

# The General Conference of 1836

by Nathan Bangs

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*The General Conference of 1836 focused on unity, challenges, and the commitment to missionary work amidst social issues like slavery.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:13, Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 2:14, 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 2:15, James 1:22, 1 Peter 4:10

**Topics:** "Church History", "Missionary Work"

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## Description

Nathan Bangs preaches at the General Conference of 1836 in Cincinnati, addressing the delegates from various conferences. The conference discusses important matters such as the distribution of religious tracts, the necessity of education in sabbath schools, academies, and colleges, and the continued expansion of missionary work both domestically and internationally. The conference also addresses the sensitive topic of slavery and abolitionism, emphasizing the Church's historical opposition to slavery while advocating for a prudent and gradual approach to its eradication. Despite challenges such as the loss of influential leaders and the destruction of the book establishment, the conference remains steadfast in its commitment to upholding core principles of faith, discipline, and mission.

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## Transcript

This conference assembled in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, on the first of May, 1836, and was composed of the following delegates: --

New York Conference: Nathan Bangs, Laban Clark, William Jewett, S. Martindale, Daniel Ostrander, Phinehas Rice, Marvin Richardson, Peter P. Sandford, John B. Stratten, Beverly Waugh.

New England Conference: Isaac Bonney, Phineas Crandall, Daniel Fillmore, Joseph A. Merrill, Orange Scott, Charles Virgin, Daniel Webb.

Maine Conference: Charles Baker, Moses Hill, John B. Husted, Heman Nickerson, William H. Norris, Ezekiel Robinson, George Webber.

New Hampshire Conference: John F. Adams, Charles D. Cahoon, Schuyler Chamberlain, Samuel Kelly, Samuel Norris, Jared Perkins, Elihu Scott, Elisha J. Scott, George Storrs.

Troy Conference: S. D. Ferguson, Buel Goodsell, Noah Levings, Sherman Minor, P. C. Oakley, Charles Sherman, Tobias Spicer.

Oneida Conference: Horace Agard, Elias Bowen, Silas Comfort, George Gary, George Lane, Zechariah Paddock, George Peck.

Genesee Conference: Asa Abel, Glezin Fillmore, Loring Grant, James Hemmingway, Wilbur Hoag, Samuel Luckey, Manley Tooker.

Pittsburgh Conference: Joshua S. Barris, Wesley Browning, Charles Elliott, Robert Hopkins, Thomas M. Hudson, Joshua Munroe, Martin Ruter.

Ohio Conference: William B. Christie, Augustus Eddy, John Ferree, James B. Finley, Thomas A. Morris, John F. Power, James Quinn, William H. Raper, Le Roy Swormstedt, John F. Wright, David Young, Jacob Young.

Missouri Conference: Jesse Green Thomas Johnson, George C. Light, Andrew Munroe.

Kentucky Conference: Henry B. Bascom, Benjamin T. Crouch, H. H. Kavanaugh, Jonathan Stamper, Edward Stevenson, G. W. Taylor.

Illinois Conference: Peter Cartwright, Hooper Crews, Simon Peter.

Mississippi Conference: Benjamin M. Drake John Lane, William Winans.

Indiana Conference: James Havens, C. W. Ruter, James L. Thompson, Allen Wiley.

Holston Conference: Thomas K. Catlett, David Flemming, Samuel Patton, William Patton.

Tennessee Conference: T. L. Douglass, Alexander L. P. Green, G. W. D. Harris, G. T. Henderson, John M. Holland, John B. McFerrin, Robert Paine.

Alabama Conference: F. H. Jones, Robert L. Kinnon, W. Murrah, W. Wier,

Georgia Conference: Samuel K. Hodges, John Howard, Lovick Pearce, Elijah Sinclair,

South Carolina Conference: Charles Betts, William Capers, Samuel Dunwoody, William M. Kennedy, Malcolm M. McPherson, N. Tally.

Virginia Conference: Moses Brock, Thomas Crowder, John Early, H. G. Leigh, James McAden, Abram Penn, Lewis Skidmore, William A. Smith,

Baltimore Conference: John A. Collins, A. Griffith, D. Steele, N. Wilson, John Bear, Samnel Brison, Robert Cadden, John Davis, William Hamilton, William Prettyman, S. G. Roszel.

Philadelphia Conference: David Daily, Manning Force, Solomon Higgins, John Lybrand, R. W. Petherbridge, Charles Pitman, Levi Scott, James Smith, Jr. Matthew Sorin, Henry White, William A. Wiggins.

Bishops Roberts, Soule, Hedding, and Andrew were present, and the first named opened the conference by reading a portion of the Holy Scriptures, singing, and prayer. Thomas H. Douglass was appointed secretary, and Thomas F. Sargeant assistant secretary.

After the conference was organized, the president introduced the Rev. William Lord, as a representative from the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, and the Rev. William Case, as the representative from the Canada conference, when the former delivered the following address from the Wesleyan Methodist conference: --

"To the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Conferences of America.

"Very Dear Brethren, -- The preachers of our connection, assembled in conference, however earnestly engaged in numerous and diversified affairs, requiring diligence, vatoloffulness, and prudence in council, cannot be so pre-occupied with their own most urgent interests as to forget that time approaches for the holding of your General Conference at we have a confidential agent in the western continent, in the person of of the beloved brother, the Rev. William Lord; and that an opportunity is thus presented for renewing the affectionate fraternal intercourse of the two great families of Wesleyan Methodism.

On former occasions, the conferences of both connections have alike acknowledged the beauty and utility of that unity of faith and love which has happily hitherto subsisted between them, and the value of reciprocal intercourse by epistles and deputations, as a means of cultivating and perpetuating the existing union and brotherhood. By taking knowledge of the steady improvement and resistless growth of our kindred communities, and giving exercise to the brotherly feelings with which we rejoice in each other's welfare and success, we are stimulated to love and to good works, and confirmed in the principles and affections essential to a catholic spirit. We also perceive in the co-existence, the independence, and the kind and intimate correspondence of the two great confraternities of the Methodist body, a mutual check to evil change in doctrine, discipline, or practice.

"We sincerely congratulate you on your continued prosperity. The increase of your members, -- the extension of your missions among the aborigines of the western continent, in regions where you have a whole and appropriate sphere of action,the establishment and progress of seminaries for your junior preachers, and all the auspicious circumstances of your great work, are highly interesting to us as partakers of your joy.

"In reference to the condition and prospects of British Methodism, notwithstanding some partial agitations in our societies, we have great cause, on the whole, to thank God and take courage. Our numbers in Great Britain are nearly the same as at the last conference; but our missionary department continues to afford us great encouragement, both by actual increase of converts from sin to God, and by openings for more extended operations. The experiment, commenced shortly after our last conference of a theological institution for the improvement of preachers admitted on our list of reserve, is proceeding in a manner which promises to exceed our best hopes. In the direction of this, as of all our institutions, it is the anxious wish of our body, inspired with one unanimous sentiment of conscientious solicitude, to preserve and perpetuate sound doctrine, and pure, experimental, and practical religion.

It has already come to your knowledge, as a matter of public notoriety, that by the blessing of God on the efforts and influence of our connection, and on the combined endeavors of the religious public of our beloved country, a great measure for the emancipation of the slaves in all the territories of Great Britain was eventually conducted to a successful issue in the imperial legislature; and has since been carried into practical effect in all the colonies of the empire, with various degrees of completeness, but universally with safety and advantage, and with results which mightily encourage us to go forward in our earnest attempts to enlighten and evangelize the whole population to which favorable access is thus freely opened.

"Our American brethren will doubtless allow us the fraternal liberty to express our conviction that great Scriptural principles are opposed to the continuance of slavery in a Christian state; that the permission of it is one of those deviations from natural equity and evangelical purity which call for further deviations to abet and maintain them; that it is contrary to the precepts of Christianity, and violates and counteracts the principles and obligations by which the gospel urges those precepts. We trust that your connection, having already begun to resist and condemn this baneful system, will, in its own way, be freely and providentially led to such practical steps as shall produce a consentaneous opinion, feeling, and purpose among your own people; and will then have the glory of leading the public opinion of your great and increasing population to such decided views as will result in a unanimous rejection of slavery and its social mischiefs, on the ground of its repugnancy to the laws of Christ.

"We rejoice to learn, from various quarters, that in your country, as in ours, Wesleyan Methodism is steadily and powerfully diffusing Christian knowledge; and this we trust it will still abundantly effect by advocating right principles in its periodical publications, as well as by the living ministry of the gospel. It will, we trust, be the sacred and unalterable purpose and aim of the Methodist societies, on both sides of the Atlantic, to maintain uncorruptness of doctrine and life, and to offer a free, a full, a present, and an everlasting salvation to all people, and to the end of time.

"Brother Lord is instructed to present to you our warmest Christian salutations: he will be able to communicate freely with you concerning our affairs; and, we trust, will be brought to you 'in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace.'

"Of all that we have to express in our communications to you, the best is that he is graciously with us, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, and who is with his disciples always, even to the end of the world. We earnestly pray that his presence may go with you through the length and breadth of your States, and throughout your western wilderness, so that every class and race among your mingled tribes may specially know the truth as it is in Jesus. Signed, on behalf and order of the conference,

"Richard Reece, President "Robert Newton, Secretary. "Sheffield, August 18th, 1835.

To this address the conference returned the following answer, appointing the Rev. Dr. Fisk, who was then in Europe, our representative to the Wesleyan Methodist conference: --

"Honorable Fathers and Brethren, -- We have had the pleasure of receiving, by the hands of your worthy representative, the Rev. William Lord, your kind and fraternal salutations, as expressed in the epistle with which he was charged, and which has been read n' open conference. This, together with the friendly intercourse of brother Lord among us on the present interesting occasion, has brought to our recollection those hallowed associations by which we have been refreshed in former times, by similar tokens of brotherly love and Christian affection. Assembled as we are, in our General Conference, is the representatives of the twenty-two annual conferences, into which our work, for greater convenience and facility in carrying forward the sacred cause in which we he engaged, is divided, we embrace this opportunity of expressing our unfeigned gratitude to God for what he hath wrought on this vast continent by our instrumentality and of our firm and unwavering attachment to those doctrines and usages, and to that discipline, by which we have ever been distinguished, and which we have received in substance from the venerable founder of Methodism.

But in the midst of these recollections, so holy and consolatory, we have the lament the loss by death, since we last assembled, of our senior superintendent, the Rev. William McKendree, the brightness of

whose example, for the many years he went in and out among us shone with a steady and cheering light, and whose setting sun reflects upon those of us who survive his in the radiance of immortality; of our junior superintendent, the Rev. John Emory, whose commanding talents and fervent piety gave us reason to hope that he would be rendered a great blessing to the Church and the world, but whose sudden and unexpected death, while it has deprived us of his services, has doubtless transferred him to the brighter regions of eternal day; -- and the loss of our excellent book establishment by fire in the city of New York, by which disastrous event we have lost about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of stock, including printing and binding materials, building, etc. And to these losses, which we regard as the chastisements of our heavenly Father, we may add, a diminution in the number of our communicants, for the last year, of between two and three thousand.

But while these things call for mourning, for 'searchings of heart,' for humiliation and prayer, we are by no means discouraged; for though thus chastened, we are not in despair, -- though cast down, not destroyed. We trust that the God of providence and grace will raise up others to fill the places of those who have gone to their reward; and furnish means to resume our wonted practice of diffusing abroad evangelical principles and holiness through the medium of the press; and also pour out his Spirit upon our heritage, and so prosper the labor of our hands, that we shall hereafter witness an increase of piety and of numbers to our Zion.

But while our domestic work has thus suffered from these and other causes, not necessary now to mention, we rejoice to witness the growing prosperity of our missions, both in our own borders, among the aborigines of our wildernesses, in the rising Colony of Liberia in Western Africa, and in some of the cities of South America. In the contemplation of these opening prospects for missionary enterprise, we rejoice in being able to record the encouraging fact, that our people are cheerfully and promptly pledging a portion of their substance to aid us in this great and good work. During the past year our missionary fund has been replenished by about twenty-two thousand dollars, over and above the amount collected in any one preceding year; and on our several missionary stations we have had an accession of upward of four thousand to the number of our church members. For these manifest tokens of divine approbation upon this department of our work, we desire to be thankful to him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, and to make them motives of renewed exertion and persevering efforts in the grand missionary cause.

"In common with sister denominations of Christians in our country, we have been less or more agitated with the perplexing question of Negro slavery. And, although we receive with respectful deference what you, as our elder brethren, have said to us in relation to this question, yet we are assured that, from the known prudence by which your body has ever been distinguished, had you been as well acquainted with this subject as we are -- could you have viewed it in all its aspects, as it presents itself to us who are in the midst of it, interwoven as it is in many of the state constitutions, and left to their disposal by the civil compact which binds us together as a nation, and thus put beyond the power of legislation by the general government, as well as the control of ecclesiastical bodies, -- could you have critically analyzed its various ramifications in our country, so as to have perceived all its delicate relations to the Church, to the several states, and to the government of the United States, -- we cannot doubt that, while expressing your decided disapprobation of the system of slavery itself, your tone of sympathy for us would have been deeper and more pathetic. While on this subject, it may be pertinent to remark, that of the colored population in the southern and southwestern states, there are not less than seventy thousand in our Church membership; and that, in addition to those who are mingled with our white congregations, we have several prosperous missions exclusively for their spiritual benefit, which have been, and are still, owned of God, to the

conversion of many precious souls. On the plantations of the south and southwest our devoted missionaries are laboring for the salvation of the slaves, catechizing their children, and bringing all within their influence, as far as possible, to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; and we need hardly add, that we shall most gladly avail ourselves, as we have ever done, of all the means in our power to promote their best interests.

Having thus given a brief outline of our present state and future prospects, permit us, dear brethren, to congratulate you on the continued prosperity of your growing connection. We have witnessed with mingled emotions of pleasure and gratitude the extension of your work, both at home and abroad, particularly on your foreign missions. In this grand work we hope to imitate your pious zeal and, though it may be at a respectful distance, to follow your steps until we shall meet on some favored spot upon our globe, and salute each other face to face, as the servants of Him who claims the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

"Although we have no institution, as, you seem to have supposed we have, of the character you mention, as existing among yourselves, for the education of those of your junior preachers who are not actively engaged in the field of labor, yet we are endeavoring, by such means as are at our command, to improve our young ministers in the various branches of knowledge which are deemed requisite for a successful discharge of the functions of their office and we rejoice in being able to state, that the cause of general education, in its various branches, from the sabbath and common schools up through the academic to the collegiate course, has been, and is now, gradually demanding more and more of our attention; and hence we hope that our ministry, though none of them has been established for their exclusive benefit, will reap a proportionate share in the results of these institutions of learning.

"We have availed ourselves of this early period of our session to return to you our Christian salutations, and to bear testimony to the prudent and conciliatory manner in which your delegate has thus far discharged the trust committed to him, that we might not miss the favorable opportunity of employing the agency of our highly respected and beloved brother, the Rev. Dr. Fisk, who enjoys our confidence, to present to you in person these expressions of our affection and esteem. We have therefore requested him to convey to you an assurance of our undiminished attachment to the Wesleyan Methodist connection; and to ask that, at our next General Conference, we may be favored with a representative from your body, whose visit, should it take place, will, we doubt not, be reciprocated with the same feelings of brotherly affection by which this intercourse has heretofore been characterized.

"Earnestly praying that he 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,' may guide, sanctify, and ever be with both you and us, we subscribe ourselves, in behalf of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, your brethren and servants in our common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

" R. R. Roberts, [Bishop] "Joshua Soule, [Bishop] "Elijah Hedding, [Bishop] "James O. Andrew, [Bishop] "Thomas L. Douglass, Secretary Cincinnati, Ohio, May 5th, 16."

Friday the 6th was observed as a day of solemn fasting and prayer, and at eleven o'clock Bishops Roberts and Hedding addressed the conference very appropriately and feelingly on the general state of the work of God, and on the strict manner in which discipline should be administered in order to keep the Church pure from immoral members. There was one point especially on which Bishop Hedding insisted with emphasis, as devolving a high duty on those to whom the execution of discipline was intrusted. He remarked, in

substance, that it was the practice of some preachers to wait for a formal complaint, containing charges and specifications, before they proceeded to the trial of a supposed delinquent member. This he considered a defective administration. As the minister was held responsible for the state and character of the Church, it became his imperative duty, whenever a report was in circulation against a member of the Church, to institute an inquiry respecting its truth, and if he found reason to believe there was just cause of complaint, he was bound to proceed to examine and try the case, as the discipline directs, without waiting for a formal accusation. Nor is it perceived how a minister can otherwise discharge his high trusts so as to give a joyful account to the Judge of all of his stewardship.

On the assembling of the conference a vacancy was perceived, accompanied with very mournful sensations, on the bench of bishops, by the absence of Bishops McKendree and Emory, whose deaths are recorded in the preceding chapter. By a vote of the conference, Bishop Soule was requested to preach the funeral discourse of the former, and Bishop Roberts of the latter, which, at a proper time, was done, greatly to the satisfaction of all who heard them.

Among other things which came up for consideration before the is conference, was the propriety of dissolving our Bible Society. The existence of this separate and denominative organization, though it answered its purpose for a season, was found not to work advantageously either to ourselves or others, and the question of its continuance had been mooted both, in and out of the board of managers for some time before the meeting of the conference.

As, however, the constitution of this society was adopted by the General Conference, and was therefore considered as a Church institution, the managers thought it inadvisable to cease such operations without the recommendation of the conference. The conference, after due deliberation, recommended to the society a dissolution of its existence, and it was, soon after the adjournment of the conference, dissolved accordingly, and our brethren and friends were advised to unite in carrying forward the objects of the American Bible Society. Since that period a harmonious co-operation has been effected and carried on between us and the other friend and supporters of that great national institution, mutually satisfactory to all concerned.

Several alterations and amendments were made in the Discipline, the chief of which we shall mention.

The rule respecting "laying aside" persons for not meeting in class, which had been so interpreted as to allow the acting preachers to drop the delinquent without a trial, was so amended as to make it obligatory on the parties concerned to allow the accused to be heard in his defense before a committee, the same as in other cases of delinquency.

The correspondence of the Missionary Society had been hitherto carried on by one or the other of the brethren connected with the Book Concern; but the increase of the business, both of that Concern and of the Missionary Society, made the duties of each so onerous, that it was found impracticable to unite the two offices any longer without injury to one or both. Hence, on the recommendation of the board of managers, an article was introduced into the constitution of the Missionary Society creating a resident corresponding secretary, who should be devoted exclusively to the interests of the society, under the direction of the managers. His election was with the General Conference.

The Liberia mission was erected into an annual conference, "possessing all the rights, powers, and privileges of other and annual conferences, except that of sending delegates to the General Conference, and of drawing its annual dividend from the avails of the Book Concern and chartered fund."

The following was added to the section on receiving preachers, and their duty: --

"Whenever a preacher on trial is selected by the bishop for a mission, he may, if elected by an annual conference, ordain him a deacon before his probation ends, and a missionary employed on a foreign mission may be admitted into full connection, if recommended by the superintendent of the mission where he labors, without being present at the annual conference for examination.

"At each annual conference, those who are received on trial, or are admitted into full connection, shall be asked whether they are willing to devote themselves to the missionary work; and a list of the names of all those who are willing to do so shall be taken and reported to the corresponding secretary of the Missionary Society; and all such shall be considered as ready and willing to be employed as missionaries whenever called for by either of the bishops.

"It shall be the duty of all our missionaries, except those who are appointed to labor for the benefit of the slaves, to form their circuits into auxiliary missionary societies, and to make regular quarterly and class collections wherever practicable, and report the amount collected every three months, either by indorsing it on their drafts, or by transmitting the money to the treasurer of the parent society.

"It shall be the duty of each annual conference to examine strictly into the state of the domestic missions within its bounds, and to allow none to remain on the list of its missions which, in the judgment of the conference, is able to support itself."

Hoping that the time was not very distant when our missionaries, and those under the direction of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, by the continual enlargement of their respective fields of labor, would approximate and even meet each other in Africa, and also among the aborigines of America, where we both had missions established, and perhaps at no remote period in some portions of Europe and Asia, the following paragraph was added to the section on missions: --

"It shall be the duty of the bishops to instruct all our foreign missionaries that, whenever they come in contact with any of the missionaries belonging to the Wesleyan Methodist conference, they shall not interfere in their respective charges, any farther than to help them in their work when requested, but shall, on all occasions, cultivate a spirit of friendship and brotherly affection, as brethren engaged in the same common cause, namely, the salvation of the world by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

For the purpose of meeting the local wants of some sections of our country more perfectly by the introduction of periodical literature and general intelligence, two additional weekly papers were established, and the one which had been commenced at Cincinnati by the book agents, on the recommendation of several of the annual conferences, was sanctioned and continued, making in all four religious weekly papers, besides the Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review, now authorized by the General Conference; namely, one at New York, one at Cincinnati, another at Charleston, S. C., and another at Nashville, Tennessee: besides these there were published four others, under the patronage of annual conferences, namely, Zion's Herald, in Boston, Mass., Maine Wesleyan Journal, in Portland, Maine, Virginia Conference Journal, in Richmond, Virginia, and the Auburn Banner, issued in Auburn, N. Y., making altogether eight weekly papers devoted to the interests of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The claims of the brethren in Canada upon a portion of the capital of our Book Concern, which had remained hitherto unsettled, were now amicably adjusted in accordance with the principles embraced in the following articles of agreement: --

"Whereas, the Canada conference, now in connection with the Wesleyan Methodists of Great Britain, was formerly united to, and formed part of; the M. E. Church; and whereas, the union which by mutual consent then subsisted, was dissolved at the earnest and repeated solicitations of the ministers and members of the Church in Canada, which was definitively determined upon by an act of the Canada conference, who thereupon and subsequently did form a union with, and become a part of the Wesleyan Methodist connection; and whereas, there has been a difference of opinion between the M. E. Church and the Canada conference in regard to the claim which has been urged by the Canada conference, of an interest in, and a portion of, the Methodist Book Concern; and whereas the decision of the several annual conferences, to whom the subject was referred by the General Conference of 1832, has been averse to the claim of the Canada conference, and has thereby precluded any further action of the General Conference on the ground of claim, as made by the Canada conference; but whereas this General Conference cherishes an affectionate remembrance of the Canada brethren, and is desirous to manifest its fraternal regard in every suitable way; and whereas, the Canada conference did, at its last session, appoint its president, the Rev. William Lord, and the Rev. Egerton Ryerson, delegates to this General Conference to negotiate its claims on the Book Concern, and the Rev. William Case having been duly appointed to take the place of Rev. E. Ryerson in the negotiation; and whereas, the said Rev. William Lord, president of the Canada conference, and the Rev. William Case, have full powers to bring to an amicable termination the question pending between the two connections, therefore it is hereby declared to be mutually understood and agreed, that the following plan shall be considered as an arrangement for the full and final adjustment and settlement of the matter at issue between the Canada conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church; to wit, The agents of the Methodist Book Concern shall furnish to the book steward of the Canada conference any of the books which may be issued from its press at the following rates, subject to the conditions and provisions hereinafter named: --

The general alphabetical catalogue books, whether in sheets or bound, shall be sold at forty per cent discount from the retail prices, as long as the present discount of one-third shall be made to wholesale purchasers, but should the discount be hereafter changed to one-fourth, then, in that case, the books sold to the book steward of the Canada conference shall be charged at a discount of one-third from the retail prices which shall from time to time be affixed to them respectively. Provided, that this discount shall not apply to such books as may be reduced below the usual prices on account of rival publishers; and provided, also, that the Canada conference shall give satisfactory security in regard to the payment of any debt which may be contracted with the Methodist Book Concern, within one year from the time such debt may be created. And it is also expressly understood and agreed, that no interest shall be demanded or paid on any such debts, unless payment shall be delayed beyond the period of credit before named, in which event interest shall be charged and paid, from and after the expiration of said credit term. It is also further provided, that all books which may be ordered by the book steward of the Canada conference shall be at the risk and expense of the said conference from the time they shall be forwarded from the Methodist Book Concern.

Sunday school books and tracts shall be furnished to the book steward of the Canada conference at a premium of eighteen percent, to be paid in general catalogue books at retail prices; and it is hereby declared to be understood and agreed, that the same provisions and conditions are to be adjudged applicable to Sunday school books and tracts as have been specified above in regard to books generally.

It is understood and agreed, that the privileges herein secured to the Canada conference shall be binding on the Methodist Book Concern until the first day of May, 1852, next ensuing the present date; provided,

also, that the said Canada conference shall regularly and truly make annual settlements to the satisfaction of the agents of the Methodist Book Concern, and not otherwise.

Finally, it is hereby mutually understood and agreed, that the foregoing arrangement is considered as a full, and definite, and satisfactory adjustment of the question which has arisen between the Canada conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church on the subject of the Methodist Book Concern.

"In testimony whereof; the agents of the Methodist Book Concern, and the delegates of the Canada conference, have mutually affixed their respective signatures, this 18th day of May, 1836, in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio. (signed)

"B. Waugh and T. Mason, Agents. "William Lord, and William Case, Delegates from Canada."

A resolution was then adopted giving discretionary power to the book agents and book committee in the city of New York to settle with the Canada conference, on such terms as might be mutually satisfactory, all debts which were due to the Book Concern by said conference, for books sold and unsold; which was, soon after the adjournment of conference, done accordingly. Thus was this long-pending question brought to an amicable termination, on such terms as to preserve and perpetuate the harmony and brotherly affection heretofore subsisting between the two connections.

The episcopal committee, after adverting in affecting terms to the death of Bishops McKendree and Emory, reported in favor of electing three additional bishops, which, after some debate, was concurred in by the conference. Accordingly, on the 23d of May, Beverly Waugh was elected on the first balloting by the votes of eighty-five out of one hundred and fifty-three, the whole number of votes taken; and Wilbur Fisk by a vote of seventy-eight; and, after several ballotings, Thomas A. Morris, by a vote of eighty-six.

On the 27th, Beverly Waugh and Thomas A. Morris were duly consecrated to their high and holy office. In the mean time, the bishops were requested to consecrate Dr. Wilbur Fisk, who was absent in Europe, as soon as practicable after his return, provided he should conclude to accept the appointment. He, however, soon after his return to the United States, declined the office, and before the next General Conference he was called to his reward in another world.

The action of this General Conference in favor of missions, education, and all those institutions designed to aid in the spread of Scriptural truth and holiness, exerted a salutary influence upon their respective interests, and tended to diffuse them more extensively through the community. The reports upon these several subjects were spread before the public through the columns of the several papers published under the patronage of the Church; but as they recognized no new principle of action, it is considered not necessary to insert them here. They showed, however, that the conference was more and more earnest in its measures to promote sound learning and useful science among the rising generation, and to carry forward the work of God by means of missionary operations to the greatest possible extent.

The report of the committee on boundaries, as it was adopted by the conference, divided the general work into twenty-eight annual conferences, besides the Mission conference in Liberia.

There was one alteration made in the Discipline at this conference, which went to affect the administration very materially, as it lodged in an annual conference a tremendous power over its members for good or evil, according to the manner in which it might be exercised.

For several successive General Conferences, the question had been mooted, whether an annual conference had legitimate authority to locate one of its members without his consent, and the predominant opinion seemed to be that no such power existed. The question came up for consideration at this time, and a rule was finally passed, giving to an annual conference the power to locate one of its members who has rendered himself "unacceptable as a traveling preacher," in their judgment, allowing him, however, the privilege of an appeal to the next General Conference.

This rule is founded on the presumption that whenever a member of an annual conference fails to fulfill the obligations of his trust, and which were the conditions on which he entered the fraternity, he forfeits his privileges and all the immunities of his official rank, and hence the conference has the right of dismissing him from their employment as an unfaithful servant. It is allowed, however, that this power ought to be exercised with great caution and moderation, lest it degenerate into tyranny and oppression.

A rule was also inserted for the trial of an accused superannuated preacher living out of the bounds of the conference of which he is a member, by a committee and the presiding elder of the district in which the delinquent may reside, the ultimate decision of the case being reserved for the conference of which he is a member.

But that which excited the deepest interest at thus General Conference was the subject of slavery and abolitionism.

That this subject may be clearly understood, and the controversy to which it gave birth duly appreciated, we must be allowed to enter into some historical details. That the Methodist Episcopal Church has always been opposed to slavery, and has accordingly adopted measures to do it away, and where this could not be done, to mitigate its evils, is a truth written upon all her institutions, and confirmed by various enactments of the General Conference; and she was going on in her steady career of doing good to the souls and bodies of both master and slave, to the white and colored population of our country, when she was suddenly arrested by a new species of measures to effect emancipation.

The success which had crowned the efforts of British philanthropists in bringing about emancipation in the West Indies, though it was effected by a compromise between the government and the owners of the slaves, by which the latter received a supposed equivalent for their legalized property, awakened a spirit of inquiry in our country respecting the practicability of emancipating the slaves in our southern and southwestern states, without waiting for the slow and more safe process of a gradual preparation for such an event. This spirit was powerfully excited by agents sent out from England, for the express purpose of lecturing us on the evils of slavery, and enlightening us on the duty and feasibility of immediate and unconditional emancipation, not indeed in imitation of the plan adopted by the legislature of their own country, which was to remunerate, in part at least, the owners of the slaves for their property; but they insisted upon a full, and free, and immediate surrender of the slaves, as a political and religious duty, alike demanded by the laws of God and of nature. These heedless and enthusiastic lecturers, not understanding the peculiar structure of our complicated governments, including the state and general governments, and not caring to distinguish between slavery as it existed here, and slavery as it had existed in the West Indies, loudly proclaimed a war against it, with such a flippancy of misguided zeal, that they soon goaded the public mind almost to madness, and thus aroused a spirit of resistance to their proceedings and measures which it was not easy to control. This interference of foreigners with our domestic relations was considered by the more judicious portions of the community as highly reprehensible, and worthy of severe rebuke and remonstrance. Accordingly, the newspapers soon

became rife with discussions upon this topic. Criminations and recriminations followed each other, until the public mind became so excited as to be incapable of calm and sober investigation on either side of the question, so that, in some instances, mob violence was substituted for argument; and "lynch law" for Scriptural and rational defense. These violent measures were alike condemned by the more sober portion of both parties.

In this agitated state of things, it could hardly be expected that the Church should wholly escape the excitement or avoid participating in the discussions to which it gave rise. Accordingly, as our brethren in the eastern states entered more deeply into this subject than any others, and as they had a weekly paper under their control, its columns were opened to the discussion of slavery as it existed in the United States, and severe denunciations were uttered against all who held slaves, whether in or out of the Church. These denunciations were met and repelled with spirit by those more immediately implicated, as being incompatible with the spirit of brotherly love which ought to characterize all Christians, and more especially such as are members of the same communion.

These discussions had been conducted for two or three years previously to the session of this General Conference, and a weekly paper had been established in the city of New York for the vowed purpose of advocating immediate emancipation, irrespective of all consequences. As the arguments and measures set forth in this and other periodicals of a kindred character were not fellowshipped by a great majority of our preachers and people even in the middle and northern conferences, nor by the official organ of the Church, the Christian Advocate and Journal, these were stigmatized by the immediate emancipationists as pro-slavery in their views and feelings, and, of course, as involved in the same guilt and condemnation with those who actually held their fellow-beings in bondage. These irritating charges were considered unjust, as the brethren implicated thought they could easily distinguish between arm approval of slavery as a system, and the apologizing for those who held slaves under certain peculiar circumstances. This clear distinction, however, was not admitted by the zealous advocates of immediate emancipation, and hence they poured forth their anathemas upon all indiscriminately who either held slaves or offered an apology for those that did, on account of their peculiar circumstances.

It was in this state of the public mind, and of the Church, that the General Conference came together in 1836. And though many of its oldest and most judicious members were very desirous of keeping the discussion of slavery from the deliberations of the conference, being convinced it could result in no good, yet several circumstances conduced to bring it in, and to make it the subject of much debate. In the first place, the allusion to the subject in the address of our Wesleyan brethren and in the address of their representative, the Rev. William Lord, made it necessary to advert to it in the answer of the General Conference, which, it will be perceived by those who will look at that answer, was done in a very brief and respectful manner. In the second place, not many days after the conference had assembled, it was ascertained that two of the abolition brethren from New England had attended and lectured at an abolition meeting in the city of Cincinnati; and as the agitation was very great upon that subject, it was feared by many that a popular excitement would be produced injurious to the character of the conference, and perhaps detrimental to the peace and harmony of the Church in Cincinnati. With a view to allay all such apprehension, the conference passed the following preamble and resolutions, by a vote of one hundred and twenty in favor and fourteen against them: --

"Whereas, great excitement has prevailed in this country on the subject of modern abolitionism, which is reported to have been increased in this city recently by the unjustifiable conduct of two members of the General Conference in lecturing upon and in favor of that agitating subject; and whereas, such a course

on the part of any of its members is calculated to bring upon this body the suspicions and distrust of the community, and to misrepresent its sentiments in regard to the points at issue; and whereas, in this aspect of the case, a due regard for its own character, as well as a just concern for the interests of the Church confided to its care, demand a full, decided, and unequivocal expression of the ideas of the General Conference in the premises: -- Therefore,

Resolved, by the delegates of the annual conferences in General Conference assembled, That they disapprove, in the most unqualified sense, the conduct of two members of the General Conference, who are reported to have lectured in this city recently upon and in favor of modern abolitionism.

Resolved, That they are decidedly opposed to modern abolitionism, and wholly disclaim any right, wish, or intention to interfere in the civil and political relation between master and slave as it exists in the slave-holding states in this Union.

Resolved, That the foregoing preamble and resolutions be published in our periodicals."

The consideration of these resolutions brought the entire subject of slavery and abolitionism before the conference, and elicited a very spirited and protracted debate, which finally ended in their adoption, as before mentioned. Many very able speeches were delivered on both sides of the question, and generally with good temper and much calmness of deliberation, though not without some appearance of asperity and warmth of feeling. The pith of the controversy, however, notwithstanding the whole field of argument and illustration was amply surveyed, may be comprehended in two of the speeches, both published at the time, that of the Rev. O. Scott in favor, and of the Rev. W. Winans against modern abolition. And even this argument itself may be brought into a very narrow compass.

The course pursued by the Methodist Episcopal Church, from the beginning of her existence, in reference and in opposition to slavery, as it has all along existed in the United States, proves that she has always considered it an evil not to be tolerated except under given circumstances; and that such circumstances exist in some portions of our Union, where severe penal laws have been enacted against emancipation, as to justify her in holding in her communion those who hold slaves, provided they are otherwise pious. That this was her doctrine is provable from her whole course of proceeding from the time of her organization in 1784. At this time were passed the severest laws against slavery which we find upon record at any time of her existence; but even these aimed at a gradual, and did not insist on an immediate emancipation; yet finding upon experiment that these severe rules could not be carried into execution without producing a greater evil than that which they were designed to remove, about six months after they were passed they were suspended, and have never been revived, nor were they ever inserted in her book of Discipline; and at almost every subsequent General Conference some enactment has been made for the purpose of regulating slavery, of modifying or mitigating its character, with a view ultimately, if practicable, to do it away. This has been the doctrine, and these have been the measures of our Church in reference to this most difficult and perplexing subject. And they prove most incontestably that she does not, nor has at any time, considered slave holding, under all circumstances, of such a deadly character as to "exclude a man from the kingdom of grace and glory;" for it is manifest that the making rules for the regulation of a practice is, in some sense, to pronounce that the practice is not, in itself considered, independently of all concurring circumstances, a moral evil in the sight of God. To legislate for a thing is to sanction it, though the manner of holding the thing may be considered either unlawful or inexpedient.

This statement of the doctrine of the Church will enable us to perceive the force and scope of the argument now wielded by Mr. Scott against slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church. In opposing the above resolutions, he laid down the following proposition: --

"That slavery is wrong in some circumstances, in no circumstance, or in all circumstances." In selecting from these positions the one which suited his views, he took this strong ground that slavery is wrong, morally wrong, under all possible circumstances; and in the course of his argument, contended that no circumstance whatever could alter or modify the sinful character of slavery; that it was wrong, or a sin not to be tolerated under any circumstance whatever, either in or out of the Church. By this comprehensive and sweeping proposition, all who held slaves, whatever might be the palliating circumstances, were, on that very account, sinners against God, and ought to be forthwith excommunicated from the communion of the Church, unless they repented, and "brought forth works meet for repentance," by an immediate and unconditional surrender of their slaves, without any regard to the consequences of such a measure.

And yet, such was the light and force of truth upon this subject, that, almost in the next breath, Mr. Scott admitted that "God himself expressly permitted his people to enslave the Canaanites," thus upsetting at a stroke the whole array of argument which he had brought to prove that slavery was a sin under all circumstances; for here was a circumstance in which God either permitted his people to commit sin, or which did away with the sinfulness of slavery: the first supposition is daringly impious; the second is fatal to the argument.

Of this concession, a concession which sacred history had forced from him, Mr. Winans took advantage, and built upon it the following impregnable argument: --

That according to this admission, taken in connection with the main proposition that no circumstance could alter the character of an action, as it was once right for God to permit slavery, it was therefore always right; is right now; and no possible circumstance could make it wrong.

This was the very gist of the argument. And the reader will observe, that in stating the argument thus, Mr. Winans did not attempt to prove that slavery, as it existed in the United States, is right, or not sinful; but simply to show, that on Mr. Scott's concession, his major proposition, that slavery is a sin under all circumstances, could not be true.

I need not trace this controversy any further. The views of the General Conference in reference to this subject, as well as others which came up for consideration, may be seen in the following Pastoral Address, which was adopted near the close of the conference: --

"To the Members and Friends of the Methodist Episcopal Church

"Beloved Brethren and Friends: -- The time has come, in the conclusion of the session of another General Conference, when it seems proper that we should address a few thoughts to you, for whom we labor, and for whose present and future happiness we desire to devote the remainder of our days. We think we can adopt, at least in some degree, the language of the great apostle to the Gentiles, 'ow we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.'

"In taking a review of our work, we rejoice in being able to say that we are more and more convinced of the truth of those doctrines, and of the healthful influence of that moral discipline, by which e as a people have ever been distinguished. These, therefore, we hope, will ever remain the same, and be handed down to

posterity unimpaired, that the generations following may be led by them into the path of peace and holiness here, and finally be conducted to eternal life hereafter. The few alterations which have been introduced into our prudential regulations, into our plan of missionary operations, and into some portions of our temporal economy, are such only as the lights of experience, the enlargement of our work, and the occurrence of new circumstances, have dictated to be expedient and necessary for carrying forward, to the greatest possible extent, the cause of reformation and salvation in which we are engaged. These, so far from impairing those cardinal principles of revealed truth and precepts of morality, which have been incorporated into our excellent Discipline, by which we have been guided thus far in peace and prosperity, are designed merely as helps to develop and apply these principles and precepts to experimental and practical purposes. Though we have been called upon to mourn over the loss of our venerated senior bishop, Rev. William McKendree, and of our junior bishop, the Rev. John Emory, as well as the destruction of our noble and useful book establishment at New York, yet we are by no means discouraged; but regarding these chastisements of our heavenly Father, who has thus corrected us for our good, that we may learn obedience by the things that we are called upon to suffer, we would endeavor to renew our diligence in the important work assigned us.

"Though we have had a very considerable increase during the four last years, yet for the one year past a diminution in the number of Church members appears on the Minutes of the conferences. Whatever may be the cause or causes of this decrease, so unusual in our history, it becomes us to humble ourselves before God, to apply the means at our command for the enlargement of his work, for the increase of holiness among our selves, as well as the conversion of sinners to God. Among the means to be used for this purpose, we may reckon, --

A recurrence to first principles; a firm adherence to, and a faithful development and application of those doctrines of the gospel by which we, as a Church, have ever been characterized; particularly the doctrine of holiness, a preached and enforced by him who, under God, laid the foundation of our spiritual edifice. His maxim was, 'When the work of sanctification goes on among believers, the work of God will prosper in all its branches.' It becomes, therefore, the imperious duty of all ministers of Jesus Christ, to explain and enforce the nature and necessity of this work in the hearts of all their hearers; and it is equally the duty of these to strive after it in the way of God's appointment, and to regulate their lives accordingly.

We would, therefore, remind ourselves, as well as those whom we now address, of the great necessity of making this subject a cardinal point in all our ministrations, and in all our public and private duties. The second thing which demands our most serious attention and constant vigilance, is the right enforcement of our Scriptural discipline. The history of the Church, from its commencement down to the present period, confirms the truth of the remark, that pure and undefiled religion has always prospered in promotion to the strictness with which discipline has been enforced.

The pithy and wise caution of our founder in reference to this subject should ever be borne in mind, 'Be strict, but mild.' While it is our duty to use all Scriptural means to reclaim an offending brother, to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and, if possible, to restore such as may have been seduced by temptation into sin, in the spirit of meekness yet when these means have failed to effect the desired object, it is equally imperative for us to discharge the painful duty of severing from the body the corrupt member.

Hence, we cannot guard with too scrupulous a care, nor watch with too much vigilance, that which hath been committed to our trust, with a view to the preservation of the Church in peace and purity, by an impartial administration of discipline. The accession of numbers to the list of Church members, unless

accompanied with the witness and fruits of the Spirit, instead of adding strength to the Church, will tend only to introduce confusion and every evil work. We would, therefore, exhort all, both ministers and people, to a united exertion in all places, and at all times, to use every Scriptural and prudent means for the preservation of the members of the Church in purity, simplicity, and godly living.

The several duties growing out of our relation to God, to each other, and to the world around us, are so very obvious, so clearly laid down in the sacred Scriptures, and so accurately defined in our general rules, as well as so often explained from the pulpit and the press, that we need not stop to enumerate them here, and will therefore only observe, that the faithful performance of these duties is the best evidence we can give to the world, and to each other, of the sincerity of our Christian profession, and of our devotedness to the cause of Jesus Christ.

The next thing to which we would call your attention, as connected with our prosperity, is the cause of education. We rejoice to witness the growing interest which has been felt and manifested in this branch of our work for a few years past. In the cause of education we include sabbath and common schools, academies and colleges. Experience and observation, if not, indeed, the common sense every individual, demonstrate, that unless we provide the means of education for our children and youth, they will be led from us to other communities, where these means are more abundant, and are put within the reach of every one.

Should this unhappily be the case, the consequence is inevitable, that the children and youth of our community will depart from us, and we shall be compelled to mourn over the melancholy fact, that they will have been brought under the influence of doctrines and usages which we honestly believe will be injurious to their present and future happiness. Such, indeed, is the eager desire for intellectual improvement, and the facilities for its attainment in other directions, that unless we furnish means to gratify this laudable desire, our children and youth will avail themselves of those thus offered them from other quarters, and be induced to throw the weight of their influence into an opposite scale.

This consideration admonishes us of our duty in this respect, and, in a language which cannot be misunderstood, reminds us of our high obligations to enter more fully and unitedly into this field of labor. "In many places we fear that sabbath schools are either entirely neglected, or but partially attended to; while in others these nurseries for juvenile improvement are suffered to languish for want of that attention to their interests which their importance demands. We would therefore urge upon all concerned a steady, active, and uniform attention to these appendages to the gospel ministry.

Nor are we less solicitous that all our brethren and friends should be mindful of their duty in selecting such teachers for primary schools as shall secure to their children the double advantage of elementary instruction, and religious and moral improvement.

"But it is to the higher branches of education, such as are taught in academies and colleges, that we would especially call your attention. Of the former we have under our patronage upward of twenty-of the latter seven, and two others are in contemplation. Though the academics may be sustained without drawing largely upon the pecuniary resources of our people, and may therefore be safely multiplied to an indefinite extent, yet it is manifest that colleges, in order to answer the end of their institution, must be liberally endowed. And such is the condition of our country in respect to these institutions, that though some of the state legislatures have made small endowments for their support, we must depend chiefly upon our own resources for their continuance and prosperity. Hence, to increase their number without adequate funds in

hand or in prospect for their support, is to weaken their influence, if not ultimately to endanger their existence.

"Such, however, is their importance to the interests of our community, so closely are they identified with our character as a Church, and so intimately connected with our other institutions which are deemed essential to our growth, and to that influence which we ought to exert over the public mind, that we cannot but regard it as a sacred duty to nourish and sustain them by all the means at our command. If, indeed, at this crisis of our history, when these literary institutions have just begun to put forth their energies, and to exert their improving influence upon our youth, and upon the Church generally, they should be allowed to languish for want of pecuniary means, the effect would be to throw us back for years in this branch of intellectual and moral culture. This is an event, however, which we cannot allow ourselves to anticipate without very painful emotions, but which can only be prevented by a united and simultaneous action in their favor, by our wealthy and benevolent friends. That there is ability in the Church adequate to sustain a suitable number of these nurseries of learning and fountains of knowledge, were proper means adopted to call it into active exercise, we cannot doubt; and we therefore affectionately exhort all the annual conferences, within whose bounds colleges are established, or who have pledged themselves to aid in their support, to exert themselves in this laudable work, to make haste to redeem their solemn pledges; and we would also invite the attention of all our brethren and friends to a hearty co-operation in whatever measures may be devised by the conferences to establish these institutions upon safe and permanent foundations, not only by contributing of their substance for their support, but also by patronizing them as extensively as their means will allow, by sending their sons to be educated, as well as by offering their fervent prayers to God for his blessing to rest upon them.

The distribution of religious tracts is another mode of diffusing abroad a knowledge of the doctrines and duties of Christianity. In this department of our work we have reason to believe that there has been for some years past an unjustifiable neglect. Such is the cheapness of these silent messengers of truth, such the facilities for their circulation by an itinerant ministry, in co-operation with all those who are zealous for God, that no justifiable apology can be offered for the non-performance of this duty-for any one to say that he is not supplied with these means of spiritual improvement. We would therefore most affectionately invite all our brethren of the ministry, and of the laity, to use their diligence to form tract societies, and to engage as many as possible in the work of distribution in every place. Let there be no circuit or station unsupplied with these messengers of mercy, and no hand that can be called into action unemployed in aiding in this good work. Form your societies, collect your moneys, send to our depositories for tracts, and adopt, as far as practicable, a regular system of distribution, such a system as shall secure the co-operation of all concerned, both male and female, young and old. We need hardly say, that this method of circulating religious knowledge is adapted especially to the circumstances and wants of the poor, the illiterate, and the young, for whose present and eternal interest we are bound in a particular manner to labor.

"This branch of our duty is therefore submitted to your pious consideration, under a solemn conviction that, if attended to with zeal and discretion, it will aid us much in the work of saving souls.

The continual enlargement of our missionary field, and the increase of pecuniary means for its occupancy and cultivation, are matters of congratulation, and of unfeigned gratitude to God. On this subject we need only exhort you to go on as you have begun, and make the hearts of the heathen, and the poor of your own land, to rejoice by means of your liberality. We have adopted a revised constitution, recommended to us by the managers of our Missionary Society, which we hope will afford increased facilities for the

progress of our missionary work, and enable us more effectually to cover the whole ground of this extensive and most interesting department of our labor.

"A field is spread open before us, sufficiently wide and extensive for the full display of all our liberality, and the exercise of all our energies.

"Such measures have been adopted at this conference in reference to this subject, as will tend, we humbly trust, to call forth and train up, more effectually, men for this important work. And surely there is a call -- a most imperious call -- for all the men and means, to enable us to fill up this extensive field with suitable laborers. In addition to those domestic missions which embrace the poorer settlements of our white population and the slaves of the south, we hear a voice from the distant tribes of our wilderness, all along our western and northwestern frontier, yea, even from the valley of the Columbia river, beyond the Rocky mountains, and on the very borders of the Pacific, which calls humbly for help. From South America, from the desolate shores of Africa, as well as from the vast interior of that mighty continent, a similar voice salutes our ears, and invites us, yea, commands us, in language which appears to be the echo of divine Providence to come over and help them. And shall we be deaf to these calls? We must not. And we are exceedingly happy to have it in our power to say, that you do not turn a deaf ear to them. You, beloved brethren and friends, have come up nobly, spiritually, liberally, and prayerfully to this work. In the name of our common Christianity, and on behalf of those heathen who, but for this timely aid, must have perished for lack of knowledge, we heartily thank you; and from having witnessed your past liberality, we take courage, folly believing that this same benevolent spirit will be continued, and even augmented in a ratio with the increasing wants of our Missionary Society.

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