries serving around the world and 500 home missionaries at work in the United States. We have been blessed of God but our increase in the past only serves to remind us that to whom much has been given, much shall be required. Still, every Methodist can proclaim with the Psalmist: "I have a goodly heritage." (Psalm 16:6)

TODAY

Because of the efficiency of our communications we grow too familiar with terror and finally it no longer makes us responsive. The age of "overkill" tends to reduce humanity's ability to recognize danger and represents one of the most serious threats to our survival. There is bred in us a contempt for the prophet and his warning. A shrinking world has not meant a reduction of human problems but quite the opposite. Once it was considered noteworthy that a shot fired at Concord was heard around the world.

Today a statesman clearing his throat is heard in the farthest places. Because of our distorted view of what constitutes news and drama, we hear little about goodness and much about evil so that the secular citizen begins to assume unconsciously that God is silent and inactive. Who will speak for God and proclaim the Good News?

Caught in the most serious struggle our civilization has faced in a thousand years, we confront a ruthless Communism which denies the spiritual and moral foundations of our life. It has won some important victories and it has succeeded too often in driving us to defensive positions. It has challenged our big pronouncements and our little practices in the realms of race relations and social justice. It has revealed how thin our witness has been in so many significant places and how routine and unimaginative has been our work. Has God allowed communistic atheism to bring judgment upon us and stab us awake, as the prophets interpreted the rise of Israel's enemies?

The conflict with Communism is religious and cannot be won by force of arms nor by economic power. The great human issues are always religious essentially and although this will bring us naught for our comfort, the outcome of the present crisis depends largely on the strength or the weakness of the Christian churches. The countries invulnerable to Communism are infiltrated with a strong evangelical Christianity. Our danger is not religious freedom but the denial of it, and the evil of the communist tyranny or the fascist attack is discerned and finally attacked by the Christian church. Those who seek to force the churches into a reactionary mold, are not patriots but betrayers. The Church has never faced a greater testing nor has it ever been confronted by a greater opportunity.

What started out to be the Century of the Common Man has deteriorated into the Age of Mediocrity. Across our world there is a lowering of certain ethical standards, and Chief Justice Warren of the United States Supreme Court has suggested that Americans need "counselors in ethics." In our fascination with subjective analyzing we have reduced the awful catastrophe of sin to a disease, and man's moral betrayals become mere sickness. One of our greatest sins has been the reduction of man's tragic grandeur to the level of adjustment. What a day this is for a Church to preach the doctrines of sin and Christian perfection! We are living in the Book of Acts which demands a new awareness of the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The richest nations seem to be the emptiest of purpose and confidence. It is the new nation marching toward freedom and the creative minority with a dream who find life

full of meaning. So The Methodist Church is called upon to create a vision in one nation, and preach restraint in another. It is clear that no political or economic success ever fills the emptiness of the soul of man. It is the Church's task to afflict the comfortable when they lose their will to serve. It is also the Church's task to remind men who are struggling to attain a better economic life for themselves and their families that it is small profit if they gain their objective and lose their souls. We stand for the truth that nothing is any good for any people unless it brings them closer to God and makes them more aware of the spiritual foundations of their being.

Perhaps our gravest danger is brutalization. It is a terrible thing to accept the possibility that thousands of babies may be malformed by the fall-out from bomb testings. It is even worse to be comforted because only a relatively small percent of the future generation will be affected. We must save our world from thinking in percentages instead of individuals. "One of these little ones" if it is my child or yours, is enough to condemn the whole horrid procedure. We rejoice that a step toward sanity has been taken in the signing of the nuclear test-ban treaty. Today, churches must witness to the eternal significance of every person in a world in danger of losing itself in the darkness of things and statistics.

It is not for the Church to join the hysteria which sets man against man, nation against nation, continent against continent by wild and irresponsible talk about "fighting fire with fire." It is for us to pursue our ancient course of attacking our own imperfections, keeping our life open to God, and perfecting our society. We are not partisans trying to destroy one culture and replace it with another. We are not trying to sell a system but to demonstrate a Way which is incomparably better than all others and shines with the promise of more abundant life for all men.

OUR MINISTRY

Methodist ministers sometimes enlarge on the problems and difficulties of their calling without a proper appreciation for the privilege of being appointed to the greatest office in the world. We believe it is time for a reexamination of the dignity, the glory, and the miracle of the ministry. Reducing our local and traveling preachers, our district superintendents and the episcopacy to the lowest possible status and making them commonplace does not serve the Kingdom of God. We ought to enlarge and not ensmall our offices. We must not take ourselves too seriously but we ought to take our calling as a divine privilege.

The Methodist tendency is to make conference membership so important that ordination becomes a secondary affair. This cuts us off from the sense of God having called us before we were chosen by the Church, and it complicates our ecumenical relationships. We have inherited by way of Rome and Canterbury the two orders of deacon and elder. Through ordination, every minister becomes a part of the church universal and stands in the great succession, beginning with the Apostles. Conference membership is a relationship with the Methodist section of the Christian Church, but accepting the moral and spiritual demands of ordination places us in the family of the whole Christian Church.

Theological seminaries are essential servants of the Church for they shape the minds and attitudes of the ministry. Deans and professors need to be close to bishops and district superintendents that our academic and practical purposes be one. There are professors anxious to warn our young theologues against the church machinery, which is in order as long as the man loves and knows The Methodist Church. But it is most important that every young minister should face the inescapable truth that he must do his work within the framework of Methodist polity, which is not his enemy but his support. Let no man teach who has lost faith in the high calling of the parish ministry or regards it as less than any other calling. We urge every seminary to interpret our polity to its students. We are grateful for the theological professors who by combining academic excellence and Christian character, incarnate the Methodist way.

In saying something about the episcopacy, we are in the pleasant but seldom admired position of talking about ourselves. We speak these words because we know the office from firsthand experience and because we believe the Methodist episcopacy is unique. It has come out of what Wesley considered the two main Christian sources: 1) Scripture and 2) experience. While he was prejudiced against the name itself, to all practical purposes he exercised the office of a bishop from the time the first societies were formed until he died. He even felt justified in ordaining men for America. Once the American Church adopted the office, it became molded and shaped by the Methodist experience in a vast new land and it has never been static. Every bishop, even as every preacher, is responsible to the Church.

One main principle of Methodist organization is that responsibility demands a commensurate authority which must never be unchecked or irresponsible. But the man who is held accountable for the program in any particular area

must be given the resources to fulfill his obligations. Nothing is more frustrating to men and organizations than high expectations on the one hand and inadequate tools on the other. The Methodist Church makes heavy demands on the episcopacy and expects the demands to be fulfilled through men of the bishop's choosing. The episcopacy in its appointment of district superintendents stands before the General, Jurisdictional and Central Conferences responsible and accountable.

From a number of sources there has come a request that the Council of Bishops give leadership to the Church between General Conferences. This would not imply the power to make general commitments, but rather to speak on vital contemporary issues and give a Methodist witness in crisis situations. Perhaps the Council should send a message to the churches annually. In a day when affairs move so swiftly, it is hardly adequate to have a Methodist word only once in four years.

We believe that when The Methodist Church decreed that men elected to the episcopal office should devote the rest of their lives to its service, it acted wisely. This is in harmony with the historic tradition of the Christian Church, and it removes the office from political temptation. When Methodism grants certain power to any of its servants, it is not to enlarge persons but to protect the Church. Churches must be protected against empty pulpits and ministers must be protected against closed pulpits. Every layman and minister is to have protection against the passing whims of a minority or a majority. Nothing is so easily subverted as liberty where there is no constituted authority. The episcopal office needs to be especially amenable to the Holy Spirit's guidance. The Bishops are your servants, for Christ's sake, and as each of us remembers his ministers and laymen in prayer, we ask that they so remember us.

It is to be noted that most of the new plans for church union come very close to the Methodist polity. We believe that our offices are Scriptural and that God has raised us up to make contributions to the ecumenical movement. No Church polity is perfect, but our observation and experience indicates that we go wrong whenever we depart from the tested principles of our polity. The appointive system must apply to all preachers and to all churches, large as well as small. Within our framework we hold each other up and know the strength of a connectionalism which never lets a man or a church stand alone. When the dark times come, it is the whole Methodist Church against the enemy.

RECRUITMENT

Along with other churches, we face the problem of ministerial recruitment. After a great surge of new students at the close of World War II, we find our seminaries leveling off in their enrollments and in some places, there are declines. We need 2,697 new ministers every year and at the present time we are producing about half that number. We believe this is due to neither the worldliness of the younger generation nor to the Gospel's loss of appeal. Our failure is at the point of meeting young men with the claims of the Christian ministry.

This confrontation begins in the home. Parents are not expected to decide their children's careers, but they are privileged to keep the channels open for God's call to be heard. Let our family prayer be that God will put His hand on a son or daughter in a special way, and may Methodist families dedicate all their possessions and their children to the service of God.

It is tragic when a Methodist preacher fails to make the ministry the most exciting task in the world. Contemporary literature reveals how badly tarnished is our image of the ministry. Yet there is no calling more relevant to the basic issues of our time and if young people are not catching the fire of enthusiasm from our ministerial behavior, then we need to pray for a renewal of our first enthusiasm. One of the great joys of being a Methodist preacher is to recruit sons in the Gospel and unless we have missed the way, God will give us this reward for our labors.

Churches harangued by the reactionary, invaded by the petty, and controlled by worldly fear will enlist no young men with vision for their ministry.

We must ask ourselves—Methodist laymen and ministers alike—do we believe that the real issues are ultimately religious? We must ask ourselves if there is any fellowship except the Church with the spiritual power, the ethical sensitivity, and the universal sweep to redeem our sick civilization. If we find, as we must, that this "extension of the Incarnation," this "body of Christ," this "dwelling place of wonder" is the only hope, then we must count it honor indeed to bring our best and most gifted youth into its service. We believe that the next quadrennium should accept ministerial recruitment as a main consideration. If the General Conference should place this obligation on the Council of Bishops, we will be happy to give it our best efforts. We do believe that the enlistment of young men for the ministry is one of the bishops' main responsibilities.

Methodism is not a pietistic sect but a Christian church. It believes in the warm heart and in social concern. No man

is sufficient for its ministry in himself and every man has to throw himself upon the mercy of God and lean on the everlasting arms. We can only hope to do our work by being the most disciplined of men. We must regard our physical bodies with the same respect and concern as the athlete. We must train our minds until they have the sharp edge of the surgeon's knife. We must be spiritually committed. It is to this disciplined order that we call the most daring youth of our homes and our churches.

We need a new awareness of the centrality of preaching. In the beginning, we were a preaching order in the Established Church and since that time any list of the great preachers will contain more than a proportionate share of Methodists. This is because we have a theology that does more than counsel a mere waiting for God to act. Our theology can be preached for it calls for response and it is born out of experience. Our ministers are more than sociologists and analysts. They are preachers of the Word spoken by God and proclaimers of the Good News of forgiveness and redemption. We have strayed from this concept of our office, and we must pray God to restore preaching power to us by giving us the grace to believe His promises.

THE LAITY

It is a demanding thing to be a Methodist layman and not everybody is up to it. Some there be, who found the demands too severe and walk with us no more. The Methodist Church from the beginning was a layman's movement. John Wesley's use of lay preachers was a scandal to the Established Church, but it brought the Gospel to forgotten and neglected people. Many a man found his first opportunity to be somebody in a Methodist society and one of the greatest contributions of the Evangelical Revival was the transformation of by-standers into participants. The great religious movement does not wait for God to send it leaders, but grows by giving converted men their chance to lead.

We carry that heritage of lay participation into all our boards and agencies, and we have equal lay representation in all the decision-making councils of Methodism. We have not believed that a man's theology should reach him at second hand. For us, "the priesthood of all believers" means to let God speak His particular word to each man's heart. Within the broad framework of our Twenty-Five Articles of Religion, inherited for the most part from the Church of England, we encourage each man to make his personal confession and come to his own experience of Christ.

This is a terrible responsibility. The easier way is to let

the Church make the decisions for us. But the man who comes to Christ directly and personally knows a living assurance that can never be handed down. A Church that is theologically authoritarian has a certain appeal and enjoys certain advantages, but the true aim of the Church is to produce Christians who can sing from their hearts:

“Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see.”

We have failed to turn our churches into schools of Christian growth. Too often we have assumed that when the vows of membership are taken before the congregation, the Church is excused from further responsibility. Every Methodist church ought to promote Christian nurture. To boast of our theological freedom is not enough, for freedom is but an opportunity and not an accomplishment. Through the study of the Bible, the Christian heritage, and the Church Fathers, we increase our knowledge of God. It is a sad thing to leave laymen without a fresh idea about God in thirty years, and it is a crying scandal to rest content with childish theological perceptions.

We lose too many of our children. We think it is time for us to institute a regular procedure in our educational program which will compare with what some churches call “confirmation.” Every child in our Church Schools and in our homes should be expected to receive training in church membership and become a full member of The Methodist Church. This ought to be one of the most important events in the life of children and in the life of the Church. We need a mandatory membership training course in our regular church school curriculum and, whenever possible, it should be conducted by a pastor. This is too important a matter to be left unstructured in our educational program.

The Church is not a club that eliminates members for not paying their dues or for failing to attend a set percentage of the meetings. If we counted our membership as some churches do, we would be reporting double our number as a minimum. This is not to encourage an inaccurate accounting of our people, but it is a plea to remember that ministers are shepherds and the Church is a fellowship of concern. The *Discipline* provides direction for pastoral care when our people drift or move away and we must take these advices more seriously. Our growth has been tremendous, but our loss of members is tragic. Perhaps we need a second list of “non-participating” members which will not form a part of the base for levying apportionments.

The present crisis demands articulate, instructed Chris-

tians who are witnesses of their faith and evangelists of the Gospel. Until every Methodist layman learns the joy of this experience, we have not fulfilled the purpose of church membership. Let us have done with the false dichotomy between quantity and quality in our evangelism. This is one place where we can and should have both. To believe that the Church is for a few or for a special group is heresy. The testimony of a great Christian in the Congo is a word for us: "I was only about 10% converted when I began working for the conversion of others," he said. "Had I never brought others to Christ, I would never have been more than a 10% Christian." Remember Peter Bohler's word to Wesley: "Preach faith til you have it, and then because you have it, you will preach faith."

The Methodist layman maintains the freedom of the pulpit. He hears many things with which he disagrees, yet he insists that the preacher shall not merely bolster his own opinions or share his prejudices. He listens for the prophet's word of judgment and he receives, though not always gladly, the disturbing word and the harsh warning. He is loyal and generous and every preacher is inspired by his support through dark days. The Gospel's demand often threatens the layman's security and comfort, and sometimes he pays a bigger price for his faith than the minister.

Our Church along with others, has been under severe testing from the extremist groups. We have come through better than most because the social implications of our faith have been a part of our teaching and preaching. The self-appointed guardians of orthodoxy, the literature censors, the professional patriots for profit, are always trying to control our churches by threatening to cut off their financial support. Let it be said clearly and unequivocally: The Methodist Church does not sanction the views of these extremist groups and we are not for sale. They were not welcome in the Societies of John Wesley and Methodist laymen have the responsibility to keep our churches free from organized attempts to sow dissension that fractures the fellowship. The labeling of unpopular ideas as subversive is not Christian and there is no place for such behavior in Methodism. Any attempt to spread scandal about our leaders without evidence must be rooted out. Nothing is more indicative of our spiritual health than the failure of these groups to become more than minor nuisances.

INTEGRATION

The official pronouncements of The Methodist Church on the race question are clear. That any minister or layman in The Methodist Church should have any question as to

where we stand on this issue, is inconceivable. It is, therefore, most disturbing to see Methodists trying to justify segregation on the basis of weird interpretations of the Scriptures. We are dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, all men are brothers, and all men are of eternal worth in the eyes of God. Prejudice against any person because of color or social status is a sin.

Every minister proclaiming this fundamental Christian doctrine must have the backing of the whole Methodist Church. Every bishop and every district superintendent is bound by the discipline of the Church to oppose segregation and discrimination. Compromises in this field have brought nothing but shame to us and today we stand under the judgment of God. The Church which does not cleanse itself of this sickness, brings comfort to the enemies of Christ and betrays its Lord.

We believe that this General Conference should insist upon the removal from its structure of any mark of racial segregation and we should do it without wasting time. This will cost the Negro Methodists some of their minority rights. It will cost some white Methodists the pain of rooting out deep-seated and long-held convictions concerning racial relations. But God Almighty is moving toward a world of interracial brotherhood so speedily and so irresistibly, that to hesitate is to fight against God and be crushed.

We believe that this General Conference should be able to say when it adjourns: The people called Methodists, by the grace of God, have moved forward toward removing segregation.

MISSIONS

The Christian faith comes into sharper focus when it is seen in action in a non-Christian environment. There we apprehend its distinctiveness and grasp anew its essentials. It is our opinion that there is no greater movement in the world than the Christian missionary enterprise and any man who views it firsthand, either at home or abroad, will be henceforth committed to its support. In a world where so much is wrong, this is right.

The time has come when regional churches, some of them still receiving considerable financial and leadership support from the American and European churches, are making contributions to the older churches. Their fresh vision often makes plain what has become blurred to us and their experiences are often a judgment upon us. According to the New Testament promise, our giving now becomes the happy privilege of receiving and we pray that we may see

how much of what God would give us is coming to us by way of the new churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Methodism is established on five continents and in eighty-eight countries so that it is hard for Methodists to travel anywhere in the world and be outside the fellowship of their church. We are at the scene of disaster, famine, flood, or invasion, and we assist our brethren in the developing and awakening nations through our Methodist missionaries who are there in our name. We do not see any lessening of the importance of the missionary movement. Secular forces have closed doors against us and we must speed the process of giving nationals the authority of leadership. We must become more than ever before "servants for Jesus' sake." Methodism with its restless sense of world commitment will die if it ever allows itself to believe that the day of missions is over. Our biggest past mistake in missionary strategy has been an assumption that things were not going to change. Methodist missions must never become an institution but be an aggressive, burning, relevant demonstration of the power of Jesus Christ to answer man's questions and redeem his life. Indeed, the moment we learn of another planet with intelligent life on it, we will send missionaries to it the first moment that transportation is available. Nor will we measure the worth of our witness by the apparent permanence of a social situation. We proclaim our faith, render our service and leave the rest to God.

ECUMENICITY

We rejoice in the growth of the ecumenical movement and in the development of the ecumenical spirit. We could speak as fools, as Paul once put it, and boast of our own record in this important field. For instance, in 1791 Bishop Coke wrote a letter to Bishop White, the Anglican bishop in New York, urging a united effort to merge the two churches. This was just seven years after the birth of The Methodist Church, the first to be organized on American soil, and indicative of the catholic spirit which has dominated us from the beginning. We leave the form of baptism to the individual's choice and we welcome all Christians to the Lord's Supper. We gladly recognize the ministries of other communions and we accept members from other evangelical churches. We believe in and we support the World Council of Churches, the National Councils of Churches, and the World Methodist Council. We have a permanent *Commission on Church Union* which is engaged at the present time in working out a merger between the Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church. Our word is still that of our Founder: "Is thy heart

right, as my heart is with thine? Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough, I give thee the right hand of fellowship."

Having said this, not all of us are of the opinion that it is profitable for us to spend so much time confessing sins of exclusiveness of which we are not guilty. We hasten to add that we have enough real sins to confess. But we are not sure that God wills the churches of the Reformation to become one organic union. We believe that our pluralism has produced much good fruit, not the least of which has been freedom. We doubt seriously that eliminating our denominations would solve all our problems. We have no intention of apologizing for our own heritage or slowing down our evangelistic efforts until some proposed merger has been accomplished. The final goal for any Church is not necessarily merger but how to use its resources to serve Christ better.

We rejoice in the new spirit of ecumenical fellowship which comes out of the Second Vatican Council. We will go as far as our Roman Catholic brethren will allow in meeting together for mutual consultation and witness. We are anxious to show to the world a common unity in the face of a common foe. We have no hesitation in pledging our Church to unite with all others in confronting communism, atheism, tyranny and pagan secularism. We have believed for a long time that there is much to unite us and that we can differ without bitterness. We welcome increasing discussion and dialogue between the churches. John Wesley's sermon on the *Catholic Spirit* expresses our Methodist spirit.

We would hope that the Vatican Council will announce without equivocation that the Roman Catholic Church will respect religious liberty whether it finds itself a majority or a minority in a particular situation. We would hope that in some places where we have been hindered in doing our missionary service, the Roman Church will remove its hindrances. We approve Roman Catholic representatives at meetings of the Protestant Councils, and we are grateful that representatives from our Church and others have been graciously received at the Council in Rome, and other Roman Catholic Convocations.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Methodists do not steer away from issues merely because they are controversial. We abhor a timid spirit that cries peace when there is no peace and keeps silence when corruption grows and justice is outraged. We expect every minister, every district superintendent and every bishop to

be something besides a public relations man for The Methodist Church. We shall continue to speak our convictions on social issues.

Our generation is not sure that it has a future. To men whose confidence is in material might and military defense, we announce that only God is our strong salvation. We must oppose all policy which does not have all mankind in view or promises profit at the expense of other nations. A country's strength is its religion, and morality is its ultimate defense. The Church betrays its trust when it fails to say this and demonstrate it constantly in its own life. This demands new creatures in Christ who rise above individual desires and swear allegiance to the Kingdom established by God and announced by Jesus Christ. Brethren, this is no ordinary day. It is the First Century, and the Reformation, and Judgment. It is also Resurrection day, Pentecost, and Aldersgate.

We affirm our belief in the principle of the separation of Church and state. To this end, we oppose government aid to parochial schools under whatever guise it may be presented and we do not propose to accept taxation willingly for the sectarian teaching of any Church. We believe in the public schools and we promise them our continuing support.

We pledge a continual warfare against the liquor interests, being more convinced with every passing year that they represent a destructive force in our society. Why any intelligent people hesitates to discourage the sale and curb advertising of alcoholic beverages is beyond our comprehension. The broken homes, the highway slaughter and the alarming increase in alcoholics are tragedies familiar to every pastor and we shall continue the fight until one day, God willing, America wakes up.

The connection between cigarette smoking and disease is now so clear that no Church can be neutral regarding this habit. Sexual license threatens our society and only by maintaining the strict New Testament standards can we be saved. We believe the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and to profane that temple is a sin.

We believe in the absolute necessity of disarmament if we are to survive. This cause demands at least an effort equal with preparation for war, and we urge all governments to press for it with all of their resources. This will never be a safe world but we are convinced that the risks of disarmament are as nothing compared with the risks of the continuation of the arms race.

Our society is committed to civilian control and we are as concerned as former President Eisenhower with any drift toward increased military influence in policy decisions.

One of our greatest tests is whether or not a democratic society facing crisis can maintain democratic ways. We believe it is essential that our elected representatives should not abdicate their responsibility.

TOMORROW

We do not share the current pessimism which speaks of a "post-Protestant era." We see the non-Reformation countries striving to overcome their stagnation by adopting the Protestant ethic of personal responsibility. We see the new nations reaching out for a society that is possible only on the basis of Reformation principles. We rejoice in the signs of the renewal of other religions and we are doubly glad that these signs reveal borrowings from Christianity. But we do not see any other religion or philosophy with a promise of power to change men or save the world. We believe that the signs of the times proclaim that ours is still the relevant Word. Even when least aware of it, the modern world bears testimony that the Reformation Faith has been woven into the very texture of its ethics. Let The Methodist Church proclaim that so far as it is concerned, we are not post-anything, and the best is yet to be.

As Methodists, we are now confronted by three crucial demands.

First: the coming of the Holy Spirit in power demands human preparation. To say that we cannot save the world by organization is not to say that we can save it without organization. As a man's body is to his soul, so is the visible Church to the spirit of Christ. We must use our polity with all the intelligent skill we can muster, remembering that our organization is the means by which we combine our strength, focus our power and overcome our weakness. In our Methodist polity, we have a mighty weapon to present to our Lord for his use and direction.

Second: the time has come for us to ask ourselves what precisely we believe. We have drifted too long in the shadowy world of obscure theological generalities and we have taken refuge in our vaunted heritage of freedom from creeds. There is spiritual power only in theological conviction. Do we believe that the Gospel is God's Word to this generation? Do we believe that Christians are commissioned to bring salvation to society? Do we believe that God through a preacher's preaching or a layman's witnessing can restore a lost soul now? Do we believe that all power has been given unto us? Will we wait together in this General Conference for the rush of the mighty wind and the appearance of the tongues of fire? If we do not leave

this place with a new dedication to the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ for our living and our work, most of what we do here will be of little value. O God, help our unbelief! We do believe that God is able and He has chosen us to bring salvation to each man and His saving health to every nation.

Third: the spirit of expectancy must possess us anew. When men come seeking, they always find. So much of this depends on the preacher that it is hardly too much to say that a worship service is a reflection of his spirit. But the layman has a responsibility too, and if he enters God's house expectantly, he will hardly ever be disappointed. Methodist churches must be centers of spiritual excitement and hope. We must be rescued from our dullness. We need to learn to sing again the great Wesley hymns and meet together to study the Bible. We need to testify to what God in Christ has done for us and tell our neighbors how Christ has changed our lives and given them eternal meaning.

God called the Wesleys and now He calls their spiritual sons and daughters to a world-wide evangelistic crusade. This evangelism must have the two authentic marks of our tradition which are the experience of the heart strangely warmed and a deep social concern. It must be broad enough to include all Christians who will join hands with us. Let The Methodist Church around the world unite its power in faith and claim every part of every society for Christ. Let us offer God our organization in the spirit of that ancient cry: "I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness what his own hand is to a man." (*Theologia Germanica*.) We can save our life as a Church only by losing it. Let the Methodists of this world plan a mighty mission to the nations so splendid that future generations will marvel at our courage. Let us pray for a new expectancy that we shall behold God's mighty acts now.

On February 26, 1791, four days before he died, John Wesley in his last letter to William Wilberforce, the great crusader against slavery, wrote: "Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But, 'If God be for you, who can be against you?'" On March 2, 1791, Wesley died after speaking his last words in a clear voice: "The best of all is, God is with us." After lying in state while some ten thousand people passed by him weeping, he was buried at 5 A.M. to escape the confusion of a huge crowd. According to his instructions, he was carried to his grave by six poor men, who were to receive one pound each. All he left behind him as someone has said, were a badly abused reputation, a worn-out pulpit gown, and The Methodist Church.

We are that Methodist Church, claiming its heritage

proudly and facing its future confidently through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and our Redeemer.

Signed:

ALEJANDRO, DIONISIO D.	MAGEE, J. RALPH
ALTON, RALPH T.	MARTIN, PAUL E.
AMSTUTZ, HOBART B.	MARTIN, WILLIAM C.
ARCHER, RAYMOND L.	MATHEWS, JAMES K.
BAKER, JAMES C.	MIDDLETON, W. VERNON
BALLOCH, ENRIQUE C.	MONDOL, SHOT K.
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BOOTH, NEWELL S.	MOORE, NOAH W., JR.
BRASHARES, CHARLES W.	NALL, T. OTTO
CHEN, W. Y.	NEWELL, FREDERICK B.
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COPELAND, KENNETH W.	PALMER, EVERETT W.
CORSON, FRED PIERCE	PHILLIPS, GLENN R.
DAWSON, DANA	PICKETT, J. WASKOM
DODGE, RALPH E.	POPE, W. KENNETH
ENSLEY, F. GERALD	RAINES, RICHARD C.
FLINT, CHARLES W.	REED, MARSHALL R.
FRANK, EUGENE M.	ROCKEY, CLEMENT D.
FRANKLIN, MARVIN A.	SHAW, ALEXANDER P.
GALLOWAY, PAUL V.	SHORT, ROY H.
GARBER, PAUL N.	SIGG, FERDINAND
GARRISON, EDWIN R.	SINGH, MANGAL
GATTINONI, JUAN E.	SLATER, OLIVER EUGENE
GOLDEN, CHARLES F.	SMITH, J. OWEN
GRANT, A. RAYMOND	SMITH, W. ANGIE
GUM, WALTER C.	STRAUGHN, JAMES H.
HAGEN, ODD	SUBHAN, JOHN A.
HAMMAKER, WILBUR E.	SUNDARAM, GABRIEL
HARDIN, PAUL, JR.	TAYLOR, PRINCE A., JR.
HARMON, NOLAN B.	TIPPETT, DONALD H.
HARRELL, COSTEN J.	VALENCIA, JOSE L.
HARRIS, MARQUIS L.	VOIGT, EDWIN E.
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HOLLOWAY, FRED G.	WALTON, AUBREY G.
HOLT, IVAN LEE	WARD, W. RALPH
KELLY, EDWARD W.	WELCH, HERBERT
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KING, WILLIS J.	WICKE, LLOYD C.
LEDDEN, W. EARL	WUNDERLICH, FRIEDRICH
LORD, JOHN WESLEY	ZOTTELE, PEDRO
LOVE, EDGAR A.	

Bishops of The Methodist Church