

ADDRESS, THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE
METHODIST CHURCH IN AMERICA

BALTIMORE

April 21, 1966

Thank you, Bishop Garber, Bishop Lord, Bishop Kennedy, other distinguished members of the clergy, fellow Methodists, ladies and gentlemen:

The people of Baltimore and of the State of Maryland are proud to welcome and have as their guests the thousands of Methodists from all parts of our country who are gathered here to attend these concluding events in the celebration of the bicentennial of the founding of Methodism in America. I greet you, one and all, not only in my official capacity as Governor of your host State, Maryland, but also as a life-long Methodist communicant, devoted to his church and pleased to have this opportunity to celebrate the two centuries of its glorious history. This is a momentous event in the annals of Methodism in the United States. It also is an important milestone in the development of Christianity in our country.

It is most fitting, we Marylanders feel, that the climax of the observance of the 200th birthday of American Methodism be held here. Because it was in Baltimore and Maryland, certainly as much as anywhere else, that the foundations of Methodism were laid, and where so many chapters of the rich history of our church were written. It was here that Asbury, and Strawbridge and the other early Methodists preached and laid the ground work for the vast structure of Methodism. It was here that the celebrated "Christmas Conference" of 1784 was held—where 60 preachers met to organize the Methodist Church in the United States and to elect two bishops, the first bishops of American Methodism. It was here that Asbury and Cole were ordained, taking unto themselves the responsibility for the spiritual guidance of the thousands of Americans who were uniting themselves behind the banners of this great spiritual movement.

Yes, there are many places in America which lay claim to being the "birthplace," the "cradle," the "fountain-head" of American Methodism, but we believe here in Maryland, with no attempt to be invidious, that we are justified in feeling that in no place is Methodism more deeply rooted than right here. And so, we take pride—justifiable pride—in the fact that these concluding events in the bicentennial celebration have been staged for Baltimore and Maryland.