

Africo-American Presbyterian

"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH. AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii. 32.

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THE AFRO-AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL

IN SESSION AT THE WASHINGTON STREET CHURCH, READING, PA., OCTOBER 11-14.

By Thomas J. B. Harris, Executive Secretary, N. Y. City

The Afro-American Presbyterian Council of the North and West convened in its fortieth annual session with the people of Reading, Pa., on the above given date. This session was notable in many respects. An ever kind Providence smiled upon us and gave us ideal weather. Reading is the fourth city in size in the State of Pennsylvania and is noted for its various industries. Six different industries are carried on there. For this reason the people of Reading have not suffered as severely from unemployment as those in some other sections.

The feeling between the races seems to be very cordial and fraternal and it stands among the few cities in the nation as an example of racial good will and fellowship. It had been 20 years since Council met here and the people of the church and community were eagerly awaiting our coming. Washington Street church is among the oldest of our church organizations, being 111 years of age, and is a pride to the people who constitute its membership, many of whom can trace their ancestry back to the persons who were the founders of the church.

On the organization of Council the Rev. Wm. Holloway, D. D., the pastor of the entertaining church, was chosen as President; Mrs. Lillian E. Johnson, of St. John's church, Detroit, Michigan, was selected as temporary clerk, and Mrs. Lucy A. Green, of Princeton, N. J., and Elder George T. Hawkins, of West Chester, Pa., were voted into office as members of the Executive Committee.

The business of the Council then got under way, and from this point the work of the organization moved without a single hitch. Welcome addresses were extended to the body by Donald Palmer, chairman of the Board of Trustees, for the local church; for the churches of the city by Rev. Matthew Hamlin, of Bethel A. M. E. church; for the Presbytery by Dr. Harry S. Ecker, pastor of Olivet church, and for the city of Reading by His Honor Mayor Heber Ermentrout. The Rev. Leslie A. Taylor, of Plainfield, N. J., responded for the Council.

Evangelism, Church Extension, Christian Education, Social Service, Men's Work, Women's Work and Stewardship were the subjects that challenged the minds of the delegates who had assembled for inspiration and new ideas and methods of work. The leaders in the discussions were: Dr. Glasco, Rev. Geo. C. Ashton, Dr. Holloway, Mrs. Hester B. Lee, Dr. Imes, Elder P. Hawkins, Wendell P. Imes, Mrs. A. E. Bennett, Mrs. W. Mae Harris, Mrs. Florence Mabry, and Mrs. George J. Evans.

Rev. Fairley reported on the State of the Country, being assisted by Rev. H. R. Tolliver and Rev. Thomas E. Montouth. Dr. Colbert presented his report on Statistics which showed that the churches were holding their own and making gains.

The report on Necrology, presented by the Executive Secretary showed that two persons had passed since the last meeting: Mrs. Mary Carroll Glasco, wife of Dr. B. F. Glasco, of Pittsburgh, Pa., and

Mrs. Irvin W. Underhill, Jr., in Cameroun, West Africa, and wife of our beloved missionary.

Two addresses were delivered to the group assembled: the first by Dr. John W. Lee on "Forty Years of the Council;" and the second by Mrs. M. E. Ritzman, of Albright College, Reading, Pa.

The Friday night social feature was, as usual, a gala event. This annual reception to the ministers and delegates serves as an occasion for good fellowship. This joyful session was directed by Dr. Imes, the congenial pastor of St. James church. We think before many more years this gifted divine will qualify in the class of Mark Twain. But our good friend Bennett by no means made a poor second. Music was furnished by the church orchestra.

Council endorsed the Wagner-Costgan Anti-Lynching Bill and commended it to the churches for like action. A contribution was made to the N. A. A. C. P. to help further their activities in our interest.

The worship services were conducted on a very high level. Dr. Colbert, pastor of Grace church, Baltimore, Md., delivered the annual sermon at the opening of the Council on account of the absence of Rev. Coleman, of Detroit, Michigan, the retiring President. Dr. Colbert spoke on "The Voice of the Trumpet."

Sunday morning the Council worshipped in the Olivet church of which Dr. Ecker is pastor. We were joined in this service of worship by Dr. Ecker and his congregation. Dr. Glasco was the speaker for the morning service and he rose to the height of the surroundings and in his usual and forceful way spoke to the subject: "What Will Solve the Church's and the World's Problems?" After a very clear analysis of the many things that have been tried unsuccessfully he pointed out that a proper adjustment of man to God was the solvent.

At the evening hour we again returned to the same edifice augmented by the same congregation and there communed together in the final service of the day. The Rev. A. E. Mitchell gave the communion meditation and conducted the distribution of the elements, assisted by Dr. C. B. Allen and Rev. E. A. Bennett and the elders of Washington Street and Olivet churches. Nothing like this had been seen before in Reading. It was the forecast of a better racial understanding with the Christian Church taking the lead.

Dr. and Mrs. Holloway are doing a fine work at Reading. Dr. Holloway has tied up the work of his church to the community's needs. Opportunities in civil, educational and political life are being opened and the social application of the gospel is being practiced. Council expressed its thanks to him and his fine people for every care and consideration shown during our brief stay. They were tireless in their efforts to make us comfortable.

As a sidelight we might say no one seemed happier than Rve. E. A. Mitchell, of Philadelphia, because he had his bride with him. Well, that was

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ATMOSPHERE IN THE CHURCH SERVICE

By George I. Tilton, In The Presbyterian Advance

After fourteen years of service as organist and choir-master in Evangelical churches, I have had plenty of opportunity to observe the customs of those churches and the effect of those customs on the church life of the people. Naturally I have formed definite conclusions, feel that the time has come for those who are interested in church life and affairs to speak out in certain terms.

One of those conclusions is that, unless the Protestant Church changes her ways in certain instances, she is doomed to ultimate decay. The first thing that must be destroyed is that enemy of all progress—prejudice. We must cease to shun things because other sects practice them. If a certain course of action is shown to be beneficial, we should adopt it, regardless of whether or not another sect of which we may not approve is committed to it. In years past the Protestant Church has ignored beauty and order, largely because the Liturgical churches had beautiful buildings and orderly services. But that sort of thing can not go on. Prejudice has got to give way to reason.

To begin with, we must change our conception of the church building itself. In many instances it has been regarded merely as an auditorium where people come together to hear a discourse, oftentimes political, or irrelevant to the worship of God. Lectures, entertainments, all sorts of things are frequently held in the church, when it should be set apart as holy ground. The church is consecrated to sacred uses, to things pertaining to the worship of God, and must be kept so. We can not otherwise train youth to have regard for holy things. Let entertainments and lectures be held elsewhere, but keep the church free from all suggestions of worldliness.

Many churches are devoid of anything remotely resembling religious atmosphere. The windows are either plain or of some homely, inartistic design. "Storied" windows of stained glass are more fitting for the church. When a definite scheme of architecture is desired, plain glass has its uses; otherwise let the windows be beautiful and of such a character as to help the devotions of the people.

The old-style choir loft is another of the abominations happily passing. We may well copy the Anglican Church in our architectural plans and ideals, a three-fold plan—nave, choir and sanctuary. The pulpit the lectern should be on either side of the chancel, with the communion table or altar in the sanctuary. The cathedrals and many parish churches are cruciform in shape, the transepts forming the arms of the cross, the choir and sanctuary forming the head.

And that brings to my mind another prejudice that many Protestants cannot seem to rid themselves of, that of opposition to the display of the cross. Our Saviour died upon the cross, and therefore there is no other symbol so fitting for the Christian church, and there never will be any other symbol. I could never understand the prejudice against the cross. It should be in and on every church.

Vestments have a great deal to do with creating an atmosphere conducive to worship. Contrasts in dress are eliminated, and the picture presented is solemn and dignified, as befits

the church service. I favor the traditional vestments—the black cassock and white cotta.

A certain amount of ritual is necessary to any gathering. There must be a definite order and a regular way of doing things, if confusion is to be avoided. Lodges recognize this necessity and there are several beautiful lodge rituals in use. If it is necessary and appealing in the lodge room, it is just as much so in the church. The service need not be laden with ceremony. Simplicity is always to be desired. But there must be a common rule of practice where large numbers of people are brought together. If we kneel for prayer, sit for instruction, and stand for praise, the ritualistic problem will be solved.

And here the order of service must be considered. Each church is a law unto itself insofar as its order is concerned, and I feel that this lack of uniformity makes for confusion and general lack of interest. If each denomination had its own order, the members of each would feel at home in any church of that denomination, no matter where they might be. As it is now, the order is different in each Presbyterian church, in each Methodist church, in each Baptist church, and so on. That being the case, an effort should be made to make the services as smooth and logical in order as possible. If the governing bodies of the various denominations would draw up and present two or three recommended orders of service for their churches it would help considerably.

The processional may have a great deal to do with giving the service a devotional tone. It should be simply done, as anything suggestive of a "show" or a "stunt" is reprehensible. We go to church to worship God, not to witness a display; therefore everything which is done should conform to the one idea of worship.

The music is a great help if properly done and if the right kind of music is used. Happily there has been a great change for the better in the music of the evangelical Protestant Church during the last decade. It is not necessary to use only the very heaviest kind of music all the time, for the people will soon tire of it, and the church will only defeat its purpose in the matter of elevating the musical taste of the people. But the other extreme, the use of trite and trivial music to even more trite and trivial words should be discarded without hesitation. There is in existence much good music that is devotional, so that there is no excuse for cheapness.

The prelude, despite the term, is the first order of the service, and not preliminary to it. It should be played at the time for the opening of the service. It should be of such a character that the tone of the service is set by it. Here again, triviality should be taboo. There is a wealth of good music suitable for preludes, and there is no reason for using transcriptions of songs nor music that has secular associations. No suggestion of the world should creep into the church service, and the prelude may well set that ideal. Choral responses and choral ansens, canticles and antiphons give the service added solemnity. If the doxology is used, the original rhythm, as set out in the new Presbyterian Hymnal, is far more dignified than the

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BY THE WAY

By Uncle Billie

The color of the skin and the texture of the hair have nothing to do with the capacity of the mind; but obstacles can delay the mind in its development.

Of all the Southern States that sent Negroes to Congress South Carolina sent more; but it was not because South Carolina Negroes had more of the qualities of statesmanship than those of any other Southern State, but because of the advantages that came to South Carolina slave Negroes on account of a divided attitude toward the slave by some of the South Carolina slave owners. There was a small group in Charleston County and in the city of Charleston who were owners of large estates and slaves numbering up into the thousands. Many of these slave owners were very closely related by consanguinity to quite an innumerable host of their slave chattel. In Charleston, some were sufficiently human to set at liberty many of their colored kinsmen and a number of others who had rendered faithful service. They provided schools for these Negroes; and, of course, this gave South Carolina a larger group of Negroes more intellectually fit than the other Southern States.

In the course of years quite a large group of Negroes in and of Charleston became school teachers for the Negro race in elementary subjects; and the most outstanding was Daniel Alexander Payne, born in Charleston, February 24th, 1811 (two years after the birth of Abraham Lincoln). His mother and father were London and Martha Payne.

In his autobiography, Daniel Alexander Payne says his father, who was a class leader in the M. E. church, dedicated him to God before he, Daniel, was born. This young, ambitious youth worked at the carpenter's trade and studied during the late hours of the night. He was preparing himself to teach his people; and he opened his first school in a house on Tradd Street in the year 1829 and received three dollars a month for teaching three free children and three slaves. It is said that he studied hard and taught many branches.

In 1834, Payne sent two of his boy pupils to the country to find a viper and fetch it to him to be studied in zoology in the classroom. The son of the owner of the plantation asked the two Negro pupils their mission; and on being told, the young white man hastened to his father and said to him: "Payne is playing hell in Charleston." And the next year (1835) two representatives from Charleston had a bill passed through the legislature of South Carolina, forbidding free Negroes or white people to teach either free or slave Negroes. This forced young Payne, at the age of twenty-four, to leave Charleston. But he said: "I go, but I shall return;" and in 1865 he did return and as one of the Bishops of the A. M. E. Church.

Daniel Payne was a Negro of high ideals and aspirations; for when he left Charleston in 1835 he went to New York City in quest of an education that would fit him for a greater work God had for him. Here he met Alexander Crummel, a young colored man. He gave Crummel six of his only twelve dollars to help him (Crummel) to go to Ox-

ford College, England. Crummel was graduated from Oxford and became the first Negro Episcopal Rector in the United States. Payne was sent to the Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, Pa., from which he was graduated. He was advised by the Lutheran minister to connect himself with the A. M. E. Church where his opportunities would be better for the development of his powers and where he could render greater service to his people. He then conducted a private school in Spruce Street, Philadelphia.

In 1852, at the age of forty-one years (and seven years after leaving Charleston) Payne was elected Bishop of the A. M. E. Church.

In 1856 Payne went to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he married a widow with 7 children. At this time Payne was assistant Principal and a trustee of Wilberforce, a school that was conducted by the M. E. Conference of that State, for free Negroes of the North.

When the M. E. Conference convened in Cincinnati in 1862, Bishop Payne was there; and this Conference offered to sell Wilberforce to Bishop Payne for ten thousand dollars, the amount they owed on the institution. The Bishop did not have the money. He asked for time to go to the Pittsburgh Conference; but his white M. E. Church brethren asked for "an immediate answer." The Bishop said: "Let us pray." They all knelt in prayer, and on rising from his knees the Bishop said: "Without a dollar in my pocket I buy this property in the name of Almighty God and the African Methodist Episcopal Church." He then went to Pittsburgh, Pa., and got James G. Mitchell and Jas. A. Shorter to move to Wilberforce, while he left for England in 1862, where he remained for three years. In 1865 he returned with seven thousand dollars.

On the 14th of April, 1865, a message was received that Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated, and at the same time that Wilberforce was burned. At this news it is said that Bishop Payne stuck his gold-headed cane in the ashes and said: "It went down in wood, but it will come up in brick;" and it did, through the efforts and vision of one of South Carolina's free Negroes, who left Charleston because he was not allowed to give his people light; but he went where he could.

Daniel Alexander Payne had no white relatives to stand by him, as quite a number did in Charleston, in financial support as he struggled in the North to rise above the satanic plight that the legislature of South Carolina intended as an everlasting fixity to hold his people in ignorance. His picture before me today as I write this article, designates him as a man of pure African blood; but he is dead, and there are others, while the spirit of all Charleston County, that a Negro "plays help" if he is able to give his people light, yet abides.

The wise are instructed by reason; ordinary minds by experience; the stupid by necessity; and brutes by instinct.—Cicero.

Thou art in the end what thou art. Put on wigs with millions of curls, set thy foot upon all-high rocks. Thou abidest ever—what thou art.—Johann Wolfgang Goethe.