



# SHALL THE NAME BE RESTORED?

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An Inquiry into the Historical and Ecclesiastical Status  
of the Question Now Pending before the Annual  
Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal  
Church, South, Concerning the Change  
(or Restoration) of the Church's  
Name from "Methodist Epis-  
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"Methodist Episco-  
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*By*

H. M. DU BOSE, D.D.  
*Of the North Georgia Conference*

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NASHVILLE, TENN.  
DALLAS, TEX.; RICHMOND, VA.  
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At the afternoon session of the fifteenth day of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which sat in Asheville, N. C., in May, 1910, the following resolution was presented—viz.:

*Resolved*, That the bishops be requested to submit to the several Annual Conferences during the year 1913 this question: "Shall the name of the Church be changed from 'The Methodist Episcopal Church, South,' to 'The Methodist Church?'"

[Signed]

N. L. LINEBAUGH,  
W. L. SHERRILL,  
R. P. HOWELL,  
W. W. WATTS,  
P. H. LINN,  
J. E. HIGHTOWER.

While the motion to adopt was pending, H. M. Du Bose offered the following substitute—viz.:

*Resolved*, That the words "Methodist Church" be stricken out and the words "Methodist Episcopal Church in America" be substituted therefor, thus restoring the original name of the Church adopted at the Christmas Conference, held in Baltimore, in 1784.\*

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\*This substitute was accepted by the movers of the original resolution, and thus became the main question.



Upon a call for the previous question, the ayes and nays were ordered, and, the vote being taken, the Chair declared that the substitute had prevailed by the required constitutional majority.

Thus was put in tangible and constitutional shape before the Annual Conferences the issue of restoring the original historic name of American Methodism. This issue, if not a truly crucial one, may be fairly described as living and significant to an extraordinary degree. Twice already has the question of altering the present name of the Church been sent down to the annual sittings for constitutional sanction; three times (including the vote on the pending resolution) has the General Conference given its constitutional indorsement to the demand for a change; and now, for the third time, the Annual Conferences will go on record with a vote.

In 1866, scarcely more than a year after the close of the War between the States, the General Conference proposed, by the required constitutional vote, to substitute for the existing title of the Church the form "Episcopal Methodist Church," but the Annual Conferences refused to give a concurrent majority. Thus the matter rested for a time, at least so far as General Conference action was concerned; but a glance at the journals of subsequent General Conferences will show that a persistent tide of memorials on the

subject of change continued to set toward the calendar.

Again, in 1882, a proposal identical with the one now pending was, under the advocacy of prominent Church leaders, voted through the General Conference and submitted for the action of the lower houses. The poll on this resolution in the General Conference showed 105 ayes against 40 nays, being a decisive constitutional majority.

But the time had not then come for the favorable consideration of this or any other action involving a change in the Church's formal title. With little or no precedent discussion, the Annual Conferences returned an unfavorable answer to the proposal of the higher body.

But the necessity for a change of name, which has been recognized by many of our leaders for more than fifty years, is being felt by an ever increasing number, not, as it appears, through loss of affection and reverence for the name as it now stands, but through the force of fact and the logic of history, both written and unwritten.

It is only less certain than a spoken prophecy that in a not remote future the name of the Church will be altered either as an answer to the logic of expediency, or as a result of coalescence, or as a policy of ecclesiastical or inter-Methodist accommodation. The one point to be settled now

is this: Does the present juncture demand action under either one of these considerations? If a demand exists at all, it is the demand of expediency; for that alone could certainly be read, though signs of the emergence of the others are not wholly wanting. They may come sooner than we think.

But given that expediency demands an alteration of our Church title, sentiment, policy, history, and legal considerations shut us up to a single alternative, and that is to restore the long-disused first title, named in the resolution now pending before the Annual Conferences — viz., “The Methodist Episcopal Church in America.”

To expound and illustrate with appropriate arguments and historical citations the statement here made is the purpose of the present writing. This task I propose to discharge without appeal to prejudice or partisan sentiment and without intention to wound the sensibilities of the many who feel constrained to differ from the view I have been forced through the logic of fact to take, and that against all my predilections.

My contention is that this is a matter to be considered and acted upon by the constituencies of Methodism wholly from the viewpoint of what is wisest and best for the cause of religion now and in the future. To make it a sectional or denominational issue would be to miss the large

spirit in which both its advocates and its opponents should meet it.

Acerbity and heat should have no place in the discussions anticipating or attending the action of the Conferences.

My own views, unchanged to this hour, expressed editorially in the *Epworth Era* nearly three years ago, were as follows:

We are satisfied with the name of the Church as it is. Our predilections are for the suffix "South." We believe that it was providentially adopted, and that it is still historically and characteristically expositive. This is our position; but we are committed to progress and to policies of soundness and wisdom. If our brethren who are asking for a change in the Church's name can "show cause" above those we have set in order, we are not foresworn to follow blindly a contrary path.

It was only after many overtures and eloquently urgent pleas had come from the Conferences on the Pacific Coast, from the trans-Mississippi States, and from nearly the whole border line of the connection, with strong support from the Conferences in the "Old South," and after the General Conference had twice shown its willingness to consent to a "change," that the substitute asking for "restoration" was offered. This I did for three reasons—namely: First, because, for one, I had committed myself to consider the arguments and majority action of the brethren most vitally

interested in the change of name; secondly, because I believed, as I now believe, that an alteration of our name is inevitable; and, thirdly, because I think that we should consent to no change or alteration that will remove us as a connection one inch farther than we now are from the history and sentimental traditions of Asburian Methodism. This last consideration will be fully satisfied in the adoption of the substitute, which will not only not "change" our Church name, but will simply and happily restore that form of title which, by historical and sentimental right, has been ours since the beginning. Nor will this action merely validate the historical and sentimental claims of Southern Methodism; it will restore the sequence of the years and repair the breach in our chronology, a breach which will continue to witness against our otherwise well-grounded claims to an original Asburian status until we use the one possible means within our reach to close it. But this will be fully argued as the plan of this writing develops.

#### THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE QUESTION.

The present status of the name question in Methodism is this: The legal title of that wing of the Church which is most largely represented in the Northern half of the republic is "The Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of

America." The legal title of the wing most numerously represented in the Southern half of the country is "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South." These two forms of name and title appear in the respective Disciplines of the two Methodisms in what is known as the "Property Trust Clause." Under it churches, chapels, and other properties are secured for the use of the preachers and peoples of the two connections. The names written in these property deeds are the names under which the two Churches are to stand in the courts, claim and defend vested rights, sue and be sued, until such time as they shall be regularly and legally substituted.

Previous to 1844 the two wings of Methodism existed as one body or connection, bearing the name and title now borne by the larger or Northern wing, "The Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America," but known popularly as simply "The Methodist Episcopal Church." The initial stages of "separation," as the division of 1844 was termed, were accomplished by mutual action on the basis of an ecclesiastical parity of the wings; but in the division of mutual properties differences arose, and the Federal courts were called upon to adjudicate the cause. This the courts did by equitably dividing the property and declaring the two parties in equity to be coequal parts of a former unity. The

Northern wing retained the name long borne by the original body, and also retained the chronological order and reckoning of the original Quadrennial Conferences. The Southern wing, though equally entitled to bear the descriptive title, "in the United States of America," assumed the distinctive expositive "South," retaining the chronology of the adhering Annual Conference, but instituted most illogically a new chronology and reckoning for its Quadrennial or General Conferences, thus breaking the thread of its history in the most eventful years of its own and the nation's life. This mistake was, in some measure, repaired by the General Conference of 1894, which introduced a parenthetical reading into the heading of the General Conference journal connoting the longer and shorter chronologies. But of this more fully in its order.

Although a detailed consideration of what is involved in the chronological break at the year 1844 (more properly 1846) belongs also to another section of this writing, it is proper at this point to so far anticipate the narrative as to say that here is the chief argument for the restoration of the Church's earliest title. To the Methodism of the South the history of the Church between 1784 and 1796 belongs in a peculiar sense, but it is denied to us by our own awkward chronology, except as we have insufficiently affirmed it in the

parenthetical journal reading referred to above. The parenthesis wears a significant squint, but it should be as bold-faced as the facts of history demand. The restoration of the Christmas Conference name would transform the squint into a comely featured fact and reinvest the Church with its birthright of years.

#### VITAL FACTS.

Although the undivided Church previous to the "Separation" in 1844 was known legally as "The Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America," that was *not* the original name of the Church, nor was that the name under which it labored and witnessed during the first twelve years of its organized existence. All this I will make plain by appeal to evidence written in incontestable documents.

From the beginning of the Wesleyan cause in this country the words "in America" were always used by John Wesley in his letters and minute entries when reference was made to the transatlantic societies. Similarly in the minutes of the first American Conference, held in Philadelphia in 1773, the phrase "in America" is used to describe the status of the people called Methodists in the colonies.

At the organization of the Methodist societies into a Church, in 1784, under the letters ecclesias-



tical of John Wesley and the episcopal presidency of Thomas Coke, the words were conspicuously employed. The new jurisdiction was called "The Methodist Episcopal Church *in America*." The minutes of the Christmas Conference, the body which completed this organization, are not extant, but that this title was adopted has been proved beyond any doubt. Collateral evidence in the shape of contemporaneous papers is abundant. The Discipline of 1785 (an original copy of which is my guide) carries the title "A Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and Other Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America." In the episcopal letters issued by Bishop Coke to Bishop Asbury, whom he ordained at the Christmas Conference, he styles himself "General Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America."

The printed minutes from 1791 to 1799 carry this question: "Who are elected by the suffrages of the General Conference to be general superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America?" All the early books and other publications of the Church bore the legend "in America." But this name was never incorporated, nor was any Church property of any character ever secured under it. The early Methodist chapels in this country (those built prior to 1796) were secured under a modified form of the chapel deed

(the Deed of Settlement) used by Wesley in England. The early Methodists had little dream of the greatness to which their cause was to grow; they had few or no legal concerns; they were cumbered with little property; they trusted God and Asbury, and so saw no occasion to incorporate their title. Thus the matter stood with them for twelve years. In their books they wrote, "The Methodist Episcopal Church in America;" but to the world they were known simply as "The Methodist Church" or "The Methodist Episcopal Church," since there was no other Wesleyan body on the continent to divide claims with them.

At this time also the republic was young, and until the adoption of the Constitution of 1787 it was not certain what course the political destinies of the country would take. But by 1789 the new era had fully dawned. Washington had been elected and inaugurated President, the star of empire was ascendant, and the patriotism of the people sought every possible channel of expression.

In May of this year (1789) the New York Conference, or rather that sitting of the progressive annual session of the itinerants which met in New York City, directed the two bishops, Coke and Asbury, to present to General Washington, then officially present in the city, a note of congratulation and respect. This they did, styling

themselves "Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church." In his formal reply handed to the bishops General Washington addressed them as the "Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the *United States of America*," a form of designation hitherto unknown to Methodist literature, and a form which, I verily believe, had not so much as once before been written.

It was characteristic of Washington's thought and temper to let the name of the republic into the title of the Church, and it was characteristic of the spirit of the times that the Methodists should have accepted the "amendment." The presidential court and the new constitutional government had been but a month in existence, but the new consciousness was dominant. Colonial continental sense had shrunk into a vagary, while, like another Colossus, rose the new national ideal. Church and State were separated, in fact; but the Church could not resist the fascination of writing into its name that of the puissant young republic whose birth star was all but the same as its own.

It is perhaps too much to even suggest that General Washington meant to propose a new form of title for Methodism. He, however, did mean to emphasize the nation's civic spirit and to appeal to it in his letter of courtesy to his Methodist compatriots. His appeal was doubly effective. He did then and there change the Church's

name. Immediately the Methodists took up the amended form and in a little while put it into common use. The older form "*in America*" began to disappear. Geographically considered, the new form was distinctly limiting. Technically considered, it described the jurisdiction of the Church as coextensive with the lines of the republic, while the older title implied a continental, not to say hemispheric, range. But the early Methodists thought not of this. The English settlements in Canada, being then but a handful, were not considered, and to statesmen and churchmen alike the lands bordering on the Spanish main and reaching into the vast Northwest were not only a *terra incognita*, but a *terra impossibilis* as well.

With this state of the national and ecclesiastical mind understood, what followed can only be regarded as consequential and necessary. The General Conference of 1796 relegated the original or Christmas Conference expositive phrase, "*in America*," to the archives and completed the ascendancy of the words "*in the United States of America*" by writing them into the title and body of the articles of the "*Chartered Fund*," the first incorporated document of American Methodism. These articles, designating the connection as "*The Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America*," were, in the year following, accord-

ing to Dr. Nathan Bangs, the historian of the times, patented or incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania. The same General Conference inserted in the book of Discipline the "Property Trust Clause," referred to already, which required all property deeds to be secured to "The Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America."

This title clause, as we have seen, persisted in the undivided Church up to 1844, and since that date has remained unchanged in the Discipline of the Church in the North. With the substitution of the single word "South" for the words "in the United States of America," it persists in the Discipline of our own Church.

As late as 1820 an effort was made to revive the use of the older form, "in America." In 1819 Joshua Soule, Nathan Bangs, and others organized the Methodist Missionary Society in New York City and wrote for it a constitution, in which they carefully inserted and reiterated the words "in America," for which words Joshua Soule, particularly, had a predilection that lasted to the end of his life.

This writing, with an appropriate memorial, went the next year to the General Conference; but that body struck out the words "in America" as being unnecessary and irrelevant, and so the last clamor of Asburian continentalism received

its quietus. Since that time it has been a phrase familiar only to the Church antiquarian, and the collation of facts contained in the present writing has brought a surprise to the minds of a multitude of intelligent Methodists. But there are many who have come to believe that in this ancient and honorable but long-used Church title is the hiding of providence and power for the Methodism of the Southern half of the republic. A calm and judicial passing upon this point is what is now asked of the commons of Methodism. Should the pending recommendation be voted down, then, sooner or later, we must accept an alternative involving confusion and loss of opportunity; for the issue in its present shape (proposing restoration) could hardly be revived. This misfortune no prescience could adequately forecast.

#### A PERTINENT FACT.

During the twelve years in which the Church bore the uncontested Christmas Conference name, "Methodist Episcopal Church in America," the preponderance of its membership and power was in Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas. Its activities centered about the peerless units represented in the old Baltimore Conference. The pivot of its evangelism and revival life was in the "Old Dominion." A Southern itinerant was

planting Methodism in New England, and Virginians were organizing the Church in Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. Methodism was then the Church *in the South*, if not the "Church, *South*." The taproot of that Methodism was the Robert Strawbridge Society, at Sam's Creek, Md., whose history, according to Asbury, antedates that of all the other beginnings in American Methodism, going back possibly to 1760.

Without arrogance or motives of prejudice, and with no purpose to obtrude an invidious suggestion to gain advantage, I affirm that these considerations add eloquence and fascination to the proposal to restore to the South the long-unused first name of American Methodism. The words are a lure of providence and prophecy, and their reënthroning and preservation in this way should be a matter of interest to every loyal Methodist, North or South. Indeed, it is not too much to say that an ecumenical interest is involved in this transaction.

#### ALTERNATIVE NAMES.

Already I have discussed the logical impossibility of Southern Methodism's acceptance of any other proposal to change its corporate name than the one now pending. To do so would be to cut loose from historic and priceless affiliations, throw away the vantage and victory of years, and, above

all, refuse a supreme opportunity to realize and establish the claims of all our past. To make this even clearer, it will be well to inquire into the merits of those alternative names which have been at one time or another seriously proposed in our ecclesiastical councils.

The name "Episcopal Methodist Church" was once considered, and that at a time when a certain distinctive view of the episcopacy gave to the order of terms in the title a suggestiveness not now apparent. But the impossibility of the proposal was soon recognized. The sequence, "*Episcopal Methodist*," is wholly anti-Wesleyan. *Methodists* we are preëminently; *Episcopalians* we are in a secondary sense only. Methodism is the large, unvarying present-day content of our doctrine; Episcopalianism is the traditional, hereditary character of our Protestantism and the expedient nature of our polity. Our Episcopalianism is qualified by our Methodism, not our Methodism by our Episcopalianism. The Methodist Revival modified Anglicanism, while the Methodist Revival itself remains unmodified. Therefore the order of historical statement in our name cannot be reversed.

The name "Methodist Church" has been proposed—was, in fact, the original content of the resolution now going to the Annual Conferences. From the controversial viewpoint, it is here un-



necessary to indicate the difficulties that would have stood in the way of adopting this name. But, with great respect for the brethren who proposed it, I beg to affirm that its adoption would have weakened our position historically and discounted our cause beforehand in the contests of the future. Unless we should alter our polity—a thing which, as I take it, we are not likely soon to do—the elimination of the word “Episcopal” would be an act of incongruity and contradiction. Though Episcopalians in a limited sense only, we are still vitally so. Nor does the word “Episcopal” stand for an idea of polity only, as already asserted. It involves in its definition another and distinct idea. It indicates our belief that in the Western Hemisphere we represent the glorious Anglican Protestantism of Cranmer, Parker, and the Wesleys. We deny prelatical succession, but we affirm ecclesiastical and theological continuity. Methodism was not picked up behind a hedge, nor can it fit to itself any name which advantage or occasion may suggest. It is an evolution of the highest forms of religious life and thought, and, if true to itself, must accept that designation which history and providence have ordained. Through Anglicanism, the Augsburg Articles, and the Nicene formularies, Methodism goes back to the apostles. That is an apostolic line susceptible of being traced. We do not want to lose it by cut-

ting out of our name the one word which is the clew to it.

But if these weighty considerations did not hold, we still could not arrogate to ourselves the pre-eminence of being styled "The Methodist Church." Were there no other Wesleyan body than our own on the whole continent or in the hemisphere, we could not do it. Asbury and the fathers would not do it when "the whole floor of the continent" was before them, and when they published an unshared evangel "in the face of the sun." We dare not do it.

Yet other names, such as "The Wesleyan Episcopal Church," "The Wesleyan Church," etc., have recently been suggested, and some of them have been urged on the score of brevity. But they are all impossible, and for the one reason that the adoption of any one of them would sacrifice our history, our chronology, and our position of vantage, both for the present and for the future.

#### OBSTACLES—ARE THERE ANY?

Are there any obstacles in the way of restoring the Church's original name? Several have been urged, but upon investigation they are found to be grounded in fancy or upon misconceptions of facts.

For the first thing, it was suggested that the branch of the Church in the North claimed a sole

and undivided right to the old name, and would look with disfavor upon the present movement. Both of these suggestions are empty and go for nothing. Whatever right one Church has to the name, the other has likewise. Either Church to use it as a corporate title must needs first be "off" with the new in order to be "on" with the old, reversing a venerable saying. The only living use now being made of this name by either Church is that made by the Church in the South, which in its General Conference held at Memphis in 1894 ordered this parenthetical writing to be inserted in the journal—namely, "Being the — General Conference since the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America." That this writing describes a step toward the desired goal many are devoutly hoping.\*

Personally, I have heard not a few expressions

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\*Should the old name of the Church be restored by vote of the Conferences in 1913, the journal of the General Conference of 1914 might appropriately be made to read thus: "The thirty-second General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America (being the seventeenth General Conference since the division of the Church in 1844)." That would be regular, historical, and illuminative to future generations. It would also be more than was done to note the change made in 1796. If no break in chronology was noted in 1796, why should any have been noted in 1846? A *change* of name occurred at each date.

from leaders of our sister Methodism in the North commending the Church, South, for this movement and congratulating us upon the prospect of accomplishing so wise and effective an order. Since the action of our General Conference the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (in the United States of America) has met, and not a syllable of dissent or disapproval emanated from it, though the action pending in our jurisdiction was fully known to its members. Nor is any protest forthcoming. Our brethren in the North understand this question as we do. To them, as to us, the setting of the case is as clear as the path of the sun in the heavens.

But, again, it has been objected that the return to the old name would make the titles of the two Churches so nearly the same as to create confusion. The objection is not valid. The titles are similar now, and, indeed, it is both necessary and desirable that they should remain no less similar. To seek dissimilarity is to seek disparity and, worse still, to destroy the marks of kinship. The historic, doctrinal, and sentimental unity of Methodism—taking spiritual unity for granted—should be a thing of first consideration amongst American Wesleyans to-day. The general spirit of religion demands it, the interests of Methodism demand it, and the social and civic life of the whole country will be best served by it.

Fear that confusion would result from a greater similarity of the names of the two branches of Methodism is thoroughly discounted by the experience of another great Protestant body, the Presbyterian Church, existing in two branches and separated on geographical lines almost identical with those which divide Methodism. In the year 1861, in the city in which this writing is being done, and but a single block from where the writer sits, the Southern Synods of the of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America erected themselves into a General Assembly distinct from that represented by the Synods in the North. For a number of years the entity represented in this General Assembly called itself "The Southern Presbyterian Church," while the body in the North continued to call itself "The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America" (a name exactly paralleling that of the Methodism in the North). About a quarter of a century ago, however, the *Southern Presbyterian Church* read the tokens of prophecy and reassumed its old name, calling itself "The Presbyterian Church in the United States." No confusion arises from this similarity (identity it is, in fact). Locally, the dominant body in the South is still referred to as "The *Southern* Presbyterian Church;" and when an even sharper distinction

is desired to be made, the now doubly pertinent definitive "Old School" is used.\*

Should Southern Methodism reassume its earliest name, it would occupy an analogous situation. In the southernmost South it would still be the "*Southern* Methodist Church," or familiarly, as now, "The Methodist Church;" possibly, sometimes, in a sharper contrast, "The Old Methodist Church." But in the great arena of contest and action, in the attritions of national life and thought, it would inevitably acquire the title of "*American* Methodist Church," which, along with its sister connection in the North, it is entitled to

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\*Since the above paragraph was written, the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (North) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (South), with the general body of the United Presbyterian Church, and possibly that of the Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church, have arranged to meet in May, 1913, in the city of Atlanta, Ga. It is announced that this greater assembly has been called with the thought of looking over the grounds of a possible union or, failing to bring such into view, for considering matters of republic-wide interest to the several bodies. Who is it can doubt that in such a moot the Southern body will find itself in a strong diplomatic and historical position by reason of its having long ago substituted a republic-wide name for its former honorable but sectional and limiting title? And how much more effective in a moot of Methodism would "in *America*" read than "in *the United States!*"

be. If the Methodism of the South proposes to share in the continental and hemispheric influences of the future, this adjustment would seem indispensable. If we do not challenge the age, the age will pass us by.

A question of property has been raised as an argument against the proposed vote to restore. The particular claim has been made that the Church in the North holds property under the old name. Elsewhere I have shown how clearly impossible it is for this to be. During the twelve years between 1784 and 1796—the period of the supremacy of the name “in America”—all chapel and other church property held by the American Methodists was secured under a modified form of the Wesleyan “Deed of Settlement.” Only in the year 1796 was the “Property Clause” inserted in the Discipline.

If previous to 1796 any property was secured to the Church “in America,” the indenture was irregular; if after 1796 any property was secured under this name, the title was undisciplinary in form and legally defective. And what is more to the point of my contention is this: that if previous to 1796 any property was secured to the Church “in America,” there are seven chances to one that the holdings were in Maryland, Virginia, or the Carolinas; and hence the titles passed to the Methodist Church, South, with the records and

archives of the Annual Conferences in those States.

It requires no professional legal counsel to instruct on the point that a Church can have but *one* legal corporate title. Two or more legal names for a Church would be nearly as incongruous and confusing as two separate and distinct creeds. A longer legal title and an abbreviated form of the same title would be quite like having an authorized creed, and then presenting an abridged authorized form of that creed which left out much of its qualifying theology. The Methodist Church in the North—the greatest Wesleyan body on earth—on the testimony of its book of Discipline, claims but one legal title, and that is “Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America.” To discover that this title was deliberately put to legal record in 1796 one has only to read the articles of “The Chartered Fund” and the property indenture clause of the Discipline, both adopted by the General Conference of that year and subsequently patented. To prove that the Church in the North carried these patents over the breach of 1844 and holds them still one has only to consult the nineteen editions of the book of Discipline which it has issued since then. Like the Church in the South, the Church in the North has written its legal title where all may see and read. By these mutual



records the original Asburian name has been left unencumbered and unembarrassed, and is at present equally the asset of each body, but legally claimed by neither.

AN AMPLE PRECEDENT.

The proposition now pending is not a novelty. The General Conference of 1882, under the leadership of such stalwarts as Dr. John B. McFerrin, Dr. O. R. Blue, and others, by a decisive constitutional majority, asked to have the old name, "Methodist Episcopal Church in America," restored to the Methodism of the South.

The text of that resolution, which is now historic and of more than passing interest, is as follows—viz. :

*Resolved*, That the matter of changing the name of "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South," to "The Methodist Episcopal Church in America" be referred to the several Annual Conferences by the bishops during the ensuing four years, and that they report the result of the vote to the General Conference of 1886 for ratification.

This resolution went to the Annual Conferences, but, as already noted, failed of the requisite indorsement. The times were not favorable to the success of such an issue. The Church in all its sympathies was more provincial than it is now. The word "South" possessed a significance which it does not now possess, except in sacred and

heroic memories. The pressure of great social questions, the attritions of partisanism, and the aggressions of prejudice and sectionalism put the people of the lately separated States on the defensive in every field of action. But the order is now a changed one. From an attitude of defense we have turned to one of advance. From being the admonished in national thought, we have come to regard ourselves as serving in a rôle of responsibility. Our fellow Methodists have ceased to think of us as competitors only, but now seek to meet and treat with us as allies. They even point to those offices of service in thought and action—mutual concerns of all Methodists—in which we must accept a primacy. It is our destiny. The name under which we are to do it is important.

The question, as I see it, is not so much a reason against our present honorable and honored name as the superlative advantage that will come of the reassumption of the older and equally honorable title. Its possession will put us where we can certainly hold the past and with equal certainty invite the future.

The Southern fathers who in 1882 sought to do what is now sought to be done in this matter of restoring the name knew their rights. They had looked the ground over thoroughly; they were advised on all the legal points involved.

The case presented to them no difficulty. It was a question of obtaining enough votes in the Southern Conferences, and that alone. They had reckoned also with themselves; they were men of the Southland. Some of them had been leaders in the undivided Church. Most of them had known Soule the lawgiver, not a few had known McKendree, and the memories of some went back even to the times of Asbury. They were not tyros in reading signs and divining destinies. They saw their way; they understood their own motives. Their action was a prophecy of what must come to pass when Israel sees what needs to be done. Whether the time of fulfillment is now or later is a question for the men of Israel to decide. The present appeal—not of faction, but of facts—is made to the men of Israel.

#### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

A question likely to be raised by many and from contrary viewpoints is this: "To what extent would the restoration of the old name of Methodism affect the movement for the organic union of the two Churches?" In no material way at all. It would neither advance nor retard that movement. It would, however, leave any desirable form of union constantly possible, since it would leave the two Churches steadfastly upon their original positions.

The restoration would, however, secure Southern Methodism in the place of vantage, should it ever see fit to make or receive an overture of union. I have no desire to conceal from my brethren in the North, and certainly not from my brethren at home, my thought in this matter. It is this: Should the Southern Church recover its birthright in the shape of the birth name of American Methodism and union should come, Southern Methodists would have in legal use the one name which united Methodism could best afford to adopt.

To say here that, as matters now stand, I am personally unfavorable to organic union may seem an unwarranted obtrusion; but habits of frankness are stronger with me than policies of caution. Against the notion of Methodist union in itself I not only have no objection to urge, but, on the contrary, I find it agreeable to my sensibilities and according with the course of my thinking. But conditions often render theories impracticable and compel desire to go down before choice. Organic union in any shape, at least so far as my vision reaches, is a dream. As a subject of discussion it is pleasing, and in it there is doubtless a cumulative profit. That the hope of union is a star in its ascending node, no true Methodist will desire to doubt; but while we dream and talk and hope, we of each Metho-

dist house will do well to plan for much work in the separate fields marked off for us of Providence. In the meantime it would be folly for us to get farther apart in aim or name. Rather let us take every legitimate step each in the other's direction. Our ministry is not one of competition, but of coöperation.

#### UNTO THIS LAST.

In the preceding pages I have been at some pains to express my own feelings with reference to the merits of this issue. I fully realize how unimportant these feelings may be and how little they are calculated to influence the cause. It is only that I feel bound to express what I owe to myself in the way of sincerity. I could choose defeat with conviction always; but victory through indirection, never. Personally, I am content with the present name of Methodism; the fountains of my affection swell toward it with a full tide; nor do I apprehend that confusion and disintegration await us if we continue to write the word "South" after our name. For some decades, at least, the word will continue to have in the Cotton States a preponderant significance. It is more than a geographical term; but how much soever it may have been a staff to history, it cannot be a divining rod to prophecy. The

twentieth century has created a new republic and opened a new age for the Church.

In this view I have been compelled to regard the logic of facts and adopt the line of arguments set forth in these pages. Personal experience on the Western field and observations made beyond our earlier borders force me to the conclusion that Providence points in the direction of this resolution. To the work and workers in our Western and border fields we owe this relief. Years of patient inquiry into the genesis and affinities of our Methodism are cumulative on the chief point made and reiterated in this argument—namely, that there is but one fitting title for the Methodism of the South to bear into the activities and contests of the future, and that title is, "*Methodist Episcopal Church in America.*"

## AN ADDENDUM.

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ALTHOUGH the appended article, which appeared in the *Central Christian Advocate* (Methodist Episcopal Church), Rev. Claudius B. Spencer, D.D., editor, in April, 1912, contains a treatment of not a few of the points discussed in the foregoing pages, it is reprinted here to show the spirit in which "the pending question" has been received in our sister Methodism.

### THE NAME OF THE CHURCH.

BY HORACE M. DU BOSE, D.D.

The critical paper of Dr. Miller on "The Sunday Service of the Methodists" and your editorial companion piece printed in the *Central Christian Advocate* interested me deeply. Dr. Miller's paper makes it clear that the corporate name of the Methodist Church in the North (as distinguished from the Methodist Church in the South) is "Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America." That also is my contention and was the logic of my General Conference motion to which you so pleasantly refer. It is gratifying to find so able a man as Dr. Miller sharing this view.

The name "Methodist Episcopal Church in America," which I have asked the Church, South, to reassume (should it desire to make any change in its title) was never, at any time, legally speaking, the corporate title

of the Church. The Methodist societies in America were, when first erected into a Church, and for a period of about twelve years thereafter, called by that name; but the name was never incorporated. The Church certainly never held any property under that name. The early Methodist chapels in Maryland, Virginia, and elsewhere were held under a modified form of the English Wesleyan deed of settlement, which did not mention the name by which the Church was called. Mr. Wesley, even after the Christmas Conference, considered Methodism throughout the world an organic unity; and not only the liturgy but the legal methods of the founder were, by filial consent, admitted.

In 1796 not only was the Chartered Fund incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania, but at the same General Conference a property title clause, securing churches and other property to "The Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America," was inserted in the Discipline. These instances are the first in our history of any kind of legal incorporation of the Church's title having been secured.

The change made in the title from the Christmas Conference form, "Methodist Episcopal Church in America," to "Methodist Episcopal Church in *the United States of America*" was not accidental, as I have shown in other columns, but came about through the latter form having been used by General Washington in addressing Bishops Coke and Asbury in 1789. In his response to an official letter, in which the two bishops felicitated him on his election, the first President of the republic let the name "United States" into the Christmas Conference name of the Church. The idea was a fascinating one from a patriotic viewpoint, though it distinctly changed the territorial significance of the earlier



title. The form "named" by General Washington gained so in popular favor that it soon superseded the broader title, and the General Conference, as above described, voted it in, unconfisciously, as I believe.

From about this time (the editing of the fathers was, nevertheless, careless) the old title was dropped—necessarily so, since a new one had been incorporated. From 1796 to 1908 the new title has persisted, first in the undivided Church and then in the larger division after the separation of 1844.

The real title of a Church is its corporate title. It cannot have two corporate titles. The two great Methodist Churches have each a single corporate title, written in the property clauses of their respective Disciplines.

If the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, should decide to restore the old and now unused title (except as read in the Southern General Conference journal headings), "Methodist Episcopal Church in America," it would have a clear legal right to do so, for the reasons I have already adduced; but much more for another—namely: When, after 1844, the district and supreme courts of the United States decided that the two divisions of Methodism were coequal, the Church in the South had the same legal right to the corporate name, "Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America," that its sister in the North had. It would have been perfectly legal but not expedient for the Church in the South to claim and wear that title in its separate field. It chose the path of expedience. But I submit, in all fraternal frankness and with confidence in the just judgment of my brethren in the North, that whatever claim the Methodism in the North has, or had, to the title "Methodist Episcopal Church in America,"

the Church in the South has the same, and that without prejudice or limitation of statute. And this I may add, and the pertinency of it will be seen at once: If previous to 1796 the Church had acquired any property under the name "Methodist Episcopal Church in America," there were seven chances to one that it would have been in Virginia, Maryland, or the Carolinas. In that case the title would now be in the legal possession of the Church, South.

Furthermore, if the Conferences of the Church, South, should in 1913 vote to restore the old and now obsolete title, it would be as a measure of peace and a token of good faith to its sister Methodism, and also as a *rap-prochement* preservative of history and conservative of prophecy. *Ut percurrat qui legerit eum.*

The Church in the South will one day make a change in its corporate title. It would be unfortunate for the whole body of American Methodism should that change be other than a reassumption of the historic title, "Methodist Episcopal Church in America."



