A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
SOUTH IN THE CONFEDERACY

By W. Harrison Daniel

Since the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was the largest denomination below the Mason and Dixon Line in 1860, and since its constituency was spread over the states which formed the Confederacy, it is hardly possible to discuss in a brief paper all that happened in the life and work of the denomination during the Civil War. This article will touch on the reaction of the denomination to the approaching conflict, and it will discuss some of the ways in which the church tried to meet the difficulties and handle the opportunities for service which it faced during the war years.

In the spring and summer of 1860, Methodist leaders in the South were fully aware of the critical nature of the national election to come in November. While political extremists were talking of secession in case of the election of Abraham Lincoln, the Methodist press urged the people to be calm. The North Carolina Christian Advocate, for example, suggested that voters investigate the claims of the candidates and refrain from prejudice and party excitement. In one issue that paper cautioned Christians to be temperate in speech and calm in manner, to seek divine guidance and to vote for honest men. As election day drew near and people became more agitated about the outcome of the balloting, the New Orleans Christian Advocate pleaded for patience, saying that even if Lincoln should be elected president it would not endanger Southern institutions.

The pleas of the denominational press for calm and restraint were to no avail. No sooner was Lincoln elected than some of the Methodist conferences began to advocate secession. The Alabama Annual Conference, for example, during its meeting in December, 1860, adopted this resolution:

While we deplore the necessity that exists for a separation from the Federal Union, yet in view of all the history of the past, the perils of the present and the threatened wrongs of the future, we feel bound by honor and duty to move in harmony with the South in resisting Northern domination.

* Dr. Daniel wishes to acknowledge assistance in the preparation of this article to the Research Committee of the University of Richmond.

1 North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, April 3, 1860.
2 Ibid., July 31, 1860.
3 New Orleans Christian Advocate, New Orleans, October 17, 1860.
4 Minutes of the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Held in Montgomery, Alabama, December 12-21, 1860 (Nashville, 1861), 41.
Meeting in the same month, the South Carolina and the Georgia annual conferences took even more pronounced stands in favor of secession. Only nine of 96 ministers in the Georgia Conference opposed such radical action. The South Carolina Conference published a statement applauding South Carolina’s secession.5

After the election of Lincoln and the secession of several states, some Southern Methodist leaders still opposed withdrawal from the Union. The North Carolina Christian Advocate disapproved of what it called the “political resolutions” adopted by the Alabama State Baptist Convention, advised ecclesiastical gatherings to refrain from political activities,6 and declared, “We denounce the political resolutions passed by the South Carolina Conference, and we think that South Carolina acted in immoderate haste in seceding.”7

Rufus T. Heflin, editor of the North Carolina Christian Advocate, was thoroughly Southern in his sympathies, declaring that Southerners must be “permitted to enjoy undisturbed the possession of their property and be entitled to the same immunities and privileges in all states as citizens of the states.” But Heflin opposed secession by each state separately. In fact he believed that united action, not secession, on the part of the Southern states would compel “certain constitutional changes” and preserve Southern rights.8

Immediately prior to the meeting of the peace convention in Washington, the Richmond Christian Advocate expressed the hope that a peaceful settlement of the “present difficulties” would be achieved thereby preserving the Union.9

After the firing on Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers to bring the South back into the Union, the Southern Methodist press vigorously championed the cause of the Confederacy. The Nashville Christian Advocate noted that the church papers in New Orleans and Texas were defending secession.10 The North Carolina Christian Advocate branded President Lincoln’s call for troops as usurpation of authority and said the Fort Sumter incident was an invasion of the South by “abolition fanatics.” The paper called on Southerners to stand up and defend their liberties and their homes.11 The Richmond Christian Advocate declared that the secession movement was led by intelligent, Christian men who were determined to protect their rights and make it possible for the South to live in peace.12

The church papers absolved the South of blame for secession,

---

5 North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, January 8, 1861; Charles B. Swaney, Episcopal Methodism and Slavery (Boston, 1925). 311.
6 North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, December 11, 1860.
7 Ibid., January 8, 1861.
8 Ibid., January 8, February 4, 1861.
9 Richmond Christian Advocate, Richmond, February 14, 1861.
10 Christian Advocate, Nashville, April 25, 1861.
11 North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, April 29, 1861.
12 Richmond Christian Advocate, Richmond, June 13, 1861.
claiming that it was forced upon the region as its only way of escape from the tyranny in Washington.\textsuperscript{13} They accused the North of making war on a peace-loving people who wanted only to be left alone. One editor claimed that the North had been preparing for the war for thirty years. Since an “unjust and wicked” war had been forced upon a people who never “compromised Christian principles,” the editors believed that the “God of hosts” would in the end insure a Southern victory.\textsuperscript{14}

Throughout the war the church press and church leaders professed to see the hand of God in both military victories and defeats. With disaster mounting as the war was prolonged, the situation was interpreted as the chastisement of God which would end only when sinful men repented and obeyed the Lord.\textsuperscript{15} In the fall of 1863, the Alabama Conference declared that Providence was chastening the people of the South and preparing them for a “bright and prosperous future.”\textsuperscript{16} In the spring of 1865, the press urged men to repent of their sins of swearing, drinking, avarice, and licentiousness, lest God permit the Confederacy to fall.\textsuperscript{17}

The church linked religion with patriotism throughout the war. The church papers urged their readers to pray for President Jefferson Davis, his cabinet, and the Confederate Congress.\textsuperscript{18} In 1861, the Methodist weekly papers in Charleston, Galveston, Memphis, Nashville, New Orleans, Raleigh, and Richmond declared that the South was going to war in defense of its homes, churches, and other institutions. Professing Christians were told that they could bear arms in the war “without any compunctions of conscience,” and relatives were urged to insist that able-bodied men in their families “be where duty calls.” Methodist preachers were encouraged to become chaplains so as to combat the evil and vice associated with military life.\textsuperscript{19} Speculation and extortion in business were branded as sinful.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., May 2, 1861.
\textsuperscript{14} North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, April 29, 1861; The Memphis, Arkansas and Ouachita Christian Advocate, Memphis, July 11, 1861; Richmond Christian Advocate, Richmond, September 12, 1861.
\textsuperscript{15} Richmond Christian Advocate, Richmond, February 12, 1863; Southern Christian Advocate, Augusta, March 12, 1863.
\textsuperscript{16} Minutes of the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Held in Columbus, Mississippi, November 25-December 2, 1863 (Mobile, 1863), 23.
\textsuperscript{17} North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, January 17, 1865; Southern Christian Advocate, Augusta, April 5, 1865.
\textsuperscript{18} North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, January 16, 1864, is a typical example.
\textsuperscript{19} North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, April 29, 1861; The Memphis Arkansas and Ouachita Christian Advocate, Memphis, July 11, 1861; Southern Christian Advocate, Augusta, February 12, 1863, February 11, 1864; Richmond Christian Advocate, Richmond, February 19, 1863; George G. Smith, Jr., The Life and Letters of James Osgood Andrew, Bishop of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, 1882), 473; George G. Smith, Jr., The Life and Times of George Foster Pierce, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Sparta, 1888), 439.
\textsuperscript{20} Southern Christian Advocate, Augusta, July 3, 1862; North Carolina Christian Advocate, Raleigh, July 27, 1864.
Farmers were told that they should patriotically plant more corn and wheat and less cotton, because food was needed to win the war for Southern independence.\textsuperscript{21}

While the Southern Methodist press staunchly supported the South during the war, it was remarkably free from bitterness toward the North. Southerners were counseled to "cherish no ill will" toward the people of the North, and they were asked to pray for the conversion of the "John Brown Government" and the opening of "the eyes of the people."\textsuperscript{22} Bishop James O. Andrew said that Southerners should humble themselves before God and pray for the souls of their enemies.\textsuperscript{23}

The Methodist press and Methodist leaders seldom criticized openly the Confederate government or its conduct of the war. However, the Confederate Congress was accused of profaning the sabbath in allowing the mail to move on Sunday, and several congressmen were berated on their moral behavior.\textsuperscript{24} Lamenting the fall of Fort Donelson in Tennessee in 1862, the \textit{Southern Christian Advocate} spoke of the "shameful cowardice" of the Confederate officers.\textsuperscript{25}

Privately some church leaders were pointedly critical of the conduct of the war. In the fall of 1862, Bishop Andrew wrote to Bishop Robert Paine who lived in Mississippi, "I don't like the way our leaders have managed the war . . . on the Mississippi. It seems to me the whole management of the war on the great river has been a series of blunders. I hope Van Dorn will be removed."\textsuperscript{26} Bishop George F. Pierce often criticized Confederate leadership when writing to his son. After Federal victories in Tennessee in 1862, Pierce wrote, "We have been out-generated . . . without a change of policy we are ruined. . . . Oh for a Napoleon to arise."\textsuperscript{27} Opposed to General Robert E. Lee's invasion of the North in 1863, Pierce declared that "defense is our true interest and our surest work."\textsuperscript{28} After the battle of Atlanta in 1864, Pierce was sure that if the Southern generals had adopted the right plan they could have defeated Sherman. He said, "I wish I were President for a few days; I see so plainly how everything can be done."\textsuperscript{29} In their public utterances the bishops and other church leaders expressed no such criticism and doubts about the conduct of the war.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Southern Christian Advocate}, Charleston, March 6, 1862. This paper was published at Charleston until April 10, 1862, and after that date it was published at Augusta, Georgia.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Richmond Christian Advocate}, Richmond, May 2, 1961.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Christian Advocate}, Nashville, June 6, 1861.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Richmond Christian Advocate}, Richmond, February 11, 1864; \textit{North Carolina Christian Advocate}, Raleigh, January 17, 1865.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Southern Christian Advocate}, Charleston, March 13, 1862.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Christian Advocate}, Raleigh, January 17, 1865.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Smith, Life and Letters of Bishop Andrew}, 487.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Smith, Life and Times of Bishop Pierce}, 450.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, 481.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, 486.
During the war many Southern Methodist preachers became army chaplains. Statistics show that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had twice as many chaplains in the Confederate army as any other denomination.\(^{30}\) The pay of an army chaplain was $80 per month. In 1863 the Methodist bishops asked the church to supplement the salaries of the chaplains, adding $300 per year to the pay of a single man and $840 for a married man, plus $300 for each child. The missionary society of the denomination directed the project, and a year later some 21 chaplains were receiving salary supplements.\(^{31}\)

The chaplains shared the hard life of the soldiers—they ate the same rations, marched with the troops, slept on the ground, and sometimes even fought in battle. Aware that their mission was service to the men, they sometimes gave their horses to tired foot soldiers, and they ministered to the spiritual needs of the men on the battlefield and in the hospital. As a chaplain in the Army of Northern Virginia put it, “The work is hard, there are privations to be endured, exposure and discomforts are encountered, the work of the chaplain is demanding and often discouraging but it is rewarding work.”\(^{32}\)

The list of duties performed and the services rendered by the chaplains on behalf of the soldiers is impressive. They preached to the soldiers as often as circumstances permitted; counseled with them; conducted prayer meetings; organized choirs; led Bible classes; formed classes of illiterate soldiers and taught them to read and write; collected money from soldiers to purchase tracts, hymnbooks, and Bibles; distributed religious literature; established camp

---

\(^{30}\) John W. Burke, Autobiography: Chapters From the Life of a Preacher (Macon 1884), 101; John C. Ley, Fifty-Two Years in Florida (Nashville, 1889), 88; Sidney James Romero, Jr., “Religion in the Rebel Ranks” (Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1953), 214-227; William W. Sweet, The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War (Cincinnati, 1912), 222, says that 209 Methodist ministers served as chaplains. Herman A. Norton, “The Organization and Function of the Conference Military Chaplaincy, 1861-1865” (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1956), 96-98, says that the Methodist Church sent the largest number of ministers into the chaplaincy. He states that 200 Methodist ministers served as chaplains; his figures for other denominations were: Baptists, approximately 100, Presbyterians, approximately 100, Episcopalians, 65.


and post libraries; supervised hospital arrangements; visited the sick and wounded, reading to them and writing letters for them to their loved ones; administered the sacraments to the soldiers; comforted the condemned; organized army churches; collected clothing and medical supplies for the men; performed wedding ceremonies for the soldiers; and acted as camp postmen. No respecters of persons, the chaplains ministered to the wounded, dying, and imprisoned Federal soldiers as if they were their own. A. D. Betts, chaplain in the Thirtieth North Carolina Regiment, kept individual records of the men—their age, home address, home circumstances, church affiliation, and marital status. One chaplain established a bureau for missing persons and was instrumental in finding or tracing some 30,000 individuals. William Owen, chaplain in the Seventeenth Mississippi Regiment, kept an account of the Federal soldiers to whom he ministered following the battle of Fredericksburg, and wrote to the families of the men for whom he held funeral services, indicating the location of the graves.

Some 141 Methodist preachers served in the Confederate Army as officers or soldiers in the ranks. Early in the war a New Orleans subscriber to the Christian Advocate wrote, “Nearly every minister we know is a member of a military company.” In the fall of 1862 it was reported that one-fifth of the preachers in the Tennessee Conference were serving in the army, and preachers from Florida, Georgia, Virginia, and other Southern states were in the military service. The following officers were Methodist ministers: D. C. Kelley, commander of a cavalry regiment under General Nathan Bedford Forrest; C. C. Gillespie, commander of the Twenty-Fifth Texas Regiment; and Colonel George W. Carter of the Twenty-First Texas Cavalry. All of the officers in one Texas regiment were said to be Methodist preachers.

The great majority of the Southern Methodist preachers supported

---

32 McFerrin, “Religion in the Army of Tennessee,” 28; David Sullins, Recollections of an Old Man, Seventy Years in Dixie, 1827-1897 (Bristol, 1910), 202; Betts, Experiences of a Confederate Chaplain, 19, 27, 43, 61; Bennett, The Great Revival, 80; Randolph H. McKim, A Soldier’s Recollections (New York, 1910), 238; Diary of Francis M. Kennedy, March 7, 1863, University of North Carolina Library; Herman A. Norton, “The Organization and Function of the Confederate Military Chaplaincy, 1861-1865,” 227-23.


34 Sweet, The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War, 224.

35 Christian Advocate, Nashville, May 8, 1861.


the Confederacy, but a few opposed secession and openly expressed sympathy for the Union. Union sentiment was strongest in the Holston Conference which then embraced western North Carolina as well as its present territory of southwestern Virginia and eastern Tennessee. Seven men were expelled from that conference for their union sympathy.49 Perhaps the most colorful unionist was "Parson" Willa...
The annual conferences approved the plan for army missions, and funds for the work were collected and sent to the treasurer of the missionary society, E. H. Myers of Macon, Georgia. Single men giving full time to regimental missionary work were to be paid $1,500 per year, and married men $3,000, plus $300 for each child. Preachers unable to give full time to the missionary work were asked to preach one month each year in the army, their expenses to be paid by their annual conferences or their congregations. Early in 1864 it was reported that some 35 Methodist ministers were serving as full time missionaries in the army. During the war every Methodist bishop and many prominent preachers made missionary visits to the camps where they preached to the soldiers.

Religious ministry to the Confederate soldiers by the various denominations was characterized by what we today would call an ecumenical spirit. The church papers consciously minimized factionalism and sectarian differences. Debates on theology and church polity were abandoned during the war years. The *Christian Advocate* observed, "The entente cordial prevails in our denominational press... these are times when all hearts and hands should be united. Old party lines and church controversies should not divide the people." John B. McFerrin and J. C. Granberry said that camp sermons, focusing as they did on "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," would have been acceptable to any congregation in the country regardless of denomination.

Under the preaching of the chaplains and the missionaries, revivals among the Confederate soldiers began in 1862 and continued intermittently throughout the war years. To hold converted soldiers firm in the faith, the preachers in the camps organized army churches. It is believed that Enoch M. Marvin, who would not accept a commission as a chaplain in the army but who as a civilian Methodist preacher ministered in army camps from 1862 to the end of the war, organized the first army church during the winter of 1863-64 among General Sterling Price's men. When Marvin presented his idea at a chaplain's meeting, a committee was appointed which drew up a constitution and articles of faith for the army church. It was

---
46 *Christian Advocate*, Nashville, December 12, 1861.
48 Bennett, op. cit., 244. The story of the army revivals has been told in detail by two ministers who participated in them. W. W. Bennett, a Methodist, and J. W. Jones, a Baptist. It is not my purpose to discuss the revivals.
agreed that belief in the following six articles of faith would be required of men who wished to join the army church: the Old and New Testaments as the word of God and the only rule of faith; the Trinity; the fall of Adam and redemption in Christ; justification by faith; the communion of the saints; and the doctrine of eternal rewards and punishments.

According to the constitution, members of the army church could choose their own officers, keep a record of their numbers, hold monthly meetings to discuss programs, and mete out discipline to wayward members. The constitution provided one concession to denominationalism: baptism was to be administered by immersion or sprinkling, according to the candidate’s preference. Certificates of membership in the army church were given out by the chaplains, and they were usually accepted by the home churches when the soldiers returned from the war. The army church idea became popular, and such groups were organized in the Armies of Tennessee and Northern Virginia.

In all departments of the Confederate army, chaplains and missionaries led in forming Christian Associations. The purpose of these organizations was to strengthen both the religious faith and the patriotic fervor of the soldiers. L. M. G. Baltish, a Methodist preacher from Strasburg, Virginia, organized the Soldier's Christian Association in the Tenth Regiment, Virginia Volunteers, admitting "all who desire to do better, whether church members or not." Promulgating no creed except "redemption through Christ," the association sought the "reformation of swearers, and gamblers, the reclaiming of back-sliders, and the building up of those who have become indifferent to the Master." J. Tyler Frazier, a Methodist minister from Giles County, Virginia, organized the Young Men's Christian Association in Kemper's Brigade. The organization welcomed all professing Christians into membership and pledged them to discourage insubordination and to encourage loyalty to cause and country. The constitution of the association provided that members absent from the brigade without leave or guilty of desertion would be expelled from the organization.

At times soldiers who were members of Christian associations acted as missionaries to other regiments, conducting prayer meetings

---

50 Albert T. Goodloe, *Confederate Echoes: A Voice From the South in the Days of Secession and of the Southern Confederacy* (Nashville, 1907), 401; McFerrin, op. cit., 28; *The Soldier's Visitor*, Richmond, January 1865.
51 Richmond Christian Advocate, May 7, 1863; Central Presbyterian, Richmond, March 5, 1863; Southern Christian Advocate, Augusta, April 13, 1865.
52 Richmond Christian Advocate, Richmond, May 7, 1863.
and leading in organizing new associations. In their own military
unit members of the association often conducted their own services
of worship, led fast day services, and trained fellow soldiers to per­
form religious services in the absence of the chaplain or the mission­
ary. Also, the members collected books, religious tracts, newspapers,
and other reading matter for circulation among the men.54

Providing religious literature for the soldiers and the local
churches was a problem for Southern denominations during the war.
Prior to 1861 nearly all such materials were printed in the North
and shipped South. Southern Bible and tract societies were merely
branches of national organizations with headquarters in the North.55
Soon after the war began President Lincoln banned trade with the
South, and Southern ports were effectively blockaded. Thus the flow
of religious literature from the North to the South was cut off.

In the circumstances the Methodist Episcopal Church, South be­
came very active in the effort to provide Christian literature for the
Confederacy. In the summer of 1861, T. O. Summers, head of the
publishing house in Nashville, somehow managed to have an agent
in Philadelphia purchase a set of plates for printing the New Testa­
ment and send them to Louisville. Later Summers wrote, "While
Kentucky maintained her quasi neutrality ... the plates were
brought to Nashville." By mid-October New Testaments were com­ing
off the press in Nashville,56 and the printing continued unabated
until February, 1862, when the Federal forces occupied the city.
Proving resourceful again, Summers saved the plates and sent them
to Augusta, Georgia, where an interdenominational organization
called the Bible Society of the Confederate States of America was
formed in the spring of 1862. Three Methodists became officers in
the Bible society: J. W. Burk, a preacher and publisher, was made
secretary; and E. H. Myers and R. J. Harp, ministers, were named
corresponding and recording secretaries, respec­.tively.57

Efforts of the Southern Methodists to provide the soldiers with
tracts, religious newspapers, hymnals, and Bibles met with some
success. The Virginia Conference organized the Soldier's Tract As­
sociation in Richmond in March, 1862 with William W. Bennett as
general agent.58 In May, 1863 the bishops declared the tract associ­
tion to be an agency of the denomination and urged the conferences

54 Goodloe, Confederate Echoes, 378, 384, 391, 420.
55 Christian Advocate, Nashville, July 18, 1861.
56 Southern Lutheran, Charleston, October 26, 1861.
58 Bennett, op. cit., 76.
to support it. By October the organization had additional depositories in Atlanta and Shreveport, and in Marshall, Texas. In 1864 the association was employing 25 full-time agents. "Chaplains and pious laymen" gave assistance, and in two years the tract association received contributions of about $175,000, and printed and distributed some 17,000,000 pages of tracts, 70,000 hymnbooks, and 20,000 copies of the scriptures.

The Soldiers Tract Association published two semi-monthly newspapers, distributing them gratis in the camps. They were the Soldier's Paper, published at Richmond for the troops in Virginia and the Carolinas, and the Army and Navy Herald, published at Macon, Georgia, for the soldiers in the southwest. The first paper, with William W. Bennett as editor, appeared regularly from August, 1863 to April, 1865. The second, with R. J. Harp as editor, was published from September, 1863 to April, 1865. Both papers carried sermons, devotional readings, letters, and news. Circulation for the two papers averaged about 40,000 per month.

The Methodists actively supported at least four interdenominational agencies which endeavored to supply the South with religious literature during the war. The Evangelical Tract Society was formed by a group representing different denominations in Petersburg, Virginia, in the summer of 1861. A Baptist, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, and an Episcopalian served together on the publishing committee. During the war the society published the Army and Navy Messenger, a semi-monthly newspaper. In addition, it printed more than 100 tracts totaling some 60,000 pages. In June, 1861, a group of ministers from different churches established the General Tract Agency in Raleigh, North Carolina. Its publications were accorded praise by Methodist chaplains and preachers. The South Carolina Tract Society with headquarters in Charleston, and the Tract Society of Houston, Texas, received support from Southern Methodists.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South endeavored to care for children orphaned during the war. A group met and discussed the problem at Montgomery, Alabama, in 1864. A resolution was adopted saying it was the duty of the church to care for the children of...
deceased soldiers. Each annual conference was urged to make provision for the care of its own orphans and widows. The Mobile Conference created a Soldier’s Orphan Association to be directed by a committee of twelve. William W. Wightman, later bishop, was named chairman. The committee requested the presiding elders to bring the needs of orphans to the attention of their quarterly meetings. It was the responsibility of the presiding elders to get the names of destitute orphans and suggest places where they might be cared for and educated. Collections for orphans were taken in the churches and forwarded to Wightman. His report to the conference in November, 1864, showed that $13,559 had been received for the support of orphans.

While the Methodist Episcopal Church, South did not oppose the institution of slavery from 1844 to 1865, in some ways the church manifested concern for the slaves. In 1861 there were 217,000 slave members on the church rolls. The denomination supported no fewer than 327 missionaries to the slaves. During the war church leaders condemned treatment of the slaves which they regarded as contrary to the teaching of the Bible. For example, Bishop George F. Pierce declared that state laws which forbade masters to teach their slaves to read should be repealed. He said that it was the duty of masters to educate their slaves, and that laws to the contrary were abuses of the slave system. Church leaders strongly advocated teaching religion to the slaves. T. O. Summers told the Alabama Conference that masters were duty bound to God to see that their slaves did not die without knowledge of the Redeemer. A Methodist planter near Columbus, Georgia, who built a chapel and provided religious teachers for his slaves, was cited as a good master whom others should imitate. Some church leaders conscientiously opposed the sale of slaves in instances which would separate a man from his wife or parents from their children. In a fast day sermon before the Georgia legislature, Bishop Pierce declared that one of the moral ends of the war was to reform the abuses of slavery, and added, “All laws which authorize or allow arbitrary interference with connubial relations of slaves ought to be rescinded.” In 1864 the Alabama Conference adopted a resolution saying that slave marriages should be respected

---

68 Richmond Christian Advocate, August 18, 1864.
69 Minutes of the Mobile Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Held in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, November 23-28, 1864 (Mobile, 1864), 10.
71 George F. Pierce, A Sermon Delivered Before the General Assembly at Milledgeville, Georgia, on Fast Day, March 27, 1863 (Milledgeville, 1863), 14-15.
72 Richmond Christian Advocate, April 4, 1861; North Carolina Christian Advocate, Sept. 9, 1863.
73 Minutes of the Alabama Conference, 1863, 14.
74 Southern Christian Advocate, Jan. 14, 1864.
75 Pierce, op. cit., 14.
and treated as Christian, and the Georgia Conference urged the state legislature to enact laws to protect slave marriage relationships.76

There is no evidence that leaders in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South favored emancipation during the war. When news of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation reached the South, the Southern Christian Advocate called it "fiendish" and said that it was designed to cause insurrection and race conflict. Bishop Pierce believed that emancipation would bring more evils in society than slavery, claiming that if the Negroes were freed they would become "further degraded."77 In the spring of 1863, a document entitled An Address to Christians Throughout the World was drawn up in Richmond, Virginia, and signed by 98 ministers, 17 of them Methodists. The paper protested the Emancipation Proclamation, saying that it was not a show of mercy to the slave but of malice to the master, and that it was a political document designed to placate fanatics in the North and to incite slaves to revolt.78

The war immediately upset the foreign missionary program of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, cutting off financial support for missionaries in the field and breaking their contacts with the home base.79 In order to support himself and his family, Young J. Allen, a Southern Methodist missionary in China, secured a position with the Chinese government. Some other missionaries were granted credit by local merchants until the war ended. These financial obligations of the missionaries in the field, plus their accumulated back salaries, resulted in a missionary debt of $60,000 for the church in 1865.80

Many churches, parsonages, colleges, and other institutions belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South were damaged or destroyed when Federal forces invaded the land.81 The publishing house in Nashville was used as a United States government printing

---

76 Journal of the Montgomery Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, December 12, 1864 (manuscript in Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama); Southern Christian Advocate, Jan. 19, 31, 1864.
77 Southern Christian Advocate, Oct. 2, 1862; Smith, op. cit., 435.
79 Richmond Christian Advocate, June 26, 1862.
establishment after the Northern troops came in 1862, and by the end of the war the edifice and its equipment were practically ruined.\textsuperscript{82} All Southern Methodist colleges were closed during the war, and most of them lost their endowments because the money was invested in Confederate securities which were worthless when the war was over.\textsuperscript{83} Some college buildings were used as hospitals for wounded soldiers of the North or the South, according to which army was in the area.\textsuperscript{84} In one or more instances Federal cavalry companies stalled their horses in college buildings, knocking out bricks below the first floor windows so their steeds could enter at ground level. Every Methodist newspaper in the South was forced to cease publishing at one time or another during the war or at the end of the conflict.

The war interfered with annual conferences and other church meetings which required travel on the part of participants. In a number of areas annual conferences did not meet at all. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, scheduled for New Orleans in 1862, was canceled. Bishops who could be present, officers of the mission and publication boards, and a few influential churchmen met at times in locations east of the Mississippi River and gave such leadership and direction to the church as they could. Due to the war, the church in Texas was without episcopal supervision for five years, and Arkansas was visited by no Southern Methodist bishop for four years. Bishop Pierce expressed regret that he was unable to visit any of his conferences during the war. In Virginia Bishop John Early announced that it would be impossible for the Western Virginia Conference to meet in 1863. He requested the preachers in the conference to care for the church as best they could.\textsuperscript{85}

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South suffered the loss of perhaps one-third of its members during the war. The lack of supervision, the absence of preachers from the circuits, the destruction wrought by the invading armies, and the stringent economic conditions were contributory causes to the heavy decline in membership.\textsuperscript{86}

Summing up, it may be said that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was not enthusiastic about secession in 1861, and except for a

\textsuperscript{82} Cross, op. cit., 340; Alexander, op. cit., 85. The 1898 Congress approved a bill for paying the claims for damage to the Nashville publishing house during the Civil War in the amount of $288,000. Bucke, History of American Methodism, III, 140.

\textsuperscript{83} Smith, op. cit., 496; Alexander, op. cit., 70.

\textsuperscript{84} Henry M. Bullock, A History of Emory University (Nashville, 1936), 149.

\textsuperscript{85} Smith, op. cit., 444, 447, 491; Jewell, op. cit., 189; Burke, op. cit., 109; Richmond Christian Advocate, August 27, 1863.

\textsuperscript{86} George G. Smith, Jr., The History of Methodism in Georgia and Florida from 1783 to 1865 (Macon, 1877), 408; John H. McLean, Reminiscences (Nashville, 1918), 104; Jewell, op. cit., 187-188; Hurst, op. cit., VI, 1285; Parish, op. cit., 30.
few conference resolutions it gave little leadership in the movement. However, the church supported the South to the bitter end in the war. The church blamed the North for the war and urged all Christians to pray for the Confederate government and its armies. At the same time church leaders urged members not to hate the North and to pray for the souls of the invaders. The church put forth real effort to minister to the spiritual needs of the soldiers, furnishing a large number of preachers to serve as chaplains and missionaries in the army. Both preachers and laymen on the home front joined in some interdenominational efforts on behalf of the soldiers and the cause of religion generally. The church did fairly well in providing religious literature for the people. But due to circumstances largely beyond its control, the church was handicapped in ministering to and maintaining local congregations during the war years.

Due to the large missionary debt, the number of church buildings which lay in ruins, the loss of the publishing house, the disappearance of college endowments, the generally low morale caused by the disorganization of the church as an institution, and the economic collapse of the whole region, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was demoralized and materially destitute at the end of the war. Its rise from the ashes of disaster and defeat, beginning with the forward-looking General Conference of 1866 in New Orleans, is another story which is beyond the scope of this article.