

Raleigh Christian Advocate



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THE CONFERENCE YEAR AS WE LOOK BACKWARD.

It is little over a week since the appointments were read at Henderson and the Conference of 1904 adjourned sine die.

We are so little removed from that adjournment that it is somewhat difficult to obtain a clear perspective, especially since we have not in hand the full Conference data as we will have them in the Journal.

Yet, even now, we may look backward over the year and form those conclusions which may bring joy or sorrow.

We believe that we are justified in saying that the sixty-eighth session of the North Carolina Conference was in some respects the best we have had in quite a number of years. The attendance was large. There was nothing to mar the harmony. Only in the last hours was there anything like the asperity of debate. The reports of the year's work were very gratifying. The preachers looked well fed, well dressed, and happy. Some of them had passed through the deep waters during the year, yet in their faces could be seen the light which comes from the fires on Resignation's altar. Others bore the marks of conflict with the enemies encountered by every true man who essays to do his duty.

Speaking of debate, there was less talking by the preachers and delegates than we have ever known as a member of the Conference. This fact did not add any element of strength to the Conference. Methodist preachers must talk—talk freely and fully, for it is only then that they keep up the swing and stride of progress and the glow of manly independence. If we were criticising the Conference, we would say that there was too little discussion of questions on the part of the preachers and delegates. Our laymen should take an active part on the floor of the Conference. Only once did we hear the voice of a layman on the floor.

Among the elements which proved conducive to the success of the Conference was the open, free-hearted hospitality shown every member and visitor. How could it be otherwise with such a wise experienced host as Dr. L. L. Nash and Presiding Elder Smith and such a warm-hearted people as are found in progressive Henderson.

It is to be regretted that the business of the latter part of the session was conducted in such a rush. We know of one brother who came near being left without an appointment on account of the crowding final duties. It was no fault of the Bishop and his Cabinet, either. In fact it was no fault of the Conference. How could a fault be ascribed to the latter in the face of such an emphatic testimonial in the shape of votes for one who has now received this testimonial for the fourth time. He bears only goodwill to the brethren who pushed him so closely in the race. He has not forgotten how to be magnanimous.

The session at Henderson will be regarded as the "red-letter" variety, for one very significant reason: There was a net increase in membership of over 1,200. The Annual Paradox made itself conspicuous this time by its absence. We felt as we listened to those magnificent reports from the Presiding Elders, in which reports were embodied the accounts of glorious revivals and numerous

accessions, that surely the end of the reign of King Paradox had come. And we were not mistaken. Nearly 5,000 were received into the church in the North Carolina Conference during the year. Of course there were many losses by death, certificate and otherwise. We have now 97 local preachers, and 68,847 members. There were 945 infants, and 2,380 adults baptized in the different charges.

The sum of \$132,815.57 was contributed for ministerial support—\$15,928.22 more than was contributed for the year 1903. Deducting from the sum total the amount paid to Bishops, we have an average of over \$750 for each travelling preacher in the Conference. Bishop Candler said that the salaries paid to preachers in the North Carolina Conferences are smaller than in any other Conference of Southern Methodism, and he is right, but the figures show that the North Carolina Conference, at least, is making a great improvement in this respect. There is much to be done. The Board of Stewards in every charge should, in making the assessments for 1905, remember the fact so emphatically expressed by the Bishop, and provide for their preacher a larger salary.

The sum of \$13,373.75 was contributed for foreign missions; \$10,465.75 for domestic missions. For 1903, \$13,340.75 was contributed for foreign missions, and \$10,191.42 for domestic missions. Only \$307.23 more for missions in 1904 than in 1903. This increase is too small for the increase in the material growth of the church.

The increase in the number of Sunday-schools was only 12; in number of scholars, 1,640.

There was no increase in number of Epworth Leagues, the number being 66 for both years. We are extremely sorry to say that there was a decrease of 222 in the number of Epworth League members, a record, we daresay, no other Conference in Southern Methodism has.

The amount contributed for the American Bible Society was almost double that contributed for 1903. This is a good record. It shows that our people are growing in the appreciation of the fact that the Bible is the foundation stone of all our hopes.

The Conference is at last coming into the realization that the Orphanage is one of its most sacred possessions. The success of this enterprise is almost phenomenal. When its present Superintendent, Rev. J. W. Jenkins, first mentioned the matter to the Conference, and the initial steps were taken, very few thought that the enterprise would amount to anything. But what great things God hath wrought! We have now two buildings—one, the handsomest in the whole State. The property is valued at over \$60,000. The people are looking upon it as an object for their constant contributions. The support of two hundred orphans has been a vexing question for the management. But the Conference settled this question by making an assessment of ten per cent on the preacher's salary. Thus the support of the orphans is placed upon a permanent basis. The voluntary contributions were greater for 1904 than in any preceding year.

The Schools made most gratifying reports. Trinity College and Trinity Park High School,

which are the direct property of the North Carolina Conference, with the affiliated schools, Littleton Female College and Louisburg Female College reported increased patronage for the year. The Conference made an assessment of \$2,000 for Greensboro Female College, which has arisen from its ashes and is now enjoying a fine patronage. Central Academy, with Rev. W. W. Rose as Principal, is just entering upon its career, as is also Albemarle High School. These schools are destined to play an important part in the educational work of North Carolina Methodism.

The Raleigh Christian Advocate reported a successful year. The Directors at their meeting on Saturday afternoon declared a dividend for the stockholders, probably leaving a sum for the reduction of standing indebtedness. The Raleigh Christian Advocate now has over 7,200 subscribers. The Conference has made provision for increasing this to 8,000 by May 1. The Advocate is fortunate in having as agents preachers who believe in the Advocate and are willing to work for it. In doing this they realize that they are building up the interest of the whole church on their charges. It is the exception for a bad report to be made by a preacher who is active in circulating the Conference organ. The Conference organ contains news that is contained in no other paper in the world. No member of the church who aspires to be intelligent and progressive in church work can afford to be without it.

Bishop Candler's impress on the Conference was strong and will be lasting. We expressed in last week's paper our estimate of him as a preacher and executive.

We have many reasons for believing that God has smiled upon the work of the North Carolina Conference for the year 1904. May the present Conference year be marked by still greater success.

A WONDERFUL THING IN NORTH CAROLINA METHODISM.

Perhaps the most wonderful thing in North Carolina Methodism is the remarkable experience of Rev. Christopher Thomas who died in New Bern in the year 1830. Thousands of Methodists all over the State have heard of his dream and the way it was realized. The thrilling history gives a staggering blow to materialism. Dr. Leroy M. Lee, who knew the Rev. Christopher Thomas and was an eye witness of his experience from the time that the latter left Lynchburg until his eyes were closed in death, wrote years ago a book on the dream. The North Carolina Methodist Handbook has compressed within its first twenty-five pages the whole story. We advance no theories. We simply give the facts. The reader may explain the wonderful chain of circumstances as he may. But we want all Methodists to read it. It is something that should not fade from the annals of North Carolina Methodism.

Thousands will be pained to hear of the death of Rev. J. D. Barbee, which occurred at Nashville, on the evening of the 6th instant. Death occurred from the giving away of the valves of the heart, after an illness of only a few hours. He was at the time presiding elder of the Nashville district, and formerly for fifteen years senior Book Agent of the Church. He was aged 72 and had been a minister for more than half a century.—Exchange.