

Conclusion

Such has been the history of Methodism in southern California and Arizona. There have been high moments of triumph and low periods of defeat. Significantly, however, there has been steady advance. Perhaps the reason never was stated better than it was in 1941. Frank G. H. Stevens, member of the Conference since 1898, spoke these words to the Annual Conference:

Sometimes when we are tempted to look down, the going is rough; when we are prone to look within, we see a lack; but looking out, there is the pressing need; and when we have sense enough to look up, there is God. And the answer.⁵⁰

Certain conclusions become evident from this study of Methodism in the far southwest. The Methodist Episcopal Church was decidedly the stronger of the two Wesleyan branches in both size and financial strength; this preponderance allowed many more opportunities for advancement in significant areas. In education the University of Southern California was an outstanding accomplishment, while in the field of social relations the Church of All Nations gained national prominence. The Southern Church, limited as it was by numbers and finances, nevertheless also was able to point to achievements. Most notable perhaps were the Homer Toberman Deaconess Home and the Tucson Tubercular Hospital.

Both Conferences contributed leaders and ideas to their respective denominations. Bishops and educators came from each. Trinity Church of Los Angeles pioneered in the development of the Epworth League. Robert Shuler, its minister for thirty-four years, was undeniably one of the outstanding figures of Southern Methodism in the country. Edward Locke, Bromley Oxnam, and Frank Stevens were examples of the high quality of leadership furnished by the Southern California Conference. In the matters of ministerial pensions, minimum salaries, and high educational standards for the ministry this Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church played an influential role in Methodism as a whole.

Certain issues such as Mormonism and prohibition created an essential degree of unanimity of thought among both Methodist bodies. Beyond these a diversity could be seen. Whereas both had voiced

an early opposition to critical, liberal scholarship, by 1925 the Southern Church alone spoke out publicly against it. Moreover it did not yet become embroiled in social controversies as did the Methodist Episcopal Church. Issues of war and the economic order plagued the Northern Church for many years. Southern Methodists made few comments, especially on the latter. Neither denomination escaped a split in its ranks in southern California, though neither was seriously hurt. It was rather an injury of a personal nature to the individuals involved.

Since 1939, drawing upon varied experiences and backgrounds, the united Conference has continued the forward movement which has been characteristic of the ministry and laity of the area. Strong episcopal leadership and obvious group spirit have been vital factors.

It has been one hundred and ten years since the first Methodist minister preached in the southern part of California. Courage, prophetic insight, determination, hard work, abiding faith, a willingness to adapt to new conditions—these have been the instruments by which Methodist men, women, and youth have forged the achievements in the far southwest. Accomplishments have not been automatic, and there have been some failures; but the vision and action have consistently been forward, building upon the past and looking to and planning for the future. In 1960, amidst a tremendously changing environment, due to technological and social developments and to the influx of millions of people into southern California and Arizona, the tasks and challenge seem indeed to be staggering. The dynamic history of the Conference in meeting all manner of change appears to promise a continuously successful future.