

# From the Close of the General Conference of 1816 to the Commencement of the General Conference of 1820

by Nathan Bangs

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*This sermon reflects on the growth and development of Methodism in America, highlighting the contributions of key figures such as Jesse Lee and the impact of the Tract Society.*

**Scripture:** 1 Chronicles 16:24, Psalm 96:3, Proverbs 19:17, Isaiah 6:8, Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8, Romans 10:14, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Philippians 4:19, 1 Timothy 6:18

**Topics:** "Missionary Work", "Bible Distribution"

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## Description

The Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was established in 1819 with the aim of supplying the destitute with Bibles, providing a cheap supply to those who could purchase, and supporting missionary labors throughout the United States and beyond. The society was formed to address the spiritual and temporal needs of individuals, especially in areas where people were too poor or indifferent to support the ministry. The society's constitution outlined the structure and objectives, emphasizing the importance of missionary work and the distribution of Bibles. Efforts were made to engage the cooperation of members and friends of the Church through subscriptions and donations to support the missionary cause.

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## Transcript

There were, by an act of the foregoing General Conference, two new conferences, namely Mississippi and Missouri, added to the number, making in all eleven annual conferences to be attended by the three bishops. Though some had contended that it would be most convenient to divide the episcopal supervision so as to apportion a specified district of country to each bishop, yet the majority thought it most advisable to leave these things to be regulated by the bishops themselves, as they might judge most convenient for an efficient oversight of the whole work; and they concluded that this object could be accomplished most easily and energetically by an interchange of labors, so that each bishop should visit all the conferences at least once in the four years. This, it was contended, would best answer the character of a general itinerating superintendency, prevent local interests and jealousies from springing up, and tend most effectually to preserve that homogeneousness of character and reciprocity of brotherly feeling by which Methodism had been and should be ever distinguished. The bishops accordingly

commenced their labors on this plan, and, as far as health and other existing circumstances would allow, steadily pursued it until the close of their quadrennial term.

The "Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church" was formed this year, by some members of our Church, with a view to furnish the poorer class of the community with religious reading. It is true that a small society, managed by a few pious and benevolent females, had been formed a short time previously, but its operations were extremely limited. The society now formed took a wider range, and commenced publishing its tracts and distributing them with spirit and energy. It has gone on from that time to the present, increasing the number and variety of its tracts, and enlarging the sphere of its operations; and has done much good by diffusing abroad the truths of the gospel, by issuing doctrinal, experimental, and practical illustrations of the Holy Scriptures.

This method of scattering among the great mass of the people, in the cheapest possible form, and in a small compass, religious knowledge, was begun by Mr. Wesley at an early period of his ministry, and was one of the means to which he resorted to effect the reformation and salvation of the world. Under date of Dec. 18, 1745, he says: "We had within a short time given away some thousands of little tracts among the common people. And it pleased God hereby to provoke others to jealousy. Insomuch that the lord mayor had ordered a large quantity of papers, dissuading from cursing and swearing, to be printed and distributed to the trainband. And this day An Earnest Appeal to Repentance was given at every church door, in or near London, to every person who came out; and one left at the house of every householder who was absent from church. I doubt not but God gave a blessing therewith." Here was an example for the distribution of tracts long before any tract society existed either in Great Britain or America; and Mr. Wesley continued the practice from that time forward with unexampled diligence, furnishing those who were willing to aid him in this good method of "sowing the seed of the kingdom" with short and pithy tracts, such as "A Word to the Drunkard," "A Word to the Swearer," to the "Smuggler," to the "Sabbath-breaker," &c., &c., for gratuitous distribution.

This method, so admirably adapted to bring religious instruction within the reach of all classes of men, but more especially the poor, and those who have little time and less inclination to read, was afterward adopted by Miss Hannah More [sic], by which she contributed much to check the progress of infidelity, which about that time threatened to deluge the land. Following these examples, others had resorted to the same means for diffusing religious truth more effectually among the people, both in Europe and America. And, as we have before seen, Bishop Asbury had done much by his individual exertions in the same way.

From a knowledge of the good effects resulting from this practice at the time of which we now speak, a combination of effort was made by forming the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which has resulted most beneficially to the best interests of mankind. After a few years of experiment, the whole concern, by an amicable arrangement, was transferred to the book agency, and thenceforward it has been conducted as a part and parcel of that establishment.

The records within my reach do not enable me to notice any particular enlargement of the work in the new countries, nor special revivals in other places. There was, however, a gradual increase in many places, and an extension of the circuits in others, as may be seen by an inspection of the numbers in Church fellowship.

Fifty-two preachers located this year, fourteen were returned supernumerary, thirty-eight superannuated, two had been expelled, one withdrawn, and five had died.

Among those who had entered their rest the past year was the Rev. Jesse Lee. He was born in Prince George's county, in the state of Virginia, in 1758. His parents were respectable, and they gave him that sort of education which it was common in those days to bestow on boys not destined for any learned profession. In the fifteenth year of his age he was happily brought to the knowledge of the truth, and made a partaker of the pardoning mercy of God. In the year 1783, one year before the organization of our Church, he entered the traveling ministry, and continued in it with great zeal and much success till his death, which happened on the 12th of August, 1816.

As the preceding pages of this History have recorded much respecting his early labors in the cause of Christ, particularly in New England, it is not necessary to recapitulate them in this place. The last station he filled was Annapolis, the metropolis of Maryland. While here he attended a camp meeting near Hillsborough, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where he preached twice with great acceptance and power; and in the evening of the day on which he preached his last sermon he was seized with a chill and fever, from which he never recovered. During this time he frequently expressed himself in terms of unshaken confidence in his God, and on one occasion shouted aloud, Glory! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Jesus reigns!"

On the same evening he spoke for nearly twenty minutes with great deliberation, requesting, among other things, that a letter should be written to his brother, to let him know that he died happy in the Lord, and also that he was fully satisfied with the kind treatment he had received from brother Sellers, at whose house he died.

It seems that there had existed between Jesse Lee and Bishop McKendree some difficulty, by which a degree of alienation of affection had taken place, much to the grief of their mutual friends. Before, however, the former closed his eyes in death, he said to a friend of both, "Give my respects to Bishop McKendree, and tell him that I die in love with all the preachers; that I love him; and that he lives in my heart." With these sentiments of brotherly love in his heart, and a consciousness of the peace of God overflowing his soul, this veteran of the cross and minister of Christ fell asleep in Jesus, at about half past seven o'clock in the evening of the twelfth of September, 1816, aged fifty-eight years, having been in the itinerant ministry about thirty-three years.

When Jesse Lee joined the Methodists they were few in number, much despised and persecuted, and had therefore to contend with many sorts of opposition. Yet in the midst of these things he boldly espoused the cause, and early displayed that independence of mind for which he was ever afterward characterized. That same love of Christ which was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit at his conversion, impelled him forward in the path of duty as a minister of Jesus Christ, and enabled him to bear up under the various sorts of reproach which were usually cast upon Methodist preachers in those days, and to persevere through all in the discharge of his high duties as an ambassador of God.

We do not, indeed, rank him among ministers of the most eminent talents as a preacher. His education was limited, his reading confined to a small circle of authors, and his mind was left principally to its own resources in handling the subjects which came up for investigation. Yet his talents were respectable, and his burning zeal in the cause of Christ compensated, in some measure at least, for the lack of those expanded views which might have been acquired by a more extended and critical knowledge of literature and science. But being possessed of strong common sense, of a ready wit, and sound understanding, and being brought, by his extensive travels, into contact with various classes of men, of different views and habits, he treasured up from his daily experience and observation much useful knowledge, of which he

could avail himself in time of need, in defense of the truths he preached, and the plans of procedure he had adopted. This also gave him a deep insight into the human character, and qualified him to adapt himself with admirable facility to the variety of exigencies which arose before him.

His preaching was chiefly of an experimental and practical character; and had he not sometimes lowered the dignity of the pulpit by facetious sayings, more calculated to "court a grin, or woo a smile," than they were to inspire respect "for that holy place, the pulpit," he might be more safely held up for the imitation of others. Though we by no means condemn an innocent sally of wit, nor that satire which dresses up vice and folly in their own native deformity, yet, whenever either of these is so far indulged as to leave the mind barren, or to divert the soul from the spirit of devotion, it evinces the necessity of laying a restraint upon this witty disposition of the mind, and of making it bow to the more sober dictates of manly truth and logical argument.

It has also been objected to Mr. Lee, that he evinced an ambitious mind; and his disappointment at not being elected a bishop at the time Richard Whatcoat was chosen to that office has been adduced as an evidence that he was ambitious of office. That he had reason to expect such an appointment must be granted. That Bishop Asbury had designated him, at one time, as a proper person for that office, is equally manifest. And hence, that he suffered some degree of mortification at his non-election, it is reasonable to suppose; and that this might have created some uneasiness in his mind, and have biased his judgment and feelings toward those who were preferred before him, is not at all unlikely. But these things by no means prove the existence of an unholy ambition, or an improper thirst for human fame. A man may be very improperly deprived of his rights by the unjust imputations of others, by intrigue, jealousy, and a mean compliance with the dictates of the spirit of rivalry. Without, however, pretending to decide whether or not Jesse Lee should have been elected to the office of a bishop, he may have thought himself justly entitled to that distinction, and hence, from a simple desire to be more extensively useful, he might have desired it without subjecting himself to the charge of indulging in a criminal ambition. That he was ambitious to do good on the most extensive scale is manifest from the whole tenor of his conduct, from the sacrifices he made in the cause of Christ, and the manner in which he employed his time and talents.

But whatever defects the keen eye of criticism may have discovered in his character or conduct, they must be ranked among those venial faults which are common to human beings -- defects of the head, not of the heart; of education, and not from moral or intellectual obliquity. The integrity of his heart, the uprightness of his deportment, and his indefatigable labors in the best of all causes, effectually shield him from all imputations of moral delinquency, and place him high on the pedestal of honor among his brethren of that age of Methodism.

He, indeed, opened the way for the introduction of Methodism in many new places, in doing which he had to contend with a variety of difficulties of a peculiar character; and the firm and prudent manner in which he encountered and overcame those difficulties evinced at once his moral courage, the purity of his motives, and the strength of his understanding. In New England especially, where the people were generally well instructed on religious subjects, and where he frequently came in contact with ministers of other denominations whose doctrinal views differed, in some important points, from his own, he was called upon to exercise all his ingenuity and patience in defending himself against his assailants, and in planting the standard of Methodism in that land of the pilgrims. And this was one of the best schools in which a minister could be educated. Coming in collision with error in all its various hues, with folly and vice in all the shapes they generally assume, whether in open profanity, or of a secret, disguised infidelity, hypocrisy, and "cunning craftiness," a minister must be armed at all points to be able effectually to ward off

the attacks of his opponents, to unmask the hypocrite, to detect the sophistry of infidelity, and to establish the truth upon a firm foundation. Yet this was the work which Jesse Lee, and others engaged with him in that day, had to perform. He stood alone against a host. He manfully fought the battles of the Lord, and came off "more than a conqueror." Hence his name is remembered with gratitude and veneration by the men of that generation, who bore witness to his self-denying zeal and persevering efforts to do them good.

His preaching was not distinguished by profound depth of thought, by a regular chain of argumentation, or by any sudden flights of oratory, but by a gentle flow of language, by apposite appeals to Scripture, by apt illustrations from experience and observation, and often by anecdotes which he had treasured up from his extensive travels and social intercourse with mankind. He generally addressed himself to the heart, and sought to effect a reformation there, knowing full well that a reformation of life would necessarily follow: and he won the affections of the sinner to Jesus Christ by the power of truth addressed to him in the persuasive language of the gospel, rather than by awakening his fears by the terrors of the law.

There was an engaging variety in his sermons. Having surveyed, as far as he was able, the whole field of theological truth, he was qualified to present it in all its various aspects, without tiring the hearer with a dull monotony of the same thing over and over again. As a writer, Jesse Lee is more distinguished for his industry in collating and his fidelity in recording facts, than he is for the chasteness and elegance of his style. There is, however, a pleasing simplicity in the plain and unvarnished manner in which his history is composed, far more to be commended than that labored and pompous style of writing with which some authors endeavor to decorate their pages. Jesse Lee was the first historian of American Methodism. As such, he deserves the thanks of the Church for the faithful and accurate manner in which he has recorded the events of his day, though it is evident that his judgment was biased, in some instances, either by personal prejudice, or by too great a tenacity for his own peculiar views. It must be confessed, too, that his history is wanting in the variety of incident and copiousness of detail which are essential to excite interest and to satisfy the desire of those readers who wish for full information respecting the character, doings, and progress of this branch of the church of Christ.

His personal appearance was respectable and commanding; his countenance intelligent, and marked with that shrewdness by which he was peculiarly distinguished and often a pleasant smile played upon his lips, which gave an air of cheerfulness to his conversation with his friends. As he advanced in life he became quite corpulent, so much so that it seemed a labor for him either to walk or ride. This, however, did not arise from a luxurious mode of living, for he was exceedingly temperate in his habits, as well as plain in his manners and dress.

Such was Jesse Lee, as nearly as I am able to describe him. If the portraiture be faulty, it must be attributed to want of skill in the painter, and not fidelity in the heart or hand which guided the pencil. As such he stands enrolled among those early Methodist preachers who contributed by their deep piety, their sacrifices, and labors, to lay the foundation of that superstructure which has since arisen in such beauty and grandeur in this western world. And having "finished his course, and kept the faith," he is now reaping the reward of his sacrifices and toils in the world of glory everlasting.

Samuel Waggoner, Peter Wyatt, John Van Schoick, and Stephen Richmond had also filled up the measure of their days in usefulness, and gone to their home in peace.

It seems proper to record here the death of another eminent servant of God who had exchanged worlds during the past year, namely, the Rev. George Shadford. As he had devoted several years to the service

of his Master in America, justice requires that some notice should be taken of him in the history of our Zion.

He was born near Lincolnshire, at a place called Slotter, in England, January 19, 1739. He was educated in the principles of the Established Church; was early taught by his parents to read the Holy Scriptures, the necessity of prayer, as well as to repeat his catechism; and at a suitable age was confirmed by the bishop, and received the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Though he was thus taught the form of godliness, he remained unchanged in heart until he was in his twenty-fourth year, when, after various struggles against sin and error, he was brought into gospel liberty by the instrumentality of the Methodist ministry. He was soon after led forth into the ministry of the word, and in 1768 joined the itinerant ministry under the direction of Mr. Wesley. It soon appeared, by the blessed effects of his ministrations, that a dispensation of the gospel had been committed to him. After continuing in this work for about four years, during which time God had given him the most indubitable marks of his approbation, hearing Captain Webb speak of the state of things in America, and the great want of preachers, Mr. Shadford offered his services for this new field of labor. His offer being accepted by Mr. Wesley, in company with Mr. Thomas Rankin, on Good Friday, he set sail for America, and after a voyage of eight weeks safely landed in Philadelphia, where he was most cordially received by the people. He immediately entered upon his work, and God attended his word with his blessing. He visited Trenton and various parts of New Jersey, and then came to New York. In all these places God gave him seals to his ministry.

When he was about leaving the city of Philadelphia the following remarkable circumstance happened, which is related in his own words: --

"When I went," said he, "to the inn where my horse was, and had just entered into the yard, I observed a man fixing his eyes upon me, and looking earnestly, until he seemed ashamed, and blushed very much. At length he came up to me, and abruptly said, 'Sir, I saw you in a dream last night. When I saw your back as you came into the yard I thought it was you; but now that I see your face, I am sure that you are the person. I have been wandering up and down till now, seeking you.' 'Saw me in a dream,' said I, 'what do you mean?' 'Sir,' said he, 'I did, I am sure I did: and yet I never saw you with my bodily eyes before. Yesterday in the afternoon I left this city and went as far as Schuylkill river, intending to cross it, but began to be uneasy, and could not go over it; I therefore returned to this place, and last night, in my sleep, saw you stand before me; when a person from another world bade me seek for you until I found you, and said you would tell me what I must do to be saved. He said also that one particular mark by which I might know you was, that you preached in the streets and lanes of the city.' Having spoken this, he immediately asked, 'Pray, sir, are not you a minister?' I said, 'Yes, I am a preacher of the gospel; and it is true that I preach in the streets and lanes of the city, which no other preacher in Philadelphia does. I preach also every Sunday morning, at nine o'clock, in Newmarket.' I then asked him to step across the way to a friend's house, where I asked him from whence he came. He answered, 'From the Jerseys.' I asked whether he had any family; he said, 'Yes, a wife and children.' I asked where he was going; he said he did not know. I likewise asked, 'Does your wife know where you are?' He said, 'No; the only reason why I left home was, I had been very uneasy and unhappy for half a year past, and could rest no longer, but came to Philadelphia."

"I replied, 'I first advise you to go back to your wife and children, and take care of them, by obeying God in the order of his providence. It is unnatural,' said I, 'to leave them in this manner; for even the birds of the air provide for their young. Secondly, you say you are unhappy; therefore the thing you want is religion; the love of God, and of all mankind; righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. When this takes possession of your heart, so as to destroy your evil tempers, and root out the love of the world, anger,

pride, self-will, and unbelief, then you will be happy. The way to obtain this is, you must forsake all your sins, and heartily believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you return to the Jerseys, go to hear the Methodist preachers constantly, and pray to the Lord to bless the word; and if you heartily embrace it you will become a happy man.'

"While I was exhorting him tears ran plentifully from his eyes. We then kneeled down to pray, and I was enabled to plead and intercede with much earnestness for his soul. When we arose from our knees I shook him by the hand: he wept much, and had a broken heart; but did not know how to part with me. He then set out to go to his wife in the Jerseys, and I saw him no more; but I trust I shall meet him in heaven."

Of his subsequent labors in America, and the great success which attended his preaching, the reader will find an ample account in the first volume of this History, book ii, chapter 1. The following incident is related as the effect of his labors while in Virginia. Concerning the new converts who were brought to the knowledge of the truth during that great and glorious work, Mr. Shadford says: --

"Among these was a dancing-master, who came first to hear on a week-day, dressed in scarlet; and came several miles again on Sunday, dressed in green. After preaching he spoke to me, and asked if I could come to that part where he lived some day in the week. I told him I could not, as I was engaged every day. I saw him again at preaching that week, and another man of his profession. When I was going to preach one morning, a friend said to me, 'Mr. Shadford, you spoiled a fine dancing-master last week. He was so cut under preaching, and feels such a load of sin upon his conscience, that he moves very heavily; nay, he cannot shake his heels at all. He had a profitable school, but hath given it up, and is determined to dance no more. He intends now to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic.' I said, 'It is very well; what is his name?' He said, 'He is called Madcap!' I said, 'A very proper name for a dancing-master;' but I found this was only a nickname, for his real name was Metcalf. He began to teach school, joined our society, found the guilt and load of his sin removed from his conscience, and the pardoning love of God shed abroad in his heart. He lived six or seven years after, and died a great witness for God, having been one of the most devoted men in our connection."

In 1778 Mr. Shadford, not willing to throw off his allegiance to the British government, and not being permitted to remain here in peace without taking the oath required by the law of the state of Maryland, to be an obedient citizen of this country, took his departure for England. After his return he continued with great diligence in the work of an itinerant minister, being everywhere received as a messenger of God, until, worn down with labor and weakened by disease, he was compelled, in 1791, to take a supernumerary relation. He did not, however, bury himself in obscurity, or lead a life of useless inactivity, but persevered in his work as his strength would permit the remainder of his days. His biographer gives the following account of his last hours, which is an instructive comment upon a life of piety and devotion to God: --

"On Monday, February 28, Mr. Shadford dined with his affectionate friend Mr. Blunt, in company with his brethren. He then appeared in tolerable health, and ate a hearty dinner. In the course of the week he felt indisposed, from a complication of diseases. He was under no apprehension at this time that his departure was so near, as he had frequently felt similar affections, and, by timely applications to his medical friend Mr. Bush, had been relieved. On Friday, March 1, he with some difficulty met his class, and afterward said it was impressed on his mind he should never meet it more. On the Saturday afternoon I called to inquire about his health, when he said, with unusual fervor,

'To patient faith the prize is sure; And all that to the end endure The cross, shall wear the crown.'

His mind seemed fully occupied with the great and interesting realities of eternity, and he had no greater pleasure than in meditating and talking of the redeeming love of God. On the Lord's day morning, March 10, before I went to the chapel I called to see him and found he had slept most of the night; from this we flattered ourselves the complaint had taken a favorable turn, and were in hopes of his recovery. But when the doctor called he said the disease was fast approaching to a crisis, and it was impossible for him to recover. Upon this information Mr. Shadford broke out into a rapture, and exclaimed, 'Glory be to God!' Upon the subject of his acceptance with God, and assurance of eternal glory, he had not the shadow of a doubt. While he lay in view of an eternal world, and was asked if all was clear before him, he replied, 'I bless God, it is;' and added, 'Victory! victory! through the blood of the Lamb!' When Mrs. Shadford was sitting by him, he repeated, 'What surprise! what surprise!' I suppose he was reflecting upon his deliverance from a corruptible body, and his entrance into the presence of his God and Saviour, where every scene surpasses all imagination, and the boldest fancy returns wearied and unsatisfied in its loftiest flights.

Two friends, who were anxious for his recovery, called upon him, and when they inquired how he was, he replied, 'I am going to my Father's house, and find religion to be an angel in death.' A pious lady, in the course of the day, was particularly desirous of seeing him, and she asked him to pray for her: he inquired, 'What shall I pray for?' She said, 'That I may meet you in heaven, to cast my blood-bought crown at the feet of my Redeemer:' he said, with great energy, 'The prize is sure.' His pious sayings were numerous, and will long live in the recollection of many; but a collection of them all would swell this article beyond due limits. His last words were, 'I'll praise, I'll praise, I'll praise;' and a little after he fell asleep in Jesus, on March 11, 1816, in the 78th year of his age."

The following remarks upon his character are as just as they are true:

"For nearly fifty-four years Mr. Shadford had enjoyed a sense of the divine favor. His conduct and conversation sufficiently evinced the truth of his profession. For many years he had professed to enjoy that perfect love which excludes all slavish fear; and if Christian tempers and a holy walk are proofs of it, his claims were legitimate. Maintaining an humble dependence upon the merits of the Redeemer, he steered clear of both Pharisaism and Antinomianism: his faith worked by love. Truly happy himself, there was nothing forbidding in his countenance, sour in his manners, or severe in his observations. His company was always agreeable, and his conversation profitable. If there was any thing stern in his behavior, it was assumed, to silence calumniators and religious gossips. In short, he was a man of prayer, and a man of God.

"His abilities as a preacher were not above mediocrity; yet he was a very useful laborer in the vineyard of the Lord. In illustrating the doctrines of the gospel he was simple, plain, and clear. His discourses, though not labored, were methodical, full of Scriptural phraseology, delivered with pathos, and accompanied with the blessing of God. He did not perplex his hearers with abstruse reasoning and metaphysical distinctions, but aimed to feed them with the bread of life; and instead of sending them to a dictionary for an explanation of a difficult word, he pointed them to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

"Mr. Shadford was free and generous. His little annual income, managed with a strict regard to economy, supplied his wants, and left a portion for the poor and needy. In visiting the sick, while he assisted them by his prayers and advice, he cheerfully administered to their wants. He spent no idle time in needless visits

or unmeaning chit-chat; and though many of his kind friends in Frome would have considered it a high favor if he could have been prevailed upon to partake of their bounty, yet he always declined it, except once a week, at the hospitable table of his generous friend Mr. Blunt, where he generally met the preachers with some part of their families. He loved his brethren in the ministry; and, like an old Soldier who had survived many a campaign, he felt a pleasure in retracing the work of God, in which he had been engaged for more than half a century. He claimed it as a right, and deemed it a privilege, to have the preachers to take tea with him every Saturday afternoon. There was nothing sordid in his disposition, and, as far as I could ever observe, covetousness formed no part of his character. He considered the rule of his Saviour as having a peculiar claim upon his attention: 'Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.'

"His patience and resignation to the will of God were such, that he has left few superiors in those passive graces. Some years since he lost his eyesight, and continued in this state of affliction for several years; but instead of murmuring at this dispensation of Providence, he bore it with Christian fortitude. This did not altogether prevent his usefulness; for though the sphere of his action was circumscribed by it, he could still pray with the afflicted, converse with the pious, and meet several classes in the week. In this state he was advised to submit to an operation for the recovery of his sight. The trial proved successful; and when the surgeon said, 'Sir, now you will have the pleasure of seeing to use your knife and fork,' Mr. Shadford feelingly replied, 'Doctor, I shall have a greater pleasure; that of seeing to read my Bible.' This luxury he enjoyed; for when he was permitted to use his eyesight, the first thing he did was to read the word of life for three hours, reading and weeping with inexpressible joy. During the whole of his last short illness he betrayed no symptoms of uneasiness, but cheerfully submitted to the will of God. Through the last few years of his life he glided smoothly down the stream of time. The assiduous attention of Mrs. Shadford to all his wants, her sympathy in the moments of his pain, and unwearied attempts, either to prevent his sufferings or lessen their force, greatly tended to soften them down. She has lost a pious and an affectionate husband, and the Methodist Society in Frome one of its best members."

Numbers in the Church: Whites This Year: 181,442; Last Year: 171,931; Increase: 9,511 -- Colored This Year: 43,411; Last Year: 42,302; Increase: 1,107 -- Total This Year: 224,853; Last Year: 214,235 -- Increase: 10,618 -- Preachers This Year: 716; Last Year: 695; Increase: 21.

This year marks a favorable epoch in the history of our Church, by the recommencement of the Methodist Magazine, the first number of which was published by J. Soule and T. Mason, in January, 1818. As has already been remarked, the General Conference of 1812 ordered the resumption of this work, but the order was never executed. The order was renewed in 1816, yet from some cause it was not recommenced until this year. Its appearance, even at this late period, was hailed, by the friends of literature and religion, as the harbinger of brighter days to our Zion, as it promised to become a medium of information and instruction to our people generally, and a permanent record of those facts and incidents which might throw light upon our history in a future day.

As the issuing of this work was entering on an untrodden path by those who were to guide its course and watch over its destinies, it is no wonder that its editor, the Rev. Joshua Soule, felt some anxiety for its success, and a trembling sense of the responsibilities he was about to assume. These he expressed, in the preface to the first number, in the following language: --

"In publishing this periodical, the editors feel all those sensibilities which arise from a conviction that its merits are to be tested under the inspection of an enlightened community. The care and labor inseparable from the agency of the Book Concern forbid our devoting as much time and application to the selection

and arrangement of materials for publication in the Magazine as its nature and importance demand. But notwithstanding these embarrassments exist, we trust the work will be found both useful and entertaining to the real friends of Zion."

The design of the work, and the manner in which it was proposed to carry it into execution, were thus announced: --

"The great design of this publication is to circulate religious knowledge, a design which embraces the highest interests of rational existence, as the sum of individual and social happiness increases in a scale of proportion with the increase of spiritual light and information.

"In the execution of this design the strictest care will be taken to guard the purity and simplicity of the doctrines of the gospel against the innovations of superstition on the one hand, and of false philosophy on the other.

"In admitting controversial subjects into this work, the heat of party zeal and personal crimination will be carefully avoided."

As before said, the appearance of this work gave great satisfaction to the most enlightened and intelligent friends of our communion, and hence a commendable zeal was exemplified in procuring subscribers, that it might have as wide a circulation as possible among the people of our charge; and I believe that not less than ten thousand were procured the first year, though its circulation in subsequent years did not answer the expectations raised by this promising commencement.

An effort was made last year to resuscitate the cause of education among us. Dr. Samuel K. Jennings, aided by several benevolent and public spirited individuals in the city of Baltimore, laid the foundation of a literary institution, denominated the Asbury College; and it into operation under apparently favorable auspices, an account of which was published in the March number of the Methodist Magazine for this year. With this account, however, the friends of education, who estimated things as they are, were not much gratified, as it seemed to promise more than could be rationally expected, and was rather calculated to blazon forth the attainments of the professors than to enlighten the public by a sober statement of facts.

It continued for a short time, and then, greatly to the disappointment and mortification of its friends, went down as suddenly as it had come up, and Asbury College lives only in the recollection of those who rejoiced over its rise and mourned over its fall -- a fatality which had hitherto attended all attempts to establish literary institutions among us.

This year was distinguished by some powerful revivals of religion. In the city of Baltimore the Rev. Stephen G. Roszel gives an account of one of the most extensive and encouraging revivals ever beheld in that city. It was preceded by observing days of fasting and prayer, and began at Fell's Point, whence it spread throughout the entire city, in the progress of which nearly one thousand souls were brought into church fellowship. The subjects of this great work were from twelve to eighty and even ninety years of age, many of whom were heads of families, of respectable standing and influence in society, and others in the bloom of life, young men and maidens of promising talents, who became pillars in the Church. The work entered the penitentiary, and quite a number of the convicts became subjects of the grace of life. Such was the impression made upon the public mind by this powerful reformation, that even those who were not its immediate subjects were awed into silent submission, being constrained to acknowledge the hand of God.

In many other places also, in the bounds of the New York and New England conferences, there were gracious outpourings of the Spirit of God, and great was the rejoicing of happy believers over the conversion of penitent sinners. Southold, on Long Island, and some circuits within the bounds of the Kennebec district, in Maine, and other places which might be named, were favored with manifestations of the power and grace of God in the awakening and conversion of sinners.

In Upper Canada, particularly on the Augusta, Bay of Quinte, Hallowell, and Niagara circuits, there was a great ingathering of souls into the fold of Christ, among whom were several Roman Catholics, and eight persons who were over sixty years of age.

This work commenced at an annual conference held at Elizabethtown in June, 1817, the first ever held in that province, and thence spread in a glorious manner through the above-mentioned circuits, bowing the hearts of hundreds, young and old, and in some instances whole families, to the yoke of Jesus Christ. During the progress of this great work about one thousand souls were brought from darkness to light, and added to the Church.

We have heretofore seen that camp meetings, by reason of the irregularities which brought them into discredit, gradually declined in Kentucky, and were indeed generally abandoned for several years, especially in the central part of the state. Their usefulness, however, in other parts of the country, induced some of the friends of the cause to make an effort to introduce them again into the interior of Kentucky. The Rev. Le Roy Cole, who joined the traveling ministry as early as 1777, had located and moved into Clarke county, Ky.; but, being much devoted to the work of God, he had entered the itinerancy, and was again zealously engaged in promoting revivals. This year he appointed a camp meeting in the neighborhood of Cynthiana, in Harrison county. For the first and second days every thing tended to discourage them -- the rain descended in torrents, and a company of rude young men came on the ground, with bottles of whisky in their pockets, evidently determined on mischief. The friends of religion, however, persevered in their work, and on Saturday night there was a mighty display of the convincing power of God. Those very young men, who came for sport, became much alarmed; some, throwing away their whisky bottles, fell upon their knees in prayer, while others ran into the woods, to escape, if possible, from their fears; but even here their cries for mercy testified to the deep anguish of their souls. This was the commencement of a great revival of religion in that part of the country, which eventuated in the conversion of about four hundred souls in Cynthiana and its vicinity, under the ministry of Absalom Hunt, Le Roy Cole, and others, who assisted them in their work. From this the reformation afterward spread its hallowing influence in various directions through the country, and camp-meetings regained their lost character in that part of Kentucky. It is, indeed, said, that during this great and good work several traveling preachers were raised up, who have since distinguished themselves for usefulness in the Church.

The general superintendency of the Church, as has been seen in the account given of the General Conference of 1816, was now committed to three hands, all of whom entered upon their work with commendable zeal and diligence, traveling through the length and breadth of their charge, alternately changing with each other, so that each could pass through his great circuit at least once in four years. Bishop McKendree, however, enjoyed but a feeble state of health, and could not, therefore, render that efficient service which was desirable. But his colleagues were comparatively young and vigorous, their labors incessant, and their services highly appreciated by the Church generally.

Of the living it would be unseemly to speak in terms of fulsome flattery, while of the dead they may be told without the fear of censure for either praise or dispraise. Of Bishop McKendree we have already spoken,

while giving an account of his election to office. Bishop George was a man singularly devoted to God, of great natural eloquence, and his preaching was "in the demonstration of the Spirit and power;" and wherever he went he diffused the spirit of piety and of Christian and ministerial zeal among preachers and people. And it is enough to say that his colleague, Bishop Roberts, gave equal evidence of his strong attachment to the cause he had espoused, and general satisfaction to his brethren by the manner in which he discharged his duties. In the hands of such men the government was administered with fidelity, the conferences attended with punctuality, and the union, peace, and prosperity of the Church generally secured and promoted.

But though the health of Bishop McKendree was delicate, he was enabled to move around among the churches, and to discharge a portion of the duties of the superintendency. This year he traveled through the southern and western states, extending his visits to Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, and Missouri, in which he passed through several tribes of Indians. Though his bodily infirmities were such that his friends had to assist him in mounting and dismounting his horse, yet his zeal for God and perishing souls impelled him forward, and enabled him to triumph over all the difficulties of his journey, and to perform, with such assistance as he could procure, the duties of his office. Such, however, was his feebleness when he came to the Tennessee conference, that he had to be taken from his bed and supported by two preachers while he performed the ordination services, which he did on the camp ground where the exercises were held on the sabbath. The rest of his journey was pursued in a like state of feebleness and pain, and his sufferings were heightened by his being obliged to lodge in the woods eight or ten nights while passing through the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations of Indians. In these labors he was borne up by a consciousness of the divine approbation, and cheered by the good countenance and affectionate attentions of his brethren and friends.

Fifty were located, seventeen returned supernumerary, thirty-eight superannuated, and five, namely, William Patridge, Anthony Senter, Henry Padgett, Hezekiah Harryman, and Gad Smith, had died in peace. A strong testimony in favor of all these is left on record; but the last mentioned, Gad Smith, was one of the most devoted, diligence, and useful young ministers I ever knew. His race was short, but it was attended with most evident marks of the divine favor.

Numbers in the Church: Whites This Year: 190,447; Last Year: 181,442; Increase: 9,035 -- Colored This Year: 39,150; Last Year: 43,411; Decrease: 4,261 -- Total This Year: 229,627; Last Year: 224,853 -- Increase: 4,774 -- Preachers This Year: 748; Last Year: 716; Increase: 32.

The reader will perceive that while there was an increase of white members amounting to 9,035, there was a decrease of 4,261 of the colored members, reducing the actual increase to 4,774.

This diminution in the number of colored communicants was owing to the influence of the Allenite secession, before mentioned, which had now spread into the city of New York and some other places, exciting quite a spirit of dissatisfaction in the minds of many of this class of our membership. Indeed, a desire to become independent of the white preachers had manifested itself for some time among a portion of our colored congregations, not because they were oppressed, -- for our services had been rendered mostly gratuitous, the entire colored congregation in the city of New York not paying more, at any time, than two hundred dollars a year for the support of the ministry, -- but chiefly from a disposition to manage their own affairs in their own way, without check or control from their white brethren, pleading that they had piety and talent among themselves sufficient to guide them in their counsels, to supply their pulpits, and to exercise the discipline of the Church. It is not known, however, that they departed in any degree from the,

doctrines which they had received, or from the General Rules of the United Societies. In this respect, therefore, they remained Methodists still, while they declared themselves independent in regard to a general control over their societies and church property.

1819

This year was distinguished for the origin and commencement of the Missionary society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

It is true that Methodism had been justly considered missionary in its character from its beginning. Among all modern missionaries, John Wesley was the greatest, the most evangelical, laborious, and successful. The method which he adopted and pursued to the end of his most useful life included in it all the elements of a missionary society, missionary plans, and operations. And the manner in which our Church was organized in this country partook of the like missionary character. The first Wesleyan ministers who came to this country were missionaries, in the proper sense of that word; and it was by carrying out the spirit and plans which they adopted, itinerating as extensively as possible through the country, that the gospel took such a rapid spread through the instrumentality of their successors.

Yet, on the increase of our work, bringing the circuits, districts, and conferences into a more regular and compact order, it was found that it was losing somewhat of its missionary character, and therefore needed, that it might take a still wider range of usefulness, something by which a more expansive field of labor might be occupied. This could be done only by grafting upon the original stock the branch of a missionary society, subject to such regulations as should bring it strictly within the control of the general superintendency.

It was found also that there were many parts of our country, both in the old and new settlements, where the people were either too poor or too indifferent about their eternal interests to grant any thing like a competent support to those who might be sent to preach the gospel to them. With these difficulties we had long contended, and many of our preachers had suffered all sorts of hardships in conveying to the people in these circumstances the glad tidings of salvation. But as they had succeeded in raising up societies, many of which had become comparatively wealthy, it was thought to be nothing more than a duty which the Church owed to God and to mankind, that its members should contribute a portion of their earthly substance to aid in supplying the spiritual wants of those destitute places. Under these impressions it was concluded that if a united and systematic plan could be devised to call forth the ability and liberality of the Church, that amount of human suffering arising from pecuniary embarrassments might be greatly diminished, the gospel be more extensively spread among the poor and the destitute, and those men of God who were willing to devote their energies to this noble enterprise be relieved from the anxieties arising from present or prospective want and suffering. These thoughts had long occupied the minds of some of the most enlightened and warm-hearted ministers and members of our Church.

This subject accordingly became the topic of conversation among several individuals in the city of New York in the beginning of this year, some for and some against the measure. At length, at a meeting of preacher's stationed in New York, and the book agents, the Rev. Laban Clark presented a resolution in favor of forming a Bible and missionary society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. At this time the following preachers were present, namely, Freeborn Garrettson, Joshua Soule, Samuel Merwin, Nathan Bangs, Laban Clark, Thomas Mason, Seth Crowell, Samuel Howe, and Thomas Thorp. After a free interchange of thoughts on the subject the resolution was adopted, and Freeborn Garrettson, Laban Clark,

and Nathan Bangs were appointed a committee to prepare a constitution to be submitted at a subsequent meeting of the above-mentioned preachers. This committee, on coming together, agreed that each member should draft a constitution, and at a subsequent meeting the one should be adopted which might appear the most suitable. On comparing these drafts, the one prepared by the present writer was preferred, and at a full meeting of the preachers before mentioned, after undergoing some verbal alterations, was unanimously concurred in, and ordered to be submitted to a public meeting of all the members and friends of the Church who might choose to attend the call, in the Forsyth Street church, on the evening of April 5, 1819. This was accordingly done, when Nathan Bangs was called to the chair. Addresses were delivered by the Chair, by Freeborn Garrettson, Joshua Soule, and some others, when, on motion of Joshua Soule, seconded by Freeborn Garrettson, the constitution which had been prepared was adopted. It is as follows: --

## CONSTITUTION

Article I. This association shall be denominated The Missionary and Bible Society of The Methodist Episcopal Church in America; the object of which is, to supply the destitute with Bibles gratuitously, to afford a cheap supply to those who may have the means of purchasing, and to enable the several annual conferences more effectually to extend their missionary labors throughout the United States and elsewhere.

Article II. The business of this society shall be conducted by a president, thirteen vice presidents, clerk, recording and corresponding secretary, treasurer, and thirty-two managers, all of whom shall be members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The president, first two vice presidents, clerk, secretaries, treasurer, and the thirty-two managers, shall be elected by the society annually; and each annual conference shall have the privilege of appointing one vice president from its own body.

Article III. Fifteen members at all meetings of the board of managers, and thirty at all meetings of the society, shall be a quorum.

Article IV. The board shall have authority to make by-laws for regulating its own proceedings, fill up vacancies that may occur during the year, and shall present a statement of its transactions and funds to the society at its annual meeting; and also lay before the General Conference a report of its transactions for the four preceding years, and state of its funds.

Article V. Ordained ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, whether traveling or local, being members of the society, shall be ex officio members of the board of managers, and be entitled to vote in all meetings of the board.

Article VI Auxiliary societies, embracing the same objects, shall be supplied with Bibles and Testaments at cost, provided such societies shall agree, after supplying their own districts with Bibles, to place their surplus moneys at the disposal of this society.

Article VII. Each subscriber paying two dollars annually shall be a member; and the payment of twenty dollars at one time shall constitute a member for life.

Article VIII. Each member shall be entitled, under the direction of the board of managers, to purchase Bibles and Testaments at the society's prices, which shall be as low as possible.

Article IX. The annual meeting of the society shall be held on the third Monday in April.

Article X. The president, vice presidents, clerk, secretaries, and treasurer, for the time being, shall be ex officio members of the board of managers.

Article XI. At all meetings of the society and of the board, the president, or, in his absence, the vice president first on the list then present, and in the absence of all the vice presidents, such member as shall be appointed by the meeting for that purpose, shall preside.

Article XII. The minutes of each meeting shall be signed by the chairman.

Article XIII. This constitution shall be submitted to the next General Conference, and, if the objects of the society be approved by them, they shall have authority to insert such article or articles as they may judge proper, for the purpose of establishing the society wherever the Book Concern may be located; and also for the equitable and equal application of its funds for the accomplishment of the objects herein expressed, and for the purpose of depositing its funds with the agents of the Book Concern, and of having their aid in printing, purchasing, and distributing Bibles and Testaments: Provided always, That the revenue of the society shall never be used or appropriated otherwise than for the printing, purchasing, and distributing Bibles and Testaments under the direction of the managers; and for the support of missionaries who may act under the direction of the bishops and conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Article XIV. This constitution, being submitted and approved according to the provisions of the preceding article, shall not be altered but by the General Conference, on the recommendation of the board of managers."

After receiving subscribers to the constitution, the following officers and managers were elected: --

"Rev. William McKendree, President. Enoch George, 1st Vice President. Robert R. Roberts, 2d Vice President. N. Bangs, New York conference, 3d Vice-President. Mr. Francis Hall, Cler. Daniel Ayres, Recording Secretary. Rev. Thomas Mason, Corresponding Secretary. Joshua Soule, Treasurer.

"Managers. -- Joseph Smith, Robert Mathison, Joseph Sandford, George Suckley, Samuel L. Waldo, Stephen Dando, Samuel B. Harper, Lancaster S. Burling, William Duval, Paul Hick, John Westfield, Thomas Roby, Benjamin Disbrow, James B. Gascoigne, William A. Mercein, Philip I. Arcularius, James B. Oakley, George Caines, Dr. Seaman, Dr. Gregory, John Boyd, M. H. Smith, Nathaniel Jarvis, Robert Snow, Andrew Mercein, Joseph Moser, John Paradise, William Myers, William B. Skidmore, Nicholas Schureman, James Woods, Abraham Paul."

Having thus formed the society, and created a board of officers and managers, the next question was, how we might best enlist the feelings and engage the co-operation of our brethren and friends generally in this important cause. To do this the more effectually, at the first meeting of the managers the following address and circular, prepared by the author, who had been appointed for that purpose, were adopted, and ordered to be printed and circulated, both in pamphlet form and in the Methodist Magazine.

## ADDRESS

Of the Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America

At a time when the Christian world is alive to every sentiment of humanity, and awake to the temporal and spiritual wants of men, every effort directed to the accomplishment of the grand climax of human felicity

will, by the philanthropic mind, be viewed with pleasure and delight.

"It is the peculiar office of Christianity to inspire in the breasts of its votaries an ardent desire for the happiness of man. Expanding the soul with the purest benevolence, wherever its influence is felt it expels that selfishness which is fed and strengthened by avarice. And this divine principle, occupying the heart, prompts its possessor to the selection of the most suitable means to accomplish the object of his desire. Ever active, and directing his activity to exalt the glory of God, and to effect the present and future happiness of man, whenever suitable means are presented they are applied with assiduity, and with certain hope of success.

"Such, we trust, are the objects of the patrons of this society. Beholding with pleasure the extensive diffusion of Scriptural knowledge, through the medium of missionary, Bible, and tract societies, and believing that more efficient means to extend the Redeemer's kingdom were within their power, the members of the Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America have agreed to unite their strength for the purpose of contributing their mite toward sending the messengers of peace to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

"In presenting their institution to their brethren and to the Christian public, they deem it expedient to explain, in a few words, their ultimate design: -- it is, as expressed in the first article of the constitution, To enable the several annual conferences more effectually to extend their missionary labors throughout the United States and elsewhere; to afford a cheap supply of Bibles and Testaments to those who may have the means of purchasing; and to supply the destitute gratis.

"The primary intention, therefore, of this institution is an extended operation of the great missionary system, the success of which has been witnessed among us for so many years; and the Bible is only so far associated with it as to be made subservient to the main design. That this ought to be the leading design of every association which has for its final object the diffusion of Christianity, will appear evident to those who consider, that it has been the invariable method of God to bring mankind to the knowledge of the truth by means of a living ministry. The Bible is the infallible judge to which the living messenger appeals for the correctness of his message; but it is the word of truth, addressed by the ambassador of Christ to the understandings and consciences of men, that generally lays open the nakedness of the human heart, and brings the guilty sinner to Jesus Christ. Send, therefore, the living messenger of God, with the Bible in his hands, and let that finally decide the controversy between the sinner and the truths delivered. This method, we believe, will be the most effectual to convey the glad tidings of salvation to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge.

Moreover, as it is the design of this society to extend itself, if possible, by means of auxiliary societies, throughout the United States, and to engage especially the co-operation of all the annual conferences, provision is made in the constitution for the formation of auxiliary societies, and a circular addressed to them on the subject; and as none are so competent to take an impartial and comprehensive view of the various parts of our extensive continent as the General Conference, in which is concentrated the episcopal authority and the general oversight of the whole Church; and as it would, in our opinion, very much facilitate the operations, and greatly contribute to accomplish the benevolent objects of the society, to unite in some measure its counsels and operations with the book agency; we have provided for the attainment of these objects, by ceding to the General Conference a power of inserting such articles for these purposes as they may judge proper, as well as for the equitable apportionment of the funds of the society among the several annual conferences. As our ultimate object is the general good of mankind, by

the extensive diffusion of experimental and practice godliness, we are principally solicitous to raise an adequate supply for such men of God as may volunteer their services in the cause of Christ, leaving to the episcopacy the selection of the men, as well as the place of their destination. We take the liberty of observing, however, that our views are not restricted to our own nation or color; we hope the aborigines of our country, the Spaniards of South America, the French of Louisiana and Canada, and every other people who are destitute of the invaluable blessings of the gospel, as far as our means may admit, will be comprehended in the field of the labors of our zealous missionaries. To accomplish so great and so glorious an object, time, union, liberality, patience, and perseverance are all necessary. And we hope to exhibit, in our future exertions, evidence of our zeal in providing pecuniary aid to the extent of our power, and in our fervent prayers and earnest wishes for the success of our institution.

"With an object of such magnitude and importance before us, we think we cannot appeal in vain to the liberality of our brethren and friends for their hearty cooperation.

"When we review our ministry from the commencement of our existence as a separate communion, and mark its successful progress, we are constrained to say, What hath God wrought!

"Contending with numerous impediments, they have persevered with great success in extending the triumphs of the cross among mankind. We ourselves are, we humbly trust, the trophies of this ministry. By the blessing of God upon their labors, it was this same ministry, crossing the 'watery world' in the character of missionaries, that gave the first impetus to that mighty exertion in the Christian cause, by which the present generation in this western world is distinguished. And shall we be wanting in our efforts to send this 'gospel of the kingdom' to our fellow-men, millions of whom are yet dwelling in darkness and in the shadow of death?

"Arise, brethren, in the majesty of your strength: in the name of Immanuel, God with us, go forward: concentrate your force in this society; and, by a united exertion, help to people the regions of perennial happiness, by contributing to send the word of life to the destitute inhabitants of our fallen world. What heart can remain unmoved, what hand unemployed, when called to action in a cause so important, so interesting, so sacred! Let but the friends of Zion give half as much for the support of missionaries, and for the distribution of the word of life, as the intemperate do to gratify and pamper their appetites, and there shall be no lack. "Although the constitution which accompanies this address requires the payment of two dollars annually to constitute a member, and the payment of twenty dollars at one time to constitute a member for life, yet this does not exclude donations to any amount, great or small. Remember, the mite of the poor widow was not only accepted, but her liberality was highly applauded by her Lord, because she put in all her living. 'It is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.' And if every one will become a cheerful giver, 'according to the ability which God giveth,' we shall soon witness the rising glory of the Church; 'the solitary places shall be glad for them' -- the messengers of Zion -- 'and the wilderness shall blossom as the rose;' the pagan nations, which inhabit the wilds of America, and the desolate inhabitants of our new states and territories, shall hail the effects of your bounty; -- nations unborn shall rise up and call you blessed. Let, then, all hearts be warm, and all hands active, until the 'ends of the earth see the salvation of our God.' "

CIRCULAR

"The managers of the Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America beg leave to present to the several annual conferences, and through them to the members of our Church

generally, a copy of their address and constitution, with an earnest solicitation that efficient means may be adopted to establish societies auxiliary to this.

"Having long been convinced of the necessity of some institution, by which pecuniary aid could be afforded to enable the conferences to carry on their missionary labors on a more extended plan, the object of their desire is at length so far accomplished in the formation of this society, the real and professed object of which is, to extend the influence of divine truth, by means of those missionaries who may, from time to time, be approved and employed by the bishops and conferences for

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/nathan-bangs/from-the-close-of-the-general-conference-of-1816-to-the-commencement-of-the-gene/>

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