

Religious Intelligence.

THE AMERICAN FAMILY OF METHODISTS.

It is to be hoped that the ecumenical gathering in London will result in making the numerous branches of the Methodist family in this country better known to one another and bring them into closer relations. It may well be doubted whether there are a score of Methodists who know the history and peculiarities of the different Methodist bodies, and whether there are many who can even name them all. Some of them are quite obscure, and seldom come either under denominational or public notice.

The largest and oldest Methodist organization in this country is the Methodist Episcopal Church, from which, at various times and for various reasons, companies have gone out and founded separate bodies. It took its rise about 115 years ago, in New York City and near Baltimore almost simultaneously. The English Wesleyan Conference sent over several missionaries, to assist in spreading holiness over the American colonies; but the War of Independence interrupted this arrangement, and in 1784 the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Baltimore, with two bishops. In the ninety-seven years of its existence as an organized body the Church has had thirty-five bishops, of whom twenty have died, two dying in the Church, South. Its annual conferences have in 108 years increased from one to ninety-five, and its members from 7,000 in 1777 to 1,743,000. The Church has spread itself over the whole country, entering the Southern States a second time after the Civil War, and counts now no less than 17,561 pulpits, all of which are always occupied.

The second Methodist body in the United States, and also in the world in numbers, is the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It was organized in 1845, in consequence of a disruption occurring in consequence of action by the fourteenth General Conference, held in New York City, in 1844, on the case of Bishop Andrew, a Georgian, charged with being connected with slaveholding by marriage. This body has confined itself chiefly to the Southern and Border States, though it has conferences in Illinois, Indiana, and on the Pacific Coast. It has six bishops and 39 annual conferences, besides three foreign-mission districts. The Church has grown rapidly since the War. In 1866 it had 498,847 members; in 1879 it reported 828,301, with 3,881 itinerant preachers. The differences between the M. E. Church and the M. E. Church, South, are very small.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church stands third in numerical importance. It arose from a secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, in 1816, of some colored members, under the lead of Richard Allen, who became the first bishop of the Church. The seceders thought they did not receive proper consideration from their white brethren. The Church extends pretty nearly over the whole country. It adopted the doctrines and polity of the parent body, excepting the presiding eldership. It has now nine bishops, 215,000 members, and 1,418 itinerant preachers. It is growing in culture, as well as numbers.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was organized by another secession of colored members from the parent body in New York, in 1800, for similar causes. It has gained great strength in the South. It has now 191,000 members and 1,500 itinerant preachers. Its bishops, seven in number, are elected, we believe, every four years, and are not consecrated.

The United Brethren in Christ, though it has an independent origin, is Methodist in doctrine and usages. William Otterbein, its founder, was of the ministry of the Reformed German Church. He organized the first church in 1774 and held the first annual conference in 1800. He was a friend and companion of Asbury, at whose consecration as bishop he assisted, by laying on hands. The United Brethren have quarterly, annual, and general conferences; classes, leaders, stewards, exhorters, presiding elders, itinerant preachers, and other Methodist features. The bishops, of whom there are five, are elected for a term of four years

by the General Conference. There are 47 annual conferences, 2,196 ministers, and 187,835 members. The Church has worked largely among the German population.

The Methodist Protestant Church is the outcome of a struggle in the Methodist Episcopal Church on the question of lay representation and abolition of the presiding eldership. Many who seceded, or had been excluded, met in Baltimore, in 1829, and called a General Convention for 1830, at which an organization was effected. No differences except of government and discipline distinguish the Methodist Protestant from the parent body. Laymen participate in all their conferences. They have no presiding elders and no bishops. Their conferences elect presidents and a committee stations the ministers. The Church divided before the War on the slavery question; but was reunited in 1877. It has 1,800 itinerant ministers and 113,405 members.

The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1870 of colored ministers and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In 1860 there were no less than 207,800 colored members connected with the latter; but after the war they began to leave for other Methodist organizations which went into the South, so that when the Colored Church was set up, in 1870, there were only about 80,000 members to go into it. It is modeled after the Church, South, and has 4 bishops, 638 itinerant preachers, and 112,300 members. No whites are admitted to its communion.

The Evangelical Association is a German Methodist body, dating its existence from the year 1800. From the name of its founder, Jacob Albright, its members are often called "Albright" Methodists. Albright, before his special work among the Germans in Pennsylvania, was connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Evangelical Association has in the main the doctrines and practical features of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Its bishops, of whom there are three, are elected every four years; so also are the presiding elders. There are 21 annual conferences, of which two are in Europe and one in Canada, 893 itinerant preachers, and 112,197 members.

The American Wesleyan Connection was organized in Utica, N. Y., in 1843, by ministers and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church who desired to show a more outspoken hostility to slavery. They numbered about 6,000 members then, and report now only about 25,000. They have no bishops or presiding elders. Their system is similar to that of the Methodist Protestant Church. They exclude from membership those connected with secret societies. The Church has 200 itinerant ministers.

The Free Methodist Church is also a branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was organized in 1860, at Pekin, N. Y., as the result of exclusion of ministers from the Genesee Conference, in which there had been hot disputes, the excluded party opposing what they called innovations or departures from the Discipline. The Free Methodists make prominent the doctrine of entire sanctification, and require simplicity of dress, the putting off of gold and jewels, and separation from secret societies. Their terms of admission are stricter, it is claimed, than in other Methodist bodies. In place of bishops and presiding elders, they elect a superintendent and district chairmen. They report 271 itinerant preachers and 12,642 members.

The Congregational Methodists are a small body existing principally in Georgia and adjacent states. The first church of the order was formed in 1852, in Georgia, of former members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from which the Congregational branch differs only in polity. The Church Conference manages the affairs of the congregation, besides which there are district and state conferences and a quadrennial general conference. There are about 150 ministers and 10,000 members.

The Primitive Methodist Church is a small body, numbering only about 3,000 members, a branch of the Primitive Methodist Church of England, which gives special prominence to the lay element in its conferences. The ministers form only a third of the delegates.

The African Union Methodist Protestant

Church is a small body, formerly in connection with the Methodist Protestant Church. There was an association of such churches and ministers as early as 1842. Now there are several annual conferences in the South, with about 2,500 members.

The Union American Methodist Episcopal Church is another colored body, organized in 1813, in Delaware. It has 5 conferences and about 2,000 members.

Besides these bodies, there are Independent Methodist Churches, the chief of which are in Baltimore. They have about 2,500 members.

Here are fifteen Methodist organizations in a field and under circumstances in which it would be difficult to justify four. We say here nothing about the Methodists of Canada, who have a history connected with that of their brethren in the United States. We append a table, to show at a glance how the different bodies stand individually and collectively:

	Communicants.
Methodist Episcopal Church.....	1,743,000
Methodist Episcopal Church, South.....	828,300
African Methodist Episcopal Church.....	215,000
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.....	191,000
United Brethren in Christ.....	157,600
Methodist Protestant Church.....	113,400
Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.....	112,300
Evangelical Association.....	112,200
American Wesleyan Connection.....	25,000
Free Methodist Church.....	12,600
Congregational Methodist Church.....	10,000
Primitive Methodist Church.....	3,000
African Union Methodist Protestant Church.....	2,500
Independent Methodist Churches.....	2,500
Union American Methodist Episcopal Church.....	2,000
Total.....	3,521,600