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BY J. A. SELBY.

COLUMBIA, S. C., THURSDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1865.

VOL. 1—NO. 137

THE PHOENIX IS PUBLISHED DAILY AND TRI-WEEKLY AND THE WEEKLY CLEANER

EVERY WEDNESDAY.
BY JULIAN A. SELBY.
TERMS—IN ADVANCE.
SUBSCRIPTIONS.
Daily Paper, six months..... \$5 00
Tri-Weekly, " " " " " " " " 3 50
Weekly, " " " " " " " " 2 00
Single copies of the Daily and Tri-Weekly,
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ADVERTISEMENTS
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Pastoral Address of the Southern
Methodist Bishops.

We have the great pleasure of presenting to our readers, below, the pastoral address of the Southern Methodist bishops, and beg their attention to it as a most noble and lucid exposition of the feelings of the great Divines of the Methodist Church, South, concerning the late war, and many of the grave questions which arose out of it. It is worthy the most candid perusal, which we have no doubt it will receive:

To the Preachers and Members of the
Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

BELOVED BRETHREN: Through the Providence of God, we have been permitted to hold our annual meeting. Having reviewed the condition of the Church, in the light of the best information we have been able to obtain from its various fields, and arranged the plan, herewith sent forth, of Episcopal visitation of the annual conferences at their approaching sessions, we do not feel that our responsibilities, as your chief pastors, would be discharged without giving you our views as to the bearing of passing events upon the Church, and our advice as to the duties growing out of the peculiar times in which our lots have been cast.

The close of the war reveals much destitution and material suffering within those States where the larger portion of our membership is situated. Let us hope that returning peace will bring other and coveted blessings in its train—civil and social order, quiet and remunerative industry and plenty to our land; and that our churches having rest may be edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, may be multiplied.

To these ends, you need not be reminded that it is not less your duty as Christians, than as loyal citizens, to contribute by all the means within your power. The cultivation of the graces of the Spirit will directly and mightily help forward the best interests of the country, now sore and broken and prostrate in its resources. Especially would we counsel mutual forbearance and conciliation in those sections where brethren have differed on the great issue which has finally been decided by arms, and conscientiously held opposing opinions and courses throughout the contest. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speakings be put away from you, with all malice. Be kind one to another, and let pastors and people set themselves, in the temper of our Master, to healing the divisions and heart-burnings and alienations that may unhappily have arisen during the calamitous years through which we have just passed. The end of the war ought to be the end of all strife; for it would be unreasonable and reprehensible in us as Christians to perpetuate a conflict which, in our relations as citizens of one common country, has been settled. Seek peace and pursue it. Build again the waste places of Zion. And forget not to pray for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

The condition of the conferences and portions of our territory which have been the principal theatre of armies and battles will render the support of the ministry, for the present at least, difficult. They are

threatened with that great calamity, "not a famine of bread nor thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." Never were the counsels and consolations of our holy religion and the ordinances of God's house, more needed by you and your families and your neighbors. We beseech you, brethren, let no labor or sacrifice hinder you from preaching and hearing the Gospel. To accomplish this result, your self-denials must be mutual and cheerful. The work of saving the souls of dying men, and of extending the Redeemer's Kingdom, must go forward. Our youth must be instructed, Sabbaths hallowed, and our sanctuaries kept open. When and wherever necessary, we commend to the preachers the example of the Apostle of the Gentiles in ministering to the Corinthians, "working with his own hands." And to the members, the example of the churches of Macedonia, whose "deep poverty" in a great trial of affliction, abounded into the riches of their liberality. Have the days of a heroic and suffering ministry passed away? We trust not, but hope to see it illustrated in the opportunities the present distress affords. We cannot draw in our lines. We cannot abandon any field. But rather, in the spirit of our fathers, at once conservative and aggressive, while maintaining positions already taken, we must extend our labors to regions beyond.

In the change from slaves to freed-men, which has providentially befallen the negroes of the Southern States, our obligations to promote their spiritual welfare have not ceased. We are still debtor to them free, as before to them bond. Under the Divine blessing, our Church has done a great work for this people. Their moral training, and generally diffused knowledge of the cardinal truths of Christianity, and their ecclesiastical discipline, have justly won the admiration of many who have lately come into contact and acquaintance with them. It has accomplished more—it has materially contributed to their subordination and inoffensive behavior through the late defenceless and excited times, when prophecies were confident and opportunities frequent for domestic insurrection. And their safe though sudden passage from a state of bondage to liberty, a transition accompanied by no violence or tumult on their part, is largely due to the same cause. Though often reviled while prosecuting the evangelization of the colored people by those who claimed to be their better friends, Southern Methodists have persevered in it not without blessed results. We might have done more, but we should be thankful to the grace of God that we have not done less. Our labor has not been in vain in the Lord. Multitudes have been saved, who will be our crown of glory in "that day." And, that the good effects of our religious teaching bestowed upon them in bondage will follow the race into their new condition and help to prepare them for it, is matter of pleasing reflection to us.

Our numerous membership among them of over two hundred and forty thousand, exclusive of the congregations and catechumens who received instruction from our pastors and missionaries, has been much reduced by recent changes and casualties. If it should be still further reduced, we need not be surprised. Defections, doubtless, will take place from their ranks to ecclesiastical organizations offering greater social inducements for their adhesion. If they elect to leave us, let them go, with the assurance that as heretofore we have been, so will we continue to be, their friends, and in every suitable way aid their moral development and religious welfare. We must still keep up a place and a service for those who remain with us and for others who, after a brief experiment elsewhere, may wish to return. While no factious opposition, on the one hand, should be offered to the exercise of their fullest liberty in choosing their ecclesiastical associations; on the other no desire of being rid of a responsibility should incline you to treat their action in so grave a matter with indifference, or to let them take their way in ignorance of all the issues involved. Give them

exact information and patient explanation. Act faithfully and kindly in all things towards them, and as becomes those who truly care for their souls.

Reconstruction or re-union with the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, has, within the last few months, been brought before the public by the denominational papers, and by their preachers and members in published addresses and resolutions. Their bishops and missionary secretaries held a meeting in June, the proceedings of which, embracing this subject, have been published by order. Under these circumstances some allusion to it may be proper from us.

You are aware that at our first general conference a delegate was appointed to visit the general conference of the Northern Methodists, and present to that body our Christian salutations, with the offer to establish fraternal relations and a closer intercourse between us as members of the same spiritual family. He was, in all respects, a most proper and unexceptionable minister, and performed the part assigned him in a most proper and unexceptionable manner. He presented his credentials to that body, and asked and awaited their decision. They granted him no hearing in their presence. They declined to receive him in his official character. They rejected his offer. He closed his intellectual mission by informing them, in a communication which he assumed them was final, that as they had rejected our offer, we could no more renew it. We held ourselves acquitted of any breach of Christian unity that might appear. But in any time, they should formally and officially make the same offer to us, the door would be open for its consideration. This was in 1843. They have since made no such offer. There the matter rests, and we might well be excused from any further reference to it.

We feel bound to say to you, however, that since then the position of Northern Methodists towards us has been somewhat changed. Having agreed with us on a plan of separation into two independent ecclesiastical jurisdictions, and for an equitable division of the Church property, they afterwards sought to repudiate their covenant and evade payment, a step only brought to settlement at the end by the law. This plan, though grandly by themselves, who were in a majority, and subsequently confirmed by the Supreme Court of the United States as the basis of our legal and constitutional rights, has been, whenever convenient, ignored by them.

They have endeavored by misrepresentations to fix on us the invidious character of secessionists and schismatics, without authority or cause from the parent body; whereas we are, in all respects, coequal and coeval with themselves.

The abolition, for military and political considerations, of the institution of domestic slavery in the United States, does not affect the question that was prominent in our separation in 1843. Nor is this the only difference or the principal one between us and them. While testifying with pleasure to the noble conduct and sentiments of many brethren among them, we must express, with regret, our apprehension that a large proportion, if not a majority, of Northern Methodists have become incurably radical. They teach for doctrine the commandments of men. They preach another gospel. They have incorporated social reforms and political tests into their church creeds. They have gone on to impose conditions upon discipline that Christ did not impose. Their pulpits are perverted to agitations and questions not healthful to personal piety; but promotive of political and ecclesiastical discord, rather than of those ends for which the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ was instituted. Without such a change as we see no immediate prospect of in their tone and temper and practice, we can anticipate no good result from entertaining the subject of re-union with them. Fidelity to what seems our providential mission requires that we preserve our distinct ecclesiastical organization, in all its vigor and integrity, free from entertaining alliance with those whose no-

tions of philanthropy and political and social economy are liable to give an ever varying complexion to theology. Let us abide in our lot, and be true to our calling, doing what we can to spread Scriptural holiness through these lands, and to oppose the tide of fanaticism which threatens their overthrow.

We, therefore, most earnestly would exhort you, brethren, to stand firmly on our platform of doctrine and discipline. Know your high calling. Preach Christ and him crucified. Do not preach politics. You have no commission to preach politics. The divinity of the church is never more strikingly displayed than when it holds on its even, straight-forward way in the midst of worldly commotions. Be not turned aside from your path by local, spurious, temporary influences, and in all your teaching, and administration of discipline, keep in view that rule of faith which declares that "the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man."

The conduct of certain Northern Methodist bishops and preachers, in taking advantage of the confusion incident to a state of war to intrude themselves into several of our houses of worship, and their continuing to hold these places against the wishes and protests of the congregations and rightful owners, causes us sorrow and pain, not only as working an injury to us, but as presenting to the world a spectacle ill calculated to make an impression favorable to Christianity. They are not only using to our deprivation and exclusion, churches and parsonages which we have built, but have proceeded to set up a claim to them as their property. By what shadow of right, legal or moral—we are at a loss to conceive. We advise our brethren who suffer these evils to bear them patiently, to cleave closely together, and not to indulge in any vindictive measures or tempers. A plain statement of the case, and an appeal to the justice of these authorities, cannot fail to defeat such scandalous designs, and secure us the full restoration of all our rights.

While some talk of re-union of the two churches, we forewarn you of a systematic attempt, already inaugurated, and of which the foregoing is only an instance, to disturb, and if possible disintegrate, and then absorb our membership individually. In the meeting of their bishops and missionary secretaries, alluded to, it was resolved to send preachers and plant societies to our midst wherever there is an opening. Their policy is evidently of division, destruction and ecclesiastical domination. Against all this be on your guard. Internal dissensions will do us much more harm than such outward antagonism. Be true to your principles, and under the divine favor they will triumph. In this connection you will be pleased to hear that our people are steadfast. The broader conferences, under special trials, present a noble example of steadfastness.

Not less as loyal citizens than as Christian men do we deplore the waste of power that must mark such unprovoked conflict; the passions that will be aroused, and the influences that will be generated, more or less, not only in the membership of both communions, but in those who sympathize with them. Teaching and affecting as it will, directly or indirectly, so large a population, and stirring the popular feelings so deeply, as religious ends ever do, the effect must be seriously to retard that settlement and agreement of an estranged and heated public temper, already begun, and the consummation of which is devoutly to be desired by every patriotic mind. For any such untoward results, we shall not be responsible.

Your General Conference, Providence permitting, will convene in New Orleans, on Wednesday, after the first Sunday in April next. To it will belong all such disciplinary changes and legislation as a wise regard to the wants of the Church and the times demand. We cannot close our address without an urgent and explicit recommend-

ation to you to adjust yourselves as citizens of the United States promptly, cheerfully and in good faith, to all your duties and responsibilities. Whatever may have been the opinions, positions or prejudices of any of you concerning the social and political changes that have occurred in the Government, we deem this course to be called for on your part, both by a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience.

Finally, brethren, we exhort you, above all things, to cultivate personal holiness. Keep up your family altars. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together for the regular and public worship of God. And may He give you the spirit of love and of a sound mind, and guide you in all things to His glory.

J. O. ANDREWS,
R. PAINE,
G. F. PIERCE.
COLUMBUS, GA., August 27, 1865.

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Leave Kingsville daily at 7:35 p. m.
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Arrive Kingsville " at 1:25 a. m.
Wilmington " at 2:05 p. m.
There is daily communication North by rail from Wilmington, and West weekly by steamer. These trains connect with trains on the North-eastern Railroad, Cheraw and Burlington Railroads, and Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. There is a line of stages between Sumter and Camden connecting with these trains.
HENRY M. DRANE,
Aug 28 16 General Superintendent.

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