

# THE METHODIST ANTISLAVERY STRUGGLE IN THE LAND OF LINCOLN

by Marie S. White

A glimpse of the antislavery struggle, a three-decade-long story in Illinois, reveals not only the background of Abraham Lincoln but also an insight as to why such leadership came from this state. The story should not be taken out of context but placed against the background of the political and social history of the country, including the great westward expansion. It is a happy story in that it ended with the emancipation of the slaves, but tragic in that it was achieved with a bloody war.

The responsibility of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Illinois, as in other parts of the Union, cannot be pinpointed. Certainly slavery had to be ended. Possibly it could have been ended without bloodshed, in a way which might have led to swifter and happier racial adjustment. We may never decide whether there was a "middle ground which could insure both an end to slavery and an end to the threat of war."<sup>1</sup> If there was such a middle ground, it disappeared in the late 1850's as political, emotional, and religious conflicts became increasingly bitter. Certainly the War brought an end to the long search for this middle ground, a search which had been especially determined and intense in the Land of Lincoln.

Lincoln, of course, was not an abolitionist,<sup>2</sup> but he was opposed to slavery, determined that slavery should not be extended into the territories, and equally determined to hold the Union together. Illinois was also the land of the leading Democrat, Stephen A. Douglas, who was confident up until the firing on Fort Sumter that new compromises could be worked out, thus promoting the continued westward expansion of the country. In the religious arena, Illinois was the home of Methodist circuit riders, the two most outstanding being I and II Peter—Peter Cartwright and Peter Akers. Their concern was that the expansion of Methodism, so outstanding in the first half of the nineteenth century, be continued without interruption, including the preaching of the gospel to both slaveholder and slave. Their state of Illinois, jutting far down into slave-state territory, was a vital part of the old Northwest, where the leaders in both church and state held the balance of power within the nation.<sup>3</sup> In Methodism, when the old Northwest voted

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Filler, "Slavery and Antislavery," *Main Problems in American History*, I, Howard Quint, Dean Albertson, and Milton Cantor, eds. Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1964, pp. 292-93.

<sup>2</sup> David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered*. Vintage Books. New York: Random House, 1947, pp. 19-36.

<sup>3</sup> Dwight L. Dumond, "The Mississippi: Valley of Decision," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* XXXVI, June, 1949, 5-7.

for the first time in the General Conference of 1844 with the North-east rather than the South, the Church split into warring halves, North and South.<sup>4</sup>

Methodist ministers in Illinois, however, were still determined to hold the middle ground; at the Annual Conference in Jacksonville in 1847 they asked these questions of the young men who were candidates for admission: "1. Are any of you members of an abolition society? 2. Are any of you pro-slavery men?"<sup>5</sup> It is recorded that "all answered in the negative to both questions," which is apparently what was expected of them. These men about to cover the state as circuit riders no doubt helped create the sentiment to which Lincoln referred some ten years later when he met Douglas in their important debates. Lincoln, like most of the Methodist ministers in Illinois, denied being an abolitionist, and yet he accused Douglas of believing that slavery is an "exceedingly little thing—only equal to the question of the cranberry laws of Indiana—as something having no moral question in it." He added that, "There is a vast majority of people that do not look upon that matter as being this very little thing. They look upon it as a vast moral evil."<sup>6</sup>

Lincoln was an astute politician as well as a product of his environment. He must have believed his position safe when he voiced the antislavery extension position on moral grounds.<sup>7</sup> Who were his "vast majority of people"? Doubtless some of them were Methodists, judging by numbers alone. The 1850 census figures show Methodism as having more churches established than any other denomination in all states of the old Northwest. In Illinois the figure was 405 Methodist churches, almost as many as the two next highest—the Baptist and Presbyterian—put together.<sup>8</sup> Most of these early settlers had migrated from the South, especially the upper South, but this does not necessarily mean that they were proslavery. Indeed many of the early Illinois Methodist circuit riders moved to Illinois to escape from a slave society.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. William W. Sweet, *Methodism in American History*. New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1933, p. 244.

<sup>5</sup> *Minutes of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1847*, p. 231.

<sup>6</sup> Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, II. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953, pp. 493-94.

<sup>7</sup> For analysis and explanation of this position in the debates, see Helen M. Cavanagh, *Antislavery Sentiment in the Northwest 1844-60*. Chicago: University of Chicago Libraries, 1940, pp. 19-27.

<sup>8</sup> Michael G. Brock, "Religious Affiliated Colleges in the Old Northwest." Unpublished master's thesis, Illinois State University, 1966, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Merton L. Dillon, "The Antislavery Movement in Illinois: 1824-1835," *Journal Illinois State Historical Society*, LVII, Summer, 1954, pp. 149-67. Religious leaders are named, including Peter Cartwright, George Locke, Jesse Haile, and John Sinclair—all being Methodists from Kentucky. Dillon states that so great was the effect of their preaching on Methodist laymen that the introduction of slavery into political campaigns was sometimes urged in order to sway Methodist votes. For corroboration,

Peter Cartwright arrived from Kentucky in 1824. The most picturesque of them all, he is frequently pictured only as a revivalist, keeping law and order in a muscular way, but he was also a genuine leader—a presiding elder for 50 years. He gave his social and economic as well as religious motives for buying that farm at Pleasant Plains in the Sangamon country, but his primary reason for moving to a “free state” was this: “First, I would get entirely free of the evil of slavery.”<sup>10</sup>

Cartwright had been the acknowledged leader of antislavery forces in the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference, where he was even once put on trial for expelling slaveholding members from his district.<sup>11</sup> When he arrived in Illinois, it was only four years since neighboring Missouri had gained admission to the Union as a slave state. The newcomer Cartwright watched with dismay as his presiding elder Samuel Thompson was defeated as candidate for lieutenant governor in 1826 along with other antislavery candidates. Fearing that his new home was not yet free of the slavery menace, Cartwright, who succeeded Thompson as presiding elder of the huge Illinois District, decided in 1828 to do some electioneering for himself as he traveled.<sup>12</sup> Thus it was that he was twice elected to the state legislature from Sangamon County—Lincoln being one of the defeated candidates in 1832.

Vying with Cartwright’s antislavery sentiment was his love for the Union and for the Constitution which held it together. South Carolina was threatening at this time to secede from the Union over another issue (the tariff question), and Cartwright was quick to present a strong protest, a preamble and resolutions which were debated by the General Assembly of Illinois:

We, the general assembly of Illinois, in the name and on behalf of the people of said state, do make the following declaration and protest:

That we regard with the highest veneration the constitution of the United States, with its distribution of powers, so admirably calculated to promote the happiness and protect and preserve the rights and liberties of the people, and to it we will firmly and faithfully adhere.

That we regard it as the richest legacy our wise and venerated

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see James Leaton, *History of Methodism in Illinois* I. Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1883, pp. 285, 141, 358-59. Leaton adds William Chambers, Charles Holliday, John Scripps, Jacob Whitesides, Samuel Mitchell, William Beauchamp, and Hiram Tremble to the list of antislavery preachers; see pp. 285, 121, 142, 147, 161, 347.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods Preacher*. Cincinnati: Cranston and Curtis, 1856, p. 245.

<sup>11</sup> A. H. Redford, *The History of Methodism in Kentucky*, II. Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1870, p. 297; Charles Baumer Swaney, *Episcopal Methodism and Slavery*. Boston: Gorham Press, 1926, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Cartwright, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-62; John Reynolds, *My Own Times*, Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1879, pp. 167-68; Thomas H. Herdman, “History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Southern Illinois”. Unpublished manuscript authorized by the Southern Illinois Annual Conference, 1901, p. 48.

fathers could bequeath to us, and while we look upon it as the charter purchased by the blood and treasure of revolutionary patriots, we are sensibly alive to the reflection, that it is now consecrated by their death. . . .

That while we tenderly respect the feelings of those who may feel themselves aggrieved by the legislation of congress, as oppressive and destructive to their interests, we feel ourselves compelled by every motive of patriotism, and by all our public obligations, to declare our belief that the drama now progressing, must exhibit in its last scene, turbulence, bloodshed, and revolution, and the final ruin and overthrow of those now peaceful, happy, and UNITED STATES.<sup>13</sup>

In the three resolutions which followed, Cartwright opposed the doctrine of nullification, promised support to the president in the enforcement of laws, and stated: "We heartily approve of and entirely concur in the sentiment expressed by the present executive of the Union, that the 'Federal Union must be preserved.'" <sup>14</sup>

Concern for the Union may be one reason why Cartwright and his colleagues later refused to join the abolitionists in the East who thought the Constitution a "Covenant with Death and an agreement with Hell." Some Garrisonians would even advocate "the repeal of the union between the North and the South."<sup>15</sup> These were shocking words in Illinois, bound as it was to the South by social and economic ties—and by the Mississippi River which like the Appalachian Mountains runs not east and west but north and south. In Illinois, as in much of the old Northwest, the Union was considered indissoluble.

Illinois Methodism was strengthened in 1833 by the immigration of Peter Akers, three times president of McKendree College. He quickly took his place beside Cartwright, the two Peters being the acknowledged Conference leaders. Both were chosen by their ministerial colleagues on the first ballot to the next five General Conferences.<sup>16</sup> Akers, also born in Virginia and transferring from Kentucky, displayed an increasing dislike for slavery, but with a spirit of conciliation.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives, State of Illinois, 1832-33*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* After debate by both houses, Cartwright was appointed to a joint committee, whose somewhat milder resolutions upholding President Jackson's proclamation against nullification were approved by the assembly. See pp. 119, 166-70.

<sup>15</sup> William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, eds., *The Antislavery Argument*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., pp. lix-lx.

<sup>16</sup> James Leaton, "Methodism in Illinois, 1832-1840," II. Unpublished manuscript, p. 3. The vote tabulation is not recorded for every election, but the order of names is important in determining leadership. For instance, in 1839 both Akers and Cartwright were chosen on the first ballot; out of a possible 101 votes, Akers received 92 and Cartwright 85. Moreover, the editor of the *Western Christian Advocate* termed these two men in 1845 the "leading men" of their conference; December 5, 1845, p. 134.

<sup>17</sup> T. Walter Johnson, "Peter Akers: Methodist Circuit Rider and Educator 1790-1886," *Journal Illinois State Historical Society*, XXXII, 1939, p. 425.

Delegates from Illinois at the General Conference in 1836 were disturbed when they saw the growing impossibility of conciliation; Cartwright reported that here for the first time the southern delegates took the position that "slavery was right, and a blessing, instead of a curse, to the slaves themselves." Cartwright added: "We had from the north Orange Scott and his coadjutors, who were ultra abolitionists; and we had some warm debates on the subject."<sup>18</sup>

Questions immediately arise—What had happened in the Church and Nation that slavery could not longer be rationally discussed? Who was Orange Scott and who were the "ultra abolitionists"? There had been an earlier era when almost all leaders, North and South alike, had agreed that slavery was evil and would be abolished. Then in 1831 there arose the raucous voice of William Lloyd Garrison. He demanded immediate abolition but had no practical plan other than denunciation. There would be no compensation to the slave holders and no educational program of apprenticeship nor any kind of colonization for the freedmen. Garrison went so far as to advocate "peaceful revolution" to overthrow the federal government.<sup>19</sup> In the same year that he began to publish the *Liberator*, the Nat Turner uprising occurred in Virginia, where 60 whites and many slaves were killed. This bloody insurrection created fears of racial survival in the South, and slavery could no longer be discussed calmly. There arose the proslavery arguments proclaiming slavery to be a positive good, in answer to the anti-slavery arguments—all based on the same Bible. Extremists began to hate each other instead of planning together for a compensated emancipation.

The Methodist extremist who was a disciple of Garrison was Orange Scott, a presiding elder of the New England Annual Conference. Like Garrison, he was an agitator with no actual plan for emancipation. He rejoiced at the division of Methodism in 1844, and he advocated the dissolution of the Union in these words: "And blessed be the day when the ungodly national compact should be broken up."<sup>20</sup> Reaction in the "Land of Lincoln" to these words may explain why antislavery preachers long refused to be called abolitionists, as well as Cartwright's scathing references to "O. Scott and Co."

Scott organized in his own New England Conference a caucus

<sup>18</sup> Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Duberman, ed. *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, pp. 32, 98, 73; John L. Thomas, ed. *Slavery Attacked*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965, pp. 11-12; Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse 1830-1844*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964, p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> Duberman, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-101.

group of "True abolitionists", strong enough to elect six of their members, with Scott heading the list, to the General Conference of 1836.<sup>21</sup> Other Annual Conferences responded with alarm; New England's demands produced fast reaction from Methodism in the Northwest. The Illinois Conference minutes of 1835 state briefly that the Ohio Conference report on Abolition was adopted as the "sentiments and resolutions of this Conference."<sup>22</sup> The Ohio report was a lengthy attack on the New England position, avowing strong antislavery sentiments but disapproving of abolitionism in no uncertain terms. After commending the number of converts—some 80,000—won by missionaries among the slaves, it asked the abolitionists what they had done to help those unfortunate people.<sup>23</sup>

These were Cartwright's sentiments, too, and his plan for the gradual abolition of slavery by the preaching of the gospel may have seemed practical in an age which saw social reform arise out of the campmeetings and revivals of the frontier. He recalled his own revivals in Kentucky and Tennessee when thousands of slaves, he said, had been soundly converted and when their masters agreed to set them free. Always he was concerned that the Church not take a course which would cut off the gospel from them. With sorrow he recorded what he saw developing in the South. As Methodism increased and spread, Methodist preachers who had preached loudly against slavery married into slaveholding families and became personally involved.<sup>24</sup> Cartwright approved the policy of the General Conferences of 1836 and 1840, in refusing to listen to the extremists on either side—the "ultra parties", as he called them. He said that a rupture of the Church was thus avoided.<sup>25</sup>

Orange Scott went back to New England to plan the secession which led to the founding of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1843. About 20,000 members of the parent church joined the new group.<sup>26</sup> Cartwright called it a "feeble secession", since Illinois was not much affected. The eastern conferences, however, in order to

<sup>21</sup> Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality 1780-1845*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, pp. 81, 84.

<sup>22</sup> "Minutes of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1824-1845", p. 213; Leaton, II, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>23</sup> "Document 20," in Charles Elliott, *History of the Great Secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Year 1845*. Cincinnati: Swormstedt and Poe, 1855, pp. 906-08.

<sup>24</sup> Cartwright, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-29, 157.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 373-74. The compromise, advocated by Cartwright, of refusing to elect any new bishops in 1840 seems to have bought four years of time for the Methodist Church, even as the Compromise of 1850—over the extension of slavery into the territories—bought ten years of time for the nation.

<sup>26</sup> Holland N. McTyeire, *A History of Methodism*, I. Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1914, p. 611; Duberman, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-100.

prevent further loss of membership, were ready to make stronger demands of the South.<sup>27</sup>

Illinois leaders became aroused at the General Conference of 1844 when it was learned that a well-liked bishop, James Andrew of Georgia, had acquired some family slaves by a recent marriage. According to Cartwright, "This fact came upon us with the darkness and terror of a fearful storm, and covered the whole General Conference with sorrow and mourning."<sup>28</sup> If antislavery delegates were agreed on anything it was that no bishop should ever be a slaveholder. They were determined that slavery should not become nationalized—that slavery, having advanced thus far, should advance no further.

After listening to days of debate on the Baltimore motion that the popular Bishop be asked to resign his office, both Cartwright and Akers supported the milder substitute motion proposed by James Finley and explained by L. L. Hamline, both of Ohio, that the Bishop be asked to "desist" from the duties of his office so long as he remained a slaveholder.<sup>29</sup> Cartwright called it "humbuggery" that Andrew could not legally free his slaves. Speaking with emotion on the Conference floor, he explained that he had once inherited some slaves: "I took them to my state, set them free, gave them land, and built them a house, and they made more money than I ever did by my preaching. . . . I stand at this day security for more than two hundred negroes, whom I helped set free." Cartwright concluded by reminding his listeners that he was not an abolitionist but that he stood on the platform of "old Methodism." He insisted that the resolution concerning Andrew would not create an "Abolition church."<sup>30</sup>

The southern delegates did not agree; in a signed Declaration they threatened immediate secession. The insoluble problem was turned over to an all-important "committee of nine" with orders to

<sup>27</sup> Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 414; Emery Stevens Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, II. New York: Abingdon Press, 1964, pp. 44-47.

<sup>28</sup> Cartwright, *op. cit.*, pp. 411-14. Cartwright explains that bishops were expected to travel at large, rotating conferences.

<sup>29</sup> *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, II, 1844, New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855, pp. 64-66; *Debates*, pp. 128-34. Akers himself took no part in the public debates because, according to his friend James Leaton, he was opposed to the policy of admitting reporters and publishing speeches and proceedings, thus introducing the methods of partisan politicians. See Leaton II, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-47. Leaton's testimony is confirmed by another contemporary who insisted that Akers in fact gave Hamline "the form and body of the speech which made him a bishop and fixed the line pursued by the Northern delegates." William Henry Milburn, "Peter Akers," *Quarterly Review of the M.E. Church, South*, July, 1891, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> *Western Christian Advocate*, June 21, 1844, p. 38; *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, II, *Debates*, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

devise a "constitutional plan for a mutual and friendly division of the church."<sup>31</sup>

Peter Akers, because he was a member of the famed Committee of Nine and because he voted for acceptance of the Plan, has been pictured as favoring the division of the Church. Then, when he faced the opposition of his home Conference, he changed his mind, denying that the committee had drawn up a legal plan of separation. It seems more plausible to grant his own explanation that the committee had accepted assurance from southern delegates that they would do everything possible to prevent the necessity for division and that the plan would be only for emergency use of the southern Conferences in the event that their ministers were actually shut out of their churches.<sup>32</sup> Just one year later Akers wrote with great dismay concerning the turn of events:

The curse of slavery affects the Church on both sides. Abolition and pro-slavery principles engender and foster each other. These discharge their respective malcontents against the Church. The abolitionist accuses the Church of being pro-slavery: and because she will not allow him to become dictator-general to the Church, he sets up for himself, and commences the trade of organizing and building up a new Church by denouncing curses against the old. . . . On the other hand, the slaveholder, in principle, accuses the Church of being abolition; and because the Church will not become pro-slavery, he calls for a new organization.<sup>33</sup>

Akers may have correctly analyzed the position and the dilemma of Illinois Methodism caught in the middle of the continuing struggle, but it was Cartwright who proposed a solution. One of the 18 delegates who opposed the plan of division on the first roll-call vote, Cartwright was also one of the first spokesmen to say that the adopted plan was illegal. Even as political leaders from Illinois later were not willing to permit the states to secede in peace, Cartwright determined that he would not now agree to a secession within the Church.<sup>34</sup> His own plan was that the annual conferences should refuse to vote concurrence for altering the Sixth Restrictive Rule of the *Discipline* concerning the division of church property, which he contended would make division impossible. He influenced his own Illinois Conference to resolve non-concurrence, to oppose

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109-11, 200-03. Note: this sketchy account of the Conference of 1844 is given from the perspective of the Illinois delegates. For a complete and balanced account, see John N. Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church 1844*. Alfred, N. Y.: The Alfred Press, 1923.

<sup>32</sup> Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 440; *Western Christian Advocate*, August 1, 1845, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1845, p. 42.

<sup>34</sup> Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

any sectional division of the Church, and to ask the bishops to call a special session of the General Conference to review decisions and to provide for the continued unity and tranquility of the Church. These resolutions were to be printed in the *Western Christian Advocate*, and copies were to be sent to each of the bishops with the request to place them before all annual conferences. A resolution was added, stating that the South should have "their full share of funds" if this plan failed.<sup>35</sup>

Other Conferences in the Old Northwest followed this action. North Ohio met at about the same time as Illinois and voted non-concurrence with the Plan of Separation. Later Conferences voted likewise: Ohio, 132 to 1; Indiana, 6 to 2; North Indiana, 65 to 0.<sup>36</sup> The *Southern Christian Advocate* printed the Illinois resolutions, noting "the existence of a strong sense of justice," but also remarking that the request for a called session of General Conference looked very much "like the shutting of the stable door after the steed is out."<sup>37</sup>

When the southern Conferences, in convention at Louisville, voted in 1845 to separate and become the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, northern reaction was bitter. Charles Elliott, influential editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*, now did an about-face and became a full ally of Dr. Thomas E. Bond, editor of the *New York Christian Advocate* and a long-time advocate of the Cartwright opinions.<sup>38</sup> Hostility increased as the two editors set themselves to prove that the Southern organization was illegally formed and was, in fact, an actual secession from the Church. Elliott contended that the original Plan was nullified because the South had not proved the "necessity of the separation." He concluded that "the few leaders of the southern misrule" had led away "the great body of southern preachers, who, as a whole, are excellent men."<sup>39</sup>

Such editorials struck a responsive chord in Illinois Methodism. Long letters to the *Western Advocate* were written by both Peter Akers and Peter Cartwright. Akers was quick to use the word "secession" and to label the "new church" as proslavery.<sup>40</sup> Cart-

<sup>35</sup> "Minutes of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church," p. 486. These resolutions were adopted by a vote of 38 to 22, with Jonathan Stamper and N. G. Berryman, Illinois delegates who had sided with the South, leading the opposition. See Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 425; for further analysis, Marie S. White, "Antislavery Leadership in Illinois Methodism 1844-1861". Unpublished master's thesis, Illinois State University, 1970, p. 58-59, 67-69.

<sup>36</sup> *Western Christian Advocate*, September 6, 1844; September 27, 1844, p. 94; October 11, 1844, p. 102; November 1, 1844, p. 115.

<sup>37</sup> *Southern Christian Advocate*, October 18, 1844, p. 74.

<sup>38</sup> Bucke, ed., II, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-27.

<sup>39</sup> *Western Christian Advocate*, June 13, 1845, p. 34.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1845, p. 42; August 1, 1845, p. 61; August 8, 1845, p. 65.

wright expressed the same sentiments, but with cutting satire:

Good-by, my dear sirs, and may joy go with you, till you shall have reaped all the blessings of 'dividing' the Methodist Episcopal Church, which, indeed, is not a 'division', but an APOSTASY FROM THE GOOD AND RIGHT WAY OF OLD METHODISM. The members of this convention went home shouting, 'Victory,' and crying, they were a 'coordinate branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church,' and if they were not this, they were 'the M.E. Church proper.' But, my dear sirs, you will have to christen the brat again.<sup>41</sup>

This war of words led to warfare on the border, as the Illinois Conference refused to grant exclusive rights to the Church, South, in nearby Missouri. Gathered at the State-house in Springfield, September, 1845, the Conference voted to accept 10 men into membership from the Missouri Conference. Cartwright and Akers won approval for a series of eight resolutions much more inflammatory than those of the previous year. The Plan of Separation was called "unconstitutional" and the action of the Louisville Convention a "secession." The right of members in the South to organize and remain in the Church was affirmed. And the "course pursued by Drs. Bond and Elliott" was said to merit "the highest praise from the Church."<sup>42</sup>

Illinois Methodists became deeply involved in Missouri's troubles as they gave financial and moral support to ministers and people in St. Louis and Hannibal, Missouri. Although the official ministrations of the Methodist Episcopal Church were suspended in Missouri from 1845 to 1848, as a "wheel within a wheel" the Missouri interests were administered from Illinois. Peter Akers, then presiding elder of the Jacksonville District, appointed Bartholomew Reed to serve the church in St. Louis. Reed vividly described how all their meeting places had been taken away from his people, but that they were "conscience-bound" never to join the Church, South. "The state of the Church," he wrote, "reminds one of a battle field after the battle is over."<sup>43</sup>

The two Peters—Akers and Cartwright—were again elected on the first ballot by their Annual Conference for the General Conference of 1848, but they were the only two of the nine who had

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, July 4, 1845, p. 46.

<sup>42</sup> Leaton III, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-76; "Minutes of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1824-1845," pp. 518, 524; *Western Christian Advocate*, October 11, 1845, p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Elliott, *Southwestern Methodism, A History of the M.E. Church in the Southwest, from 1844 to 1864*. Cincinnati: Poe and Hitchcock, 1868, pp. 21-22; "Minutes of the Central Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1824-1845," p. 528; *Western Christian Advocate*, November 7, 1845, p. 118; January 2, 1846, p. 151; Herdman, *op. cit.*, p. 545.

gone from the state in 1844 who were reelected.<sup>44</sup> On the national level, only 30 delegates, or some 20% of those who had voted for the Plan of Division, were returned. The reversal of sentiment is attributed to the "war of passion" raging on the border.<sup>45</sup>

Nor was there a conciliatory attitude at the General Conference which followed at Pittsburgh. By the overwhelming vote of 132 to 10, the delegates declared the Plan of Division "null and void," thus leading to litigation and animosity over common property.<sup>46</sup> The Church, South, was forced to "appeal to Caesar"<sup>47</sup> in court cases which went all the way to the Supreme Court. The decision was given April 25, 1854, in favor of the Church, South. The Court was headed by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, who would give the Dred Scott decision three years later; it included Judge John McLean, who disqualified himself as an interested Methodist. The financial settlement was not so important as were the emotions aroused. Said Peter Cartwright: "The unjust decisions on these suits are well known, and will form part and parcel of the unjust judicial decisions of the court against the Church."<sup>48</sup> The middle ground was fast disappearing!

Ecclesiastical warfare broke out in earnest during the decade of the fifties. Following the Mexican War, the Wilmot proviso debates, the Fugitive Slave Law, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Methodist ministers found it increasingly difficult to adhere to their traditional role of non-interference with politics. Ill will increased between the two branches of Methodism as mob action greeted northern "invaders" in Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas. The conservative antislavery preachers at work in Missouri suffered persecution because they were accused of believing, like the abolitionists, that every slaveholder was a sinner of the worst sort and that no slave could be a Christian if he remained a slave. Since this would be an appeal to slaves to rise against their masters, great suspicion was aroused.<sup>49</sup>

In the fall or early winter of 1853, fifteen slaves made their escape from Marion County, Missouri, crossed the river to Quincy, Illinois, and proceeded to Canada. The Reverend William Sellers of the LaGrange Circuit was under suspicion, and at public rallies the "Northwestern Methodist Preachers" were called abolitionists and alleged to carry "Benton's Freesoil speeches in their pockets."

<sup>44</sup> Leaton III, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>45</sup> Bucke, ed., II, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-69.

<sup>46</sup> Sweet, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-59; *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, III, 1848-1856. New York: Carlton and Porter, 1856, pp. 73-78, 80-95, 86-89; McTyeire, *op. cit.*, p. 646.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 647.

<sup>48</sup> Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 454.

<sup>49</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. i, 43-44, 59.

The local citizens voted five resolutions, asking such preachers to leave and also excluding religious or political speakers who might come from Quincy, a city "containing some of the vilest abolition thieves in the Mississippi Valley."<sup>50</sup>

The nearby Hannibal Methodist Episcopal Church, sustained by Illinois Methodism, was caught betwixt and between. It spoke out against attempts to destroy "religious and political liberties." However, these words were inserted: "We do heartily condemn what is usually termed the underground railroad operation, and all other systems of negro stealing."<sup>51</sup>

There was opposition in Illinois, too, to the underground railroad operations, from those who thought that the fugitive slave law as part of the Compromise of 1850 must be accepted since all else was second to the Union. One indication of the disputes created among Church members is the recollection of the quarterly meeting at Hendersonville (near Galesburg) when the preacher was asked, "Would you harbor a slave who had escaped from his master?" Upon his answer, "Yes I would!" he was defended by presiding elder A. E. Phelps who said, "That's right, brother Burr; the Bible commands you to feed the hungry and clothe the naked."<sup>52</sup>

Possibly the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 stirred the Methodists to greater action. After Stephen A. Douglas presented in January the first version of his bill, a great storm of fury swept across the northern part of the country. The storm was centered in the Northwest rather than in the Northeast. Some people in Illinois were wondering why a senator from their own state would endorse the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the moral issue was quickly raised. The pulpit is said to have burst forth in wrath against this great assault on freedom, which might carry slavery into the Nebraska territory. A protest signed by 500 clergymen of the Northwest denounced Douglas for his "want of courtesy and reverence toward man and God."<sup>53</sup> Douglas, in turn, charged all such ministers with "having prostituted the sacred desk to the miserable and corrupting influences of party politics." Increasingly bitter editorials and letters appeared in the various Meth-

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-42. See N. Dwight Harris, *The History of Negro Servitude in Illinois*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1904, p. 146; Harris states that Quincy was an early center of the Liberty Party in Illinois.

<sup>51</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>52</sup> J. J. Fleharty, *Glimpses in the Life of the Rev. A. E. Phelps and His Co-Laborers*. Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1878, p. 152. From 1851 to 1853, Phelps was in charge of the Rock Island District of the Rock River Conference, which had been separated from the Illinois Conference in 1840, due to the growth of Methodism in the state.

<sup>53</sup> Arthur C. Cole, *The Era of the Civil War 1848-1870*. Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1919, p. 122.

odist periodicals as they reflected the antagonisms of their sections.<sup>54</sup>

The result was that the Illinois Annual Conference in 1854 supported Peter Akers' resolutions declaring the Fugitive Slave Law immoral and terming the state's year-old Anti-Negro Act as humiliating. Furthermore, the Conference decided that the time-honored Methodist rule against slavery should be strengthened. The ambiguous rule stated that members should avoid "evil of every kind . . . such as . . . the buying and selling of men, women, and children, with an intention to enslave them." Slaveholders increasingly contended that this referred only to the slave trade. After the division of the denomination in 1845, neither branch had changed the rule, for fear of losing the border states. Now, however, the Illinois Conference asked that the next General Conference should substitute the words "the buying, or selling, or *holding in slavery* men women or children for mercenary purposes."<sup>55</sup> This added phrase "holding in slavery" became known as the "New Rule" proposition and remained the center of controversy in northern Methodism throughout the remainder of the decade.

The Rock River Conference resolution was similar to that of the downstate Conference, except that it was passed unanimously. Two reasons were given for the action, the first being "on the ground of consistency," the second bringing in the political overtones and fears about the territory:

In view of the late aggressive movements of Slave power, instance, the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, the Nebraska Bill, and the infamous Black Laws of our own State. These aggressive movements are suggestive and ominous. They loudly call upon all the friends of freedom, and especially all christians to make the most determined resistance to any further encroachment of slavery, and to put forth combined and persevering effort for the utter extermination of this *blighter* of the Lord's heritage and most ruthless foe of human rights. Your committee feel the force of the argument, that Slavery is a civil institution—that over and around it is thrown the mighty aegis of law. That it is in this light, the Slave System is to be viewed, and in this light, practically dealt with by the church.<sup>56</sup>

The above resolution seems to imply a promise to work with the new political non-extensionists against the "Slave System".

Because of pleas from missionaries working on the border, the

<sup>54</sup> Swaney, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-75; William Warren Sweet, *The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War*. Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1912, pp. 44-45.

<sup>55</sup> *Minutes of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1854*, p. 24.

<sup>56</sup> *Minutes of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1854*, p. 26.

downstate Conference backed away in 1855 from support of the New Rule, but the Rock River Conference became increasingly vehement.<sup>57</sup> In the mid-1850's, the first divergence of viewpoints between the upper and lower parts of the old Northwest became noticeable. New settlers poured into the Great Lakes regions, making Chicago the epitome of western growth. Cyrus McCormick had opened his reaper factory and the new Galena railroad was sending the first cars of wheat to the harbor front. The Mississippi River waterway and other ties with the border were no longer important to many of these new settlers.

And for the Methodists of the Chicago area, new voices were being heard. Most insistent of those demanding the New Rule was James Dempster, who came from New England to Chicago in 1854 to establish the Garrett Biblical Institute.<sup>58</sup> Elected as an alternate delegate to the General Conference, Dempster was pronounced a "master of logic" as he classed slaveholding with "theft, robbing, falsehood, swearing, and licentiousness" as sins that should never be permitted church members. However, he did not persuade the strong minority who insisted that exerting an influence on the border depended upon the *Discipline* remaining unchanged. The vote was 122 to 96 for the New Rule, but this was 27 votes short of the required two-thirds majority.<sup>59</sup>

By coincidence, it was on the very same day—May 29, 1856, when the General Conference failed to establish the New Rule—that in Illinois the State Convention of the Republican Party was held. This was the occasion in Bloomington of Lincoln's famous "Lost Speech". James Shaw, a young Methodist minister, only two years removed from Ireland and assigned to the "second Methodist" Church of Bloomington, was present. "They drew up resolutions," he said, "and formed a *plan* to resist the further encroachments of slavery."<sup>60</sup>

The "plan" may not have been announced quite that precisely. Most people in the state were not yet willing to be called abolitionists.<sup>61</sup> But certainly many of the conservatives were now de-

<sup>57</sup> *Western Christian Advocate*, October 31, 1855, p. 174; *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, October 24, 1855, p. 170. Differences among the conferences in Illinois are detailed in White, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-101.

<sup>58</sup> A. D. Field, *Memorials of Methodism in the Bounds of the Rock River Conference*. Cincinnati: Cranston and Stowe, 1886, pp. 409-20.

<sup>59</sup> L. C. Matlack, *The Antislavery Struggle and Triumph of the Methodist Episcopal Church*. New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1881, pp. 260-63; John Dempster, *Lectures and Addresses*. Cincinnati: Poe and Hitchcock, 1864, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> James Shaw, *Twelve Years in America*. London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1867, p. 114.

<sup>61</sup> The editor of the Springfield newspaper which opposed Douglas stated: "Abolition is an odious epithet among us, and we do not believe that there are a dozen men to be found in Sagamon County to whom it can be properly applied." *Illinois Journal*, October 19, 1854, p. 2.

terminated to resist "further encroachments of slavery". As historian Avery Craven has pointed out, the question of slavery extension became the *slavery issue*. The non-extensionist took over the old abolitionist movement.<sup>62</sup> When this happened, it is logical that the growing antislavery sentiments in the church would force its leaders into the political arena. Old political parties, including Cartwright's Jacksonian Democrats, were breaking, and the new Republican party was becoming visible in Illinois. Consciously or unconsciously, church and state were entangled in political arguments and issues.

Events of May 1856 also included the "Crime Against Kansas Speech," and the subsequent caning of Senator Charles Sumner. The Bloomington minister commented that the government was in the grasp of the slaveholder. "Northern senators," he wrote, "were smitten down by southern men, in the national capitol, for uttering words of freedom."<sup>63</sup>

Showing almost as much emotion were the utterances of the Rock River Conference that fall. At the conclusion of the annual Report on Slavery two resolutions were voted, condemning both the outrages permitted in Kansas and the "bullyingism and blackguardism" recently enacted in the halls of the Congress of the United States.<sup>64</sup> Also alarmed was Peter Akers who joined political leaders in predicting secession and civil war. In a chapel message at McKendree College he reportedly declared, "But through this bloody baptism we must pass for the deliverance of the slave from bondage."<sup>65</sup>

However, there may have been hope of finding middle ground by way of political compromise until the Supreme Court on March 6, 1857, handed down the Dred Scott decision, declaring against citizenship for the Negro. The aging Chief Justice Taney added the *obiter dictum* that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 was unconstitutional. The new Republican party was left with no means of carrying out its anti-extension principle except by appealing to the Higher law.<sup>66</sup> The Panic of 1857 added to ominous signs, as the financial crisis caused the moral and economic forces in the North to join hands.

Justice John McLean, the Methodist member of the Supreme Court, now joined Justice Benjamin Curtis in a dissenting opinion

<sup>62</sup> Avery Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War*. Phoenix Books, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966, pp. 340-41.

<sup>63</sup> Shaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-12.

<sup>64</sup> *Minutes of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1856, p. 23.

<sup>65</sup> W. C. Walton, *Centennial McKendree College*. Lebanon, Illinois: McKendree College, 1928, p. 102.

<sup>66</sup> Pease and Pease, *op. cit.*, p. lxxvii.

that was circulated by both the Republican party and the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>67</sup> The Rock River Conference added this opinion:

The late *exparte* decision of our Supreme Court, by which history was falsified, the national Constitution sectionalized, and by which previous decisions for freedom as the national birthright of all the inhabitants of our country were reversed, has excited in our hearts inexpressible sorrow and grief, disgracing us, as it does, before the nations of the earth, and convinces us that great battles for freedom have yet to be fought.<sup>68</sup>

While the official records of the downstate Conferences in 1857 and 1858 do not mention the political agitation, there was doubtless heated discussion. The reminiscences of William Mitchell, minister at Clinton, tell about the gathering of his Conference at Decatur in 1857, with the veteran Peter Cartwright being "among the most zealous" of the preachers present. "The slavery question," he recalled, "was then the most exciting topic of the times—as it continued to be for several years—and among those who inveighed against the institution was Cartwright."<sup>69</sup>

Another downstate minister, Allen Buckner, spoke about the rising war fever from 1858 to 1860, with lines being drawn and good friends made enemies even at a church service. "I made a remark," he said, "commending Abraham Lincoln which angered one of the Stewards to such a degree that he rose up rushing down the aisle with the remark 'I will not stand that.'"<sup>70</sup>

Even while people in Illinois were choosing sides between Lincoln and Douglas, the Methodists were again dividing over the New Rule. There was fear of another division of the Church, which might have separated the upper from the lower Old Northwest. James Leaton, secretary and historian of the Illinois Conference, assessed the situation when he wrote that the public sentiment was "more active and violent as its distance from slave territory increases and its personal knowledge of slavery diminishes."<sup>71</sup> The vote from Illinois at the General Conference of 1860 was indeed divided geographically, the 10 delegates from the two northern conferences

<sup>67</sup> Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery*. New York: Harper and Row, 1960, pp. 252-53.

<sup>68</sup> *Minutes of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1857*, p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> William Mitchell, *Personal Reminiscences*. Arcola, Illinois: Arcola Record Press, 1897, no page number.

<sup>70</sup> Allen Buckner, "Memoirs of Allen Buckner." Manuscript in Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> *Minutes of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1859*, p. 29.

voting "yea" and the 10 delegates from the two southern conferences voting "nay".<sup>72</sup>

The Illinois Conference had adopted a pamphlet-length report in defense of the conservative position, written by Leaton and seeking to prove that Methodism always had been and still was "anti-slavery". Furthermore, since the General Conference of the Church, South, had finally in 1858 voted all mention of slavery out of its *Discipline*, Leaton pointed out that the "M.E. Church" was the only institution bearing a clear witness against slavery in the border states. His conclusion was as follows:

And who are they who think that the Church is not sufficiently anti-slavery already? And who demand that she should change her policy on this subject? Not those who have exposed themselves to privation, to persecution, and even to martyrdom in carrying the gospel into the enemy's strongholds; not those who have faced the Missouri border ruffians and the Texas mobs . . . , not those who in 1836 and 1844 fought for Methodism against abolitionism on the one hand and proslaveryism on the other; not those who after the great secession when they heard the faithful ones in the slave States who had not gone with the multitude into the Church South crying, 'Come over and help us,' took their lives in their hands and ran to their help; it is not these who desire the Church to change her policy on slavery.<sup>73</sup>

The above position was held by a vanishing minority, although the New Rule again failed to gain the required two-thirds vote, this time 138 to 74. However, the disciplinary chapter on slavery was strengthened, which could be done by a simple majority vote. The "New Chapter" was declared to be advisory rather than binding.<sup>74</sup> Even so, there was a meeting to plan secession from the Church by laymen in the Baltimore area. There may have been some such agitation in Southern Illinois.<sup>75</sup> However, this Conference, meeting in October 1860, voted acquiescence to the actions of the General Conference. In fact, the resolutions are more strongly worded than are those of the three conferences to the north:

We have not the least sympathy with any movement wherever inaugurated, that contemplates the secession of any annual conference or conferences from the Church, consequence of the introduction into the *Discipline* of the new chapter upon slavery.

<sup>72</sup> *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1860.* New York: Carlton and Porter, 1860, pp. 244-46.

<sup>73</sup> *Minutes of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1859,* pp. 24-30.

<sup>74</sup> *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1860,* op. cit., pp. 244-46; Matlack, op. cit., pp. 294, 312.

<sup>75</sup> Swaney, op. cit., pp. 228-231.

That we hear with surprise and regret, of the occasional utterance upon the part of some of our church members, of opinions favorable to slavery in the abstract, and that we affectionately yet earnestly commend to the prayerful consideration of such brethren the following facts, viz, first, that no influence in all the land is arrayed with more inveterate hostility against the church of their choice, than is the case with the slave power of the country . . . .<sup>76</sup>

The words "slave power" meant something concrete to these ministers as they listened with astonishment to a sad announcement by their bishop at the Monday morning session, October 22, 1860. He reported the news of the "execution of A. Bewley, by a Texas mob."<sup>77</sup> Anthony Bewley was a brother minister well known to them, a rather feeble man of about sixty years, who had preached in Missouri and Arkansas after refusing to join the Church, South. He was placed in charge of the "Texas Mission District" in 1855, and he was warned in 1860 not to return to Texas, but he told his bishop that there were large German settlements on the Nueces, west of the Colorado, and they wanted his preaching.<sup>78</sup>

That summer it was rumored that he and a companion were responsible for the burning of several towns and poisoning of wells. Charged with insurrection, he was forced to flee the Indian Territory. His enemies followed him through Arkansas and Missouri, intent upon gaining a reward of one thousand dollars offered for him at Fort Worth. It is certain that he was hanged by a large mob on the night of September 13, 1860, although the northern and southern versions differed as to the cause. Some very gruesome accounts were printed describing his death and burial and the suffering of his semi-invalid wife who was left with a large family, including a blind daughter.<sup>79</sup>

Ministers of the Southern Illinois Conference, certain of the innocence of Bewley, immediately expressed "disapprobation and indignation at such an outrage." They said that "attacks made upon our preachers and people in Texas" were an "attack upon the civil and religious privileges of this country."<sup>80</sup>

The Rock River Conference, which had not been so enthusiastic about missionary work on the border, gave evidence of equal anger over the martyrdom of Bewley. The decision was to appoint a Committee of Correspondence, to join with like committees from

<sup>76</sup> *Minutes of the Southern Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1860, p. 31.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid., p. 9.*

<sup>78</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-51; Macum Phelan, *A History of Early Methodism in Texas*. Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1924, pp. 440-58.

<sup>79</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-99.

<sup>80</sup> *Minutes of the Southern Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1860, p. 11.*

other conferences, to appeal to the State and Federal authorities to seek that protection "to which, though hitherto withheld, we are, nevertheless, entitled under the Constitution and laws of our country."<sup>81</sup>

The Illinois Conference met before the bad news arrived, but the articulate Cartwright wrote the following letter to Dr. Elliott, now editor of the *Central Christian Advocate* (St. Louis):

Brother Bewley I knew long and well, and a better man hardly ever lived. He was no ultra-abolitionist. He was a peacefull, law-abiding citizen. . . . The Lord pity our country! It seems to me that all law is to be outraged, the Constitution to be overthrown, the day of anarchy and bloodshed to be inaugurated.<sup>82</sup>

The above lines were penned December 12, 1860, soon after the election of Lincoln, and, with the threatened secession of the Southern states, the "day of anarchy and bloodshed" truly was at hand.

After the firing upon Fort Sumter, it is significant that the Southern Illinois Conference, lying as it did in the same latitude with the border states, issued the most strongly worded demands of all for loyalty to the Union. In a series of resolutions drawn up at Salem, October 3, 1861, the ministers pledged themselves to do all they could for the support of the Government, "even to the taking up arms, if necessary, in its defense." However, the spirit which Lincoln would later display in his "with malice toward none" speech was evident as this admonition was given: "We need to strive, by watchfulness and prayer, to guard against imbibing and indulging in a spirit of revenge. Let us rather pray for our enemies and the enemies of our country." The last resolution was the most unusual of all: "Resolved, That our country's safety can be best promoted by merging all parties in one great, united, and strong Union party."<sup>83</sup>

Also noteworthy is the fact that Southern Illinois, politically a stronghold of the Democrats, after hearing the news of Fort Sumter, had at first blazed with sympathy for the Confederacy. Stephen A. Douglas in the last year of his life threw himself into the breach and won over most of the Democrats to the idea of perpetuation of the Union.<sup>84</sup> Apparently he had some assistance

<sup>81</sup> *Minutes of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1860, p. 11.*

<sup>82</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>83</sup> *Minutes of the Southern Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1861, pp. 29-30.*

<sup>84</sup> Theodore Calvin Pease, *The Story of Illinois*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925, pp. 168-69.

from Methodist ministers such as Peter Cartwright.<sup>85</sup> As these clergymen had turned more and more toward the government for help in their border struggles, they, in turn became more willing to urge political involvement and loyalty to the Union even to the point of war. No longer was there a conflict between their dislike of slavery and their love for the Union.

As antislavery sentiment was overwhelmed by loyalty to the Union, war-time emotions in turn brought forth a deeper hatred of slavery. All four Illinois Conferences, at a time when Lincoln was under fire politically in the North, endorsed President Lincoln's initial Emancipation Proclamation. Such action might be expected from the northern conferences, but the downstate Illinois Conference, meeting in Bloomington in October 1862, declared that the act was "worthy of the greatest statesman of the age."<sup>86</sup>

The Southern Illinois Conference was equally outspoken, declaring that since "slavery is a heinous sin against God and nature . . . we will fellowship no person who holds African slavery to be a divine institution." The total of seven resolutions could well have been incorporated into Lincoln's party platform as the ministers praised the President's war policy and promised that they would "enjoin patriotism from the pulpit and enforce it by the Discipline." Mounting antagonisms had brought them to the place where there was, in their own words, "no neutral ground." By their votes and their actions, they enforced these words when said simply, *Methodism is loyalty.*<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Although the aging Cartwright remained a Democrat, even speaking before the Democratic state convention in 1860, Governor Richard Yates testified that when he "needed the support of all good men in the Union cause, he felt cheered and strengthened by the earnest approval and strong influence of Peter Cartwright." See Adlai E. Stevenson, *Something of Men I Have Known*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1909, p. 238; Peter Cartwright, *Fifty Years as a Presiding Elder*. Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1871, p. 261.

<sup>86</sup> *Minutes of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862*, p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> *Minutes of the Southern Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862-63*, p. 37.