

Methodism and Slavery

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mason. The diary teems with ardor to do work completely, from acceptable materials in honest portions.

There are disclosed the causes and the reasons for a private citizen doing well the common service of taxpayer, school patron, church supporter, and factor in the census returns. There is the unadorned picture of faithful jury service, of exercise of the elective franchise, and of the religious and fraternal hewer of wood and carrier of water. Among his descendants are some individuals with far more than his power of intellect, many his equals, and none his inferior. We knew him and we know his descendants. As his standard was in accord with his light in his era, so stands theirs in the greater opportunity he and his type produced.

The finest of his contributions in the diary, 1862-1865, we have published in Numbers 1 to 7, Vol. XV, of the ANNALS. This section is unique in that it registers his uncommissioned and unpaid ministerial services in army camps, hospitals and religious congregations in the neighborhood of the camps of the Thirty-sixth Iowa. Like most northern Christian patriots, he had taken to heart the injustice of the then existing social and political status of the black man. He supposed adultery existed where mating was unsanctioned by a sovereign power, and unblessed by vows before a magistrate or minister. He knew compliance with these requisites was inadequate when unrecorded. He solemnized, and in his diary recorded, hundreds of Negro marriages. In some instances these were of matings which had already produced families and had no mark of voluntary incontinence upon them. Emancipation afforded the right, and, as Mr. Pearson believed, enjoined the duty of respectability in nuptial affairs. He preached compliance with all decrees of God and man. In nothing was he more insistent than that family life among the blacks immediately take on legal regularity. He was a veritable carpetbagger of decency in Arkansas.

METHODISM AND SLAVERY

Apropos of the closing in the current ANNALS of the war diary of B. F. Pearson, and especially of its record of a humble mind consecrated to the service of God and his country wholly within the embrace of the Methodist Episcopal church, is a recent pas-

sage at arms in the *Des Moines Register* between two members of that communion, which we present herewith.

To the Editor: In the account of the laying of the corner stone of the new Euclid Avenue Methodist Church [Des Moines], a statement appears which reads: "A Methodist discipline issued about 1850 which contains an article favoring slavery, will be among the articles deposited in the corner stone box."

I am rushing into print to question this statement concerning the endorsement of slavery by the Methodist church. Historians, both of the church and of other churches, tell us that the Methodist Church was always opposed to slavery. About 1840 to 1844, when the slavery discussion was at the highest, some conciliatory resolutions concerning slavery were adopted in the general conference, but I am unable to find any declaration of the church which favored slavery.

In 1844 the contention resulted in the severing of the church, and the beginnings of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Their first general conference was held in 1846. There would have been no reason for the Methodist church to have printed in its discipline an article favoring slavery as late as 1850, even if it were supposed to be necessary before that date. Furthermore, no general conference of the Methodist church was held in 1850, and consequently no discipline issued that year.

I believe this is a correct statement of the facts in the matter as shown by church history, and that whatever mistakes may be chargeable to the Methodist church, and doubtless it has made some, we are not to be charged with an endorsement of slavery. Hence, I am compelled to believe that someone must have been misinformed concerning what was in that ancient copy of the discipline.

Howard P. Young.

Upper Iowa University, Fayette—To the Editor: In the issue of November 25 I note a statement by a Mr. Howard P. Young under the title "Methodism and Slavery." He thinks someone is mistaken. He is correct—he is, so far as the most important question is concerned. Having made a rather careful study during the last eleven years, which is embodied in my volume "Episcopal Methodism and Slavery," I am able to clear away some of the cobwebs that have lingered all too long.

While Bishop Asbury is always pictured as being wholly against slavery, Mr. Young and others may be interested to know that our first bishop compromised on the question and was largely responsible for slavery getting such a hold on the church. Bishop Coke was also an offender. It was Coke who said in about 1786 that he had found a way to speak to both whites and blacks and that was "by first addressing the Negroes in a very pathetic manner on the duty of servants to masters; and then the whites will receive quietly what I have to say." It was Asbury who, in the General Conference of 1808, offered a resolution that

"there be 1,000 forms of discipline prepared for the use of the South Carolina Conference in which the section and rule on slavery be left out. Carried."

Mr. Young is correct in stating that no conference of the northern church was held in 1850, although one for the southern Methodists was held. I question, however, whether the existence of slavery was the real reason for the division of the Methodist church. My own conviction is that the Methodist church was doing what that denomination and others of the present day are still doing—anything to get and hold members. I base the contention so far as the former day is concerned on the fact that, after the division in 1844, eight new conferences were formed by the northern Methodists in southern territory, in which slaveholders were permitted to remain in the church and slaveholding ministers permitted to preach. Further, it was estimated in 1857 that there were 15,000 slaveholders holding 100,000 slaves in the northern church. Again, the northern church refused to pass a rule, until 1864, which refused slaveholders admission into the church, and by that time it was certain that an amendment to the Constitution would be adopted destroying slavery. That is the church did not act until it was unnecessary to act, much as it gives promise of doing on war, industrial relations, and politics.

Mr. Young may not yet be convinced that the Methodist church sanctioned slavery. The following are statements which are unquestionably true. (1) That no official Methodist paper was utterly opposed to slavery prior to 1850. (2) There is no evidence to show that any bishop ever condemned a conference which justified slaveholding, prior to 1864. (3) That, prior to 1841, the bishops condemned bitterly every conference that was antislavery. (4) That the only reason the bishops ceased to do so after that date was the fear of losing members in New England. (5) That the reason the church did not condemn slaveholders after 1844 was the fear of losing slaveholding members in the border states. (6) That bishops and conferences condemned and expelled or refused to elect to membership men who had committed no other crime than favor abolitionism or preside at abolition meetings. Abolitionists were sent to small and impecunious charges as a punishment while the conservatives were rewarded with the "plums" doled out by the bishops. In the words of William Lloyd Garrison, the Methodist church was trying "so to serve God as not to offend the Devil."

Here are some more facts easily proved. (1) That, prior to 1856, there was not a single antislavery Sunday school in the northern Methodist church. (2) That in 1840 the General Conference voted not to allow a Negro to testify against a white person in a church trial. (3) That in 1840 the General Conference passed a resolution which declared that the holding of slaves in a southern state constituted "no legal barrier to the election or ordination of ministers to the various grades of office known in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal church, and cannot, therefore, be considered as operating any forfeiture of right in view of such

election and ordination." (4) That the action in the case of Bishop Andrews was one of the greatest blots on the pages of Methodist history. (5) That the General Conference of 1844 was not free from corruption inasmuch as the ballot box was thrice "stuffed" in the election of the bishops, more ballots being cast than there were delegates.

While there are plenty more interesting facts concerning Methodism that might be related, probably enough has been written. Lest some other church should begin to feel virtuous, permit me to say that all churches which were national in their scope at that time were just as bad as the Methodists. In fact, the Quakers were about the only church people who were consistently opposed to slavery. Church leaders should take warning from the fact that the impetus of the antislavery movement came from William Lloyd Garrison who could find no rest in any church of his day.

I believe Mr. Young was seeking only truth. Here it is. Lest he think I am an iconoclast may I say that I am, by accident, a Methodist, that I am a local preacher in the Methodist church, and a teacher in fairly good standing in a Methodist college.

C. B. Swaney.

THE STATE FLOWER OF IOWA

As bearing upon the initiation of legislative selection of our state flower we learn that it grew out of a provision of the silver service for the Battleship Iowa of which we published something in the July, 1926, *ANNALS*.

From documentary sources we find that after the appropriation had been made and following a correspondence by Governor Drake and the Executive Council on the one part and Hon. John A. Kasson and Admiral John G. Walker on the other part, a contract was entered into with J. E. Caldwell & Co. of Philadelphia for the manufacture of the service. In the memorandum of agreement June 13, 1896, the company engaged to furnish in advance of manufacture, tracings of all decorations proposed to be engraved on the different pieces. On July 7, 1896, the manufacturers transmitted to Governor Drake, "a set of tracings from the original designs of the silver service * * * and also a set of photogravures taken from the designs." Subsequent letters indicate details of designs favored in addition to the ones suggested by the manufacturers of July 7. The photogravure shows one detail is a conventional wild rose.

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