

**CENTENARY THOUGHTS FOR
THE PEW AND PULPIT OF
METHODISM, IN EIGHTEEN
HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOUR**

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Centenary Thoughts for the Pew and Pulpit of Methodism, in Eighteen Hundred and Eighty-Four by R. S. Foster

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R. S. FOSTER

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FOR THE

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IN

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authentic
reprints BY
R. S. FOSTER,

ONE OF THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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W. C.

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PREFACE.



IN 1866 I was invited to preach a Centennial Sermon before the New York Conference. After its delivery the Conference, by a unanimous vote, solicited its publication. But, being asked to repeat it several times, I withheld its publication until the time passed. The first part of this little volume is the substance of that sermon, with some additions. The second and third parts are the substance of addresses delivered to the several Conferences I held in September and October of 1883, and to the Lay Electoral Conferences meeting at the same time. These were also solicited for publication by the several bodies to whom they were addressed. I have thought that perhaps I ought not to disregard the request, and, on re-examination, have come to feel that possibly at this particular time the words, while not in any respect remarkable, might do some good beyond the circle of those who heard them. This, if any is necessary, is my apology for sending forth this little *brochure*. My brethren of the ministry, who well know the heart from which it emanates, will not find fault with the liberty taken in addressing them thus more publicly, or with the great plainness of speech used, as the publication is made in response to the request of several hundreds of themselves. I indulge the hope that the reading will be profitable, possibly, long

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after the tongue which first uttered the words has been silenced by death, and far beyond the circle of those who heard them.

My lay brethren, also, I believe, will not think me immodest in addressing them in this manner, nor will they be offended with the suggestions and advices offered. Many, I am quite sure, will be pleased to have in a permanent form the words which met with their approval at the time of their delivery. I send forth this triple message with unaffected humility, and with the earnest prayer that the good God will make it a blessing to our dear Methodism.

R. S. FOSTER.

INTRODUCTION.

THE title of this book, while in itself somewhat blind, sufficiently indicates to the Methodist fraternity its general character and intent. We have come to the closing hours of the first hundred years of our denominational history. Naturally enough the occasion becomes one of special interest to Methodist peoples throughout the world. Crises points, epochal periods, inevitably start emotion and reflection. In the brief life of a man a year is significant, and the anniversary becomes a pivotal point. Great organic movements of society, civic or religious, which carry over ages, and along the lines of generations, fix their commemorative periods by centuries. Nature counts her epochal points by millienniads.

This year is our centennial. Episcopal Methodism, the largest division of the Methodist family, closes its first hundred years. Other American branches have a certain relation of kinship to it. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which dates its origin as such from 1845, when it became a separate branch with co-ordinate claims to be of the same root with ourselves, will observe this year in common with us, as its proper centennial epoch. We cordially welcome them to the fellowship of our rejoicing as brothers beloved, and joint heirs with us to all the hereditaments of our common honorable origin. Other branches, originating at different periods and from divers causes, will also join with us; and, for the time being, overlooking grounds of separation and points of difference, while recounting the

family history with pride and love, will revive the ancient bond of affection and brotherly sympathy.

What a year it might have been if, forgetting the causes which severed us, and the slight differences which keep us asunder, this centenary year might have been made memorable among all Christian people as the period of a reunion which should last forever, honorable to our family name, and promotive of welfare over all the estate of Christendom!

Churches do not divide without cause, and perhaps never without what, at the time, seems adequate cause, from the stand-point of a religious conscience. Doubtless the real root cause is often mere human weakness, if not something even worse than that. Alas! it is found to be easier to divide than to heal the wound which the wrenched limb carries and which the marred trunk feels, and so both the suffering parts must go on suffering to the end. Methodism would be a more beautiful and shapely tree, and great, like one of the Nevada monarchs, if all the branches could adorn a single trunk; but since it cannot be, we must comfort ourselves with the thought that possibly somehow it is best as it is. We confess to a personal regret at giving up the hope of reunion in our time, or, for all that we can see, at any time. For ourselves we have neither bitter recollections nor unbrotherly feelings, but an open hand and a loving heart for all who bear the family name. The roof-tree is broad enough for us all, while we gather beneath its generous boughs for a year of honest congratulations and sincere God-speeds. So we will, and our Christian neighbors will, wave us friendly signals of sympathetic joy and benediction.

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS
OF
EPISCOPAL METHODISM.