

Commission On Archives And History
The United Methodist Church

JOURNAL
OF THE
EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION
OF THE
MISSISSIPPI ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH,
HELD AT
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI,
DECEMBER 11—15, 1902.

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not a place seeker. Self, and self aggrandizement, were subordinated to the higher ideal of a true and unselfish service to the church. To take part in some way in the upbuilding of the kingdom of God was his highest aspiration.

Brother Drake was pure in mind and prudent in speech. He was free from malice, and never indulged a vindictive spirit. His was a noble, generous nature; a gentle, fraternal spirit. He was transparent. There were no hidden, jagged spurs about his well-rounded character. He possessed that smoothness and gentleness of spirit which gave a charm and potency to his life, and breathed the fragrance of a soul in harmony with Christ. The poise of his well-balanced character was not easily disturbed.

He held the unqualified and abiding confidence and esteem of his brethren in the ministry. No man in our Conference was more loved than he. He possessed that charity which "suffereth long and is kind," which "envieth not," which "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," which "Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

He was the very soul of honor and chivalry. These virtues which shone with such resplendence in the galaxy of virtues which adorned his life were manifest on all occasions, but were unostentatiously worn.

But it was in the home that he was best known and most loved. His home was the dearest place on earth, and its inmates were the objects of his tenderest affection. Love was the underlying and governing principle there. His devotion to his children was strong and impartial. His chivalrous attention to his wife, who had stood so bravely by his side in shadows and in sunshine, is worthy of all imitation.

The light of his life revealed to the world about him that he had an intelligent conception of God, an exalted spiritual grasp of Christ, and a lofty purpose of self-denying fidelity to his high calling.

REV. JOHN WESLEY HARMON.

Rev. John Wesley Harmon, son of Zebulon and Mary King Harmon, was born in Augusta, Ky., Feb. 12, 1821. He was educated at Augusta College, under Drs. Ruter and Durbin, and at St. Charles College, Mo., under Dr. G. W. Fielding. After teaching a while, he studied medicine at the Ohio State University.

For some years he had resisted a clear call to preach; but during a revival in the old Wesley Chapel, Cincinnati, held by John Newland Maffit, he was induced to yield to the heavenly calling. He joined the Mississippi Conference at a time when the States of Mississippi and Louisiana and a part of Alabama were included in its area.

His earlier ministry was almost exclusively given to charges in Louisiana, serving at Alexandria, Opelousas, Baton Rouge and New

Orleans. At some time prior to 1858, he located to prosecute temperance work. In December, 1858, he was re-admitted into the traveling connection by the Alabama Conference, and appointed to Demopolis. In December, 1859, he was appointed to Livingston, serving there during 1860 and 1861. He was at Enterprise, Miss., then in the Alabama Conference, in 1862 and 1863, and at Macon in 1864. He was agent for the Orphan's Fund Association, during the year 1865; and pastor at Crawfordsville, Miss., in 1866.

For want of data, we cannot detail his work for the next four years; but in 1870, we find him pastor at Brandon in the Mississippi Conference; and at the next Conference was appointed Agent for the Southwestern Bible Society.

In December, 1873, he located, giving himself again to the work of preaching temperance and organizing the temperance forces.

He was re-admitted in December, 1881, and appointed to Marion in the Meridian District. He served Waynesboro and State Line in 1883 and 1884. In 1885 and 1886 he was at Summit; in 1887 at Morton and Forest; in 1888 and 1889 at Anguilla; in 1890 and 1891 at Ocean Springs.

In December, 1891, he became superannuated; yet, he did not cease to work, preaching where occasions offered and writing sermons and pamphlets. He was a toiler to the end. In 1894 he published a volume of sermons, and few sermons are so readable as these.

Only a few weeks before his death, Dr. Harmon, as we called him, preached two sermons at Moss Point, Miss., of remarkable finish and power. Just two weeks before his death he preached twice the same day in Meridian.

He died Sunday, March 9th, 1902, aged 81 years and 27 days.

Dr. Harmon was married at Baton Rouge, La., July 25, 1849, to Miss Francis E. Stuart. She left him for heaven June 3, 1894. Their married life was, as he declared, "a honey-moon nearly forty-five years long." There were born to them eight children, two of whom died in infancy, and another in 1884. Two of his sons are members of this Conference.

Bishop Galloway has written so fully and so well what our hearts prompt us to say that we incorporate into our tribute his strong and beautiful words:

"No doubt that feature of Dr. Harmon's character which will most readily occur to his every friend was his buoyant, almost boyish, hopefulness. He was an ardent optimist, both by nature and Methodist grace. The very flash of his brilliant eye was like the fire of immortal youth, and the tones of his voice had the jubilant ring of a joyous childhood. To him every cloud had a silver lining, and behind every frowning providence he saw a smiling face. Nobody ever heard him talk in doleful tones, or sing in a minor key. Life's burdens were not

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always light, nor were its skies always bright, but his faith so constantly reveled in happier and more radiant to-morrows that he positively forgot the burdens and clouds of to-day. Nor was this a thoughtless and illogical optimism—a hopefulness born of carelessness. It came partly from his joyous, amiable disposition, but mostly from his unclouded faith in a God mighty to save. His hopes were not inspired by a "stream of tendency," but by a personal God, with infinite love in his heart and omnipotence in his strong arm.

What an inspiration is such a happy, hopeful spirit! How he shames away our gloom and unfaith, and puts within us the quickened pulse-beat of a larger spiritual life! With an almost prodigal hand that happy man has scattered flowers along the way of life. He literally broadcasted the fields with seeds and deeds of kindness. The memory of that precious life will itself be a flower of fadeless bloom.

Dr. Harmon was a gentle, generous spirit, who loved and honored his fellow-men. His heart was made for friendship. In it there were no hiding-places for sinister motives and evil imaginings. He was singularly free from suspicion, and seemed to be a stranger to resentment. I am sure he never harbored a revenge, or carried a grudge, or nursed a grievance. Without animosities, he had no enemies. Innocent of envyings and jealousies, he never imagined that some one stood in his way, or occupied a place to which he was entitled. He had sacred aspirations, but no sordid ambitions.

And how kindly was his speech! Harsh criticism did not dwell upon his gracious lips. Bitter words had small place in his vocabulary, and he never deceived himself with the fact that assault on personal character is often the evidence of coarseness rather than of courage. He never sought for ulterior motives, and, therefore, never berated or betrayed his brethren by misinterpreting them. O noble, knightly spirit! what a charm thou hast given to the comradeship of the Christian ministry! He loved his brethren, and rejoiced in all their achievements for our common Lord.

Dr. Harmon was an able and eloquent preacher. In the days of his full strength he was, at times, a real master of assemblies. To the natural gifts of an orator he added the graces of considerable culture and the flaming zeal of a true evangelist. Some of his sermons on special occasions yet linger in the memory of his surviving hearers, and the scenes connected therewith are the traditions of the past forty years. He was a resident of Brandon, Miss., in 1870, when Gen. Robert E. Lee died, and was invited to deliver a memorial address in honor of the great hero. For majestic speech and masterful eloquence, it is yet doubted if in all the Southland any tribute that day surpassed the one that enraptured the splendid audience in that Mississippi town. I have heard him on occasions when he was remarkably eloquent.

The pulpit was his throne, and, as was eminently right, he genuinely loved to occupy it. He never considered it a hardship, but a joy and a privilege to declare his Lord's message. And when the time came for him to retire from active pastoral service, he gracefully accepted the judgment of the Conference, but went on preaching in every pulpit to which he was invited.

Dr. Harmon was a fearless and powerful advocate of temperance reform. Much of his early, active life was devoted to this great cause. He was its courageous champion when its friends were few, and its enemies were more imperious and tyrannous than now. By trenchant pen and eloquent tongue he portrayed the horrors of intemperance and the crimes of the accursed liquor traffic, and won back to a life of virtue and sobriety many a noble young man in the Southwest. For the better moral sentiment on that subject which obtains to-day, and for any measures of reform that have been secured, honor must never be withheld from the name and apostolic labors of John W. Harmon."

Song was interspersed in the service and the session closed with the benediction.

FIFTH DAY—MORNING SESSION.

NATCHEZ, MISS., Dec. 15, 1902.

The Conference was called to order at 9 a. m., Bishop Key in the chair. G. W. Bachman conducted the religious exercises, reading the 34th Psalm, announcing a hymn and leading in prayer.

The minutes of the sessions of Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon were read and approved.

The Bishop reported the ordinations as follows:

On Sunday, December 14th, after a sermon at 11 o'clock in the Jefferson Street Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Natchez, Miss., I ordained the following Traveling Preachers Deacons:

Herbert Brown Watkins, Clarence Norman Guice, John Early Gray, Mancil Albert Thurman.

Also the following Local Preachers: Claude Mitchell Simpson, William Henry Lane, James Lafayette Red, Edward Amiss Roads.

In the evening of the same day, after the sermon in the same place, I ordained the following Traveling Deacons Elders:

George Preston McKeown, Walter Anderson Terry, Henry Anderson Gatlin, Clarence M. Crossley, John Henry Foreman, Thomas Joseph O'Neil, George Washington Huff, Thomas H. King.

Also the following Local Deacon: Thomas Henry Harrod.