

XX

LINCOLN AND METHODIST POLITICS

ON slavery and the war Simpson was torn in sentiment, his mind divided into factions, one set against the other. He loathed slavery, and his outbursts of patriotic oratory cursed it as the great sin of the Republic, the blot on the national honor. Early in the war he had told President Lincoln that emancipation was necessary; and to friends he had expressed approval of Frémont's order freeing the slaves in Missouri.¹

His private opinions did not bear public expression. He was silent on emancipation for much the same reason that Lincoln was. The war was for the preservation of the Union, the President had declared in revoking Frémont's order and stolidly resisting the demands of the Radicals for emancipation. To win the war, he must hold the border states in line; and if he could best maintain their support—and so preserve the Union—by refraining from interference with slavery, then he would let it alone. Simpson felt a like responsibility for preserving the unity of the church, large segments of which lay within slave territory. The bishops had never been abolitionist in sentiment, nor had they presumed to direct the affairs of state. The "new chapter" had sown dissension all along the border; thousands of members had withdrawn, and other withdrawals seemed imminent. What then could he gain for the church by preaching emancipation? He was not ready to join the Radicals, either in church or in government.

Emancipation came, none the less—pressed upon Lincoln by events and by the politics of the Radical Republicans. However commonplace in language and ambiguous in intent, the proclamation was a great document, clothed in essential humanity—an event

which would grow in stature and dignity and sentiment with the years. Men would clamor that they or their friends had had a part in it: that they had thought of it first, had urged it upon the President, had suggested this phrase or that. Nor would the Methodists be the least of the claimants. Was not Bishop Simpson a friend of Lincoln? Had he not visited him often in the White House? Had he not reported with his own lips that he had been one of the first to urge upon Mr. Lincoln the necessity of emancipation?

The bishop would have been amused by the picture his friends conjured up for posterity: Matthew Simpson, prophet, a modern Nathan, confronting Abraham Lincoln, the David of his people, with a bony finger and crying, "Thou Art the Man—Emancipate, or I go to tell the people"; and Lincoln, able to fend for himself against Horace Greeley, Ben Wade, Thad Stevens, and the Radicals on Capitol Hill, abashed before the man of God, kneeling, joining the company in praying twice around, rising with tears in his eyes, pledging "I will do it," and then, a few days later, issuing the immortal Emancipation Proclamation.²

Unhappily for the myth makers, events rendered the tale implausible. Under the plan of episcopal visitation the bishop was to travel to California and Oregon in the summer of 1861. Mrs. Simpson was indignant over the arrangement. He had not yet fully regained his strength after the long illness of 1858-1859, and he was scarcely fit for so exhausting a journey. She was even more concerned over the dangers of travel: Indians if he went overland, Jefferson Davis and his privateers if he went by steamer.³

Urged by his wife and his friends in Evanston and Chicago, Simpson wrote to each of his episcopal colleagues, outlining the possible dangers and seeking their advice. Ames, taciturn, and reviving perhaps some of the old antagonism he had felt for his Indiana competitor, was blunt and scornful: The work on the Pacific required attention; the dangers of the ocean voyage were not greatly increased by the war; nor would he himself be fearful, because of hostile Indians, of making the overland journey. However, his "opinion of duty would be the same even if the danger were certain, and imminent." As he understood it, one ordained to the episcopal office accepted "the toils, and danger . . . as well as the honors and emoluments." He knew no instance in the history of their church

in which a bishop had "refused to perform his official work through fear of personal danger." Yet he did not feel free to give advice, "for this thing of courage, or cowardice, is owing, perhaps, in part to physical organization"; and he hardly knew "how to sympathize with weak nerves."⁴

The other bishops were more charitable. Baker, Janes, and Scott thought Simpson ought not to go, although Scott confessed that had he been designated he might have been "imprudent enough to go despite the danger." Ames in the meantime satisfied himself after some investigation of the overland route that it was safe, and forwarded the conclusion to his hesitant colleague.⁵

Ames's spleen gave Simpson but one possible course: to go to California. Reserving passage from New York to Panama, he left Chicago on June 17, 1861. By this time friends had begun to fight his battle in good earnest. Unable to appeal on the basis of danger, they pleaded for his services in behalf of missions; the fund was exhausted, the cause was suffering, and Simpson above all others was best able to solicit contributions. The Missionary Board met in New York, attended to the appeal, and resolved that Simpson, "if consistent with his convictions of duty," should omit the visit in 1861 to California and Oregon and devote himself to raising funds for missions. All the bishops save Ames concurred. On this intervention of "Providence," Simpson agreed to a postponement of the California trip.⁶

When the plan of episcopal visitation for 1862 was drawn up, Simpson was accordingly scheduled to meet the Oregon and California conferences in August and September. Allowing extra time for supervision of the work, he sailed from New York early in June. He was in California in mid-July when Lincoln, returning from a funeral with Secretaries Seward and Welles, declared that he was going to issue a proclamation of emancipation. When the President discussed the matter with his cabinet a week later, Simpson was on the high seas, bound from San Francisco to Portland. In the days that followed, the bishop was busy preaching, lecturing, laying cornerstones, and dedicating new buildings. He returned to San Francisco by river steamer and stage, and left by stage for Chicago on September 16. He reached his home in Evanston on October 15, three weeks after Lincoln issued the proclamation.⁷

II

If Simpson's primary purpose in seeing the President was not to demand emancipation, what was it? He himself explained it simply as "matters of the Church"; and, indeed, it was. John Lanahan said the bishop was much concerned about the treatment of Methodists by the government, by Lincoln and the dispensers of patronage.⁸

His was not an unusual pursuit. However calamitous the war, it did not command the President's undivided attention; the extent of the disaster was hidden by the future, and men's hopes for an early peace were not yet shattered. In the meantime each man of influence must think the affairs of the nation best provided for if he himself had some hand in the distribution of patronage. The Republican victory at the polls had been the triumph of a party, and the spoils must be divided by political means. Lincoln made the most thoroughgoing sweep of personnel that had been made by any President; and in filling the vacancies he took pains to consult "every one who had a right to be heard."⁹

Not least among the aspirants were the Methodists. Exceptionally conscious of their numerical strength and the growing prestige derived from their property holdings and educational ventures, and from the prominent positions held by a few of their laymen, they sought what seemed to them a fair proportion of the political spoils. Simpson was pressed by office seekers: one desired the superintendency of Indian affairs for the Northwest; one, a commission to the Sandwich Islands; one, a connection in the German consulate for his son who was studying abroad; one, the governorship of a territory; and numbers sought clerkships at Washington or chaplaincies in the army or navy. Even John Lanahan, irascible preacher at Alexandria, confessed: "If Lincoln should *want* a Methodist for a respectable place—which is not likely—and would appoint me 'Navy Agent for the D.C.' I would not *decline*."¹⁰

From the outset the Methodists fared rather poorly. Simpson was thoroughly displeased when Minister Joseph Wright was "summarily ejected" from Berlin and no comparable post was found for another Methodist. John Lanahan charged that the "treatment of our people by this Administration is an open, standing insult to the

Church." If he could get the other preachers of the region to join him he "would let Mr. Lincoln know it *in no measured terms.*" In one way or another they succeeded in making the President aware of their demands. It was whispered about that he would give "very great weight" to "the cordial & hearty recommendations of our church authorities." Late in July of 1861, Henry C. Whitney overheard the President reading a letter of introduction to Secretary Chase which he had just written for an elderly gentleman who was waiting. The letter stated that "the bearer's recommendations were satisfactory and the fact that he was urged by the Methodists should be in his favor, as they were 'complaining some of us.'" ¹¹

Simpson, extremely sensitive to the charge which the Church, South, and the secular press were quick to make, that he was dabbling in politics, was cautious. So far as possible he made his recommendations through James Harlan, senator from Iowa and a long-time friend; Harlan in turn called upon the bishop to strengthen his own hand, as in the case of Jesse Bowen of Iowa City. Harlan wanted a letter from the bishop in Bowen's behalf. "We recommended his appointment to Bogato [*sic*]," the senator explained, a place which probably had been filled, "but a letter mentioning that place—*dated back*, so as not to seem ridiculous would answer my purpose, and I doubt not be of great service to Gen. Bowen." ¹²

Whatever his sensitivity, the bishop did not hesitate to confront the President himself with the claims of the Methodists when he had the opportunity. Such an occasion arose in the fall of 1861, and Secretary of War Simon Cameron presented him to the President. Briefly and pointedly, he contrasted the unfavorable attitude toward appointments from among the numerically strong Methodists as compared with members of smaller denominations.

To Simpson's astonishment Lincoln, through Cameron, promptly invited him to name the minister to Honduras! Nonplused and cautious, Simpson protested that he had "no wish to make appointments to office": he had simply been objecting to "unjust distinctions between Churches." He took the opportunity, however, to rebuke the President once more for ejecting Joseph Wright from Berlin without finding a comparable post for any other Methodist. Had Lincoln "proffered an appointment of the same grade"—thus "restoring us in this respect to the position we held under the last administration"—he would have suggested his friend Colonel Alexander Cummings

of Philadelphia, who had been "overlooked by this administration." There was at hand, however, an opportunity for the President to exhibit his good will. Cameron had promised the chaplaincy at West Point to Dr. John McClintock "because of his peculiar fitness." He would so confer it unless the President refused authority. It was clearly a "test point, which would indicate whether or not Lincoln was fairly disposed towards the Methodists." The President evidently failed in the test, for McClintock did not get the appointment.¹³

In the meantime, Simpson—and Bishop Ames, who collaborated with him—made some effort to cultivate members of the cabinet. They were on particularly friendly terms with Edwin M. Stanton, Cameron's successor in the War Department, and Salmon P. Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury.

Simpson was most favorably disposed toward Stanton. Despite an irascible temper and political double dealing, the Secretary of War was earnestly religious at the verbal level. He frequently consulted with the leaders of the church, felt no embarrassment in asking them to pray, "habitually invoked divine favor in behalf of his generals and their armies," and had "the firmest conviction" that the Lord directed the Union forces. Apparently he had known Simpson since the early 1830's, when he had gone to Cadiz, Ohio, from his native Steubenville to practice law. One of his first official acts as Secretary of War, in January, 1862, and his first friendly gesture toward Methodism, was to appoint Bishop Ames a commissioner, along with Hamilton Fish, to visit Federal prisoners at Richmond. He yielded to Methodist demands for chaplaincies, named Simpson's son to a commission, and requested the bishop himself early in 1863 to serve as chairman of a commission to visit Fortress Monroe, New Bern, Port Royal, and New Orleans "to examine the condition of the colored people and make suggestions." Simpson, sensitive to the hallowed tradition and spiritual sanctity of his office, "declined any such position."¹⁴

Simpson had known Chase in Cincinnati—had won his praise for editorials on the Fugitive Slave Law. He now saw an opportunity to forge a closer alliance between the statesman and the church. Was not the unparalleled success of the English Wesleyans in their missionary enterprises largely due to the practice of associating "public men" with their meetings, either as speakers or as presiding officers?

Would it not be wise to invite Chase to preside over missionary rallies of the church and to make an address if "compatible with his feelings"? Chase, a religious man and an inordinately ambitious politician, well aware of the Methodists' numerical strength, accepted the invitation with alacrity.¹⁵

Quite willing to take Methodist claims into account, Chase balked when Senator Harlan urged his old friend Jesse Bowen for an auditorship or a chief clerkship: both positions required specialized training which Bowen did not have. But he had in mind a Mr. Walker who, "if not a member is a regular attendant in the same Church and should become a member." Would Ames and Simpson concur in recommending him? And would they accept his appointment "as evidence of the appreciation justly due to the body whom you represent"?¹⁶

Simpson had "but little acquaintance with Mr. W." As for church membership, he knew nothing of his "predilections" nor "how his sympathies may lead him." However, with the resignation of the present officer the Methodists had lost "the *only man* which the Administration has seen fit to appoint to the head of a bureau." Of course he knew of the difficulty in making changes, and of the pressure of applicants; and he assured the secretary that he believed in his friendship and his "determination to do what is right. May God direct you in all things." John Lanahan, in the meantime, confirmed the bishop's suspicion that Walker "was not even an attendant at any of the Methodist churches."¹⁷

The first political triumph of moment was the appointment early in 1862 of John Evans as governor of Colorado Territory. Simpson had recommended him for Nebraska Territory; but Lincoln, passing him by, had offered him first Washington and then Colorado. Evans, the Indiana physician and, later, Chicago operator in real estate and promoter of railroads, was an able appointee. His selection was a coup for the Methodists, and he and Simpson planned together how best to use it. Calling upon their Indiana friend J. L. Smith—who had been an agent for Indiana Asbury University, they offered him a proposition: the bishop would appoint him superintendent of missions in the Colorado country, and Dr. Evans would name him Secretary of State for the territory. Evans assured him that there would be "no difficulty in having the work of the Secretary's office done by a deputy, so as not to hinder the evangelistic services of the

superintendent of missions." Smith was already serving in the dual capacity of collector of internal revenue for the government and presiding elder in the Methodist church. Considering these advantages and the fact that his wife disapproved of the move to the frontier, he declined the offer.¹⁸

Simpson was considerably less successful with Postmaster General Montgomery Blair than with Chase or Stanton. In 1863, with John Lanahan and other friends, he called to complain of the "proscription" of Methodists in the Post Office Department "because of their religion." He had already talked with the President and had his word that Blair had reported a number of Methodist appointees in his department. Now the bishop asked for a roll of department employees, with an indication as to which of them were Methodists. Blair refused, saying that such an inquiry would make an improper religious test for officeholders. There followed an exchange of plain and pointed, even sharp words. Blair delivered himself of a "long and . . . excited denunciation of ministers," concluding with the remark that he thought himself quite unbiased, that he had servants in his kitchen who were Methodists, and that he did not object to them because of their religion.

Simpson immediately took offense and stalked from the office. The comparison was a reproach to the church. Methodists were "fit for the kitchen but not for Office in Washington."¹⁹

The incident, closed for the moment, arose to haunt Blair for the rest of his life. Maryland was a Methodist stronghold, and had been since the beginning of the denomination. When he sought election to the United States Senate the choleric John Lanahan spread the story that he had insulted Bishop Simpson in Washington. In vain Blair approached the bishop and Harlan and others, seeking a disclaimer. With the opposition of the Methodists and the onus of having been a Union Democrat, he was never again elected to public office.²⁰

Notwithstanding Simpson's growing influence with the government, his friends continued to complain bitterly about the discrimination against Methodists. Agitation had brought few appointments. The governorship of "an inconsiderable Territory, and a few consuls" was no essential change in the "proscriptive Policy" of the administration. Every Presbyterian and Episcopal private seemed to be provided with "some other position than that of carrying a Gun,"

whereas the Methodists who, some estimated rather generously, furnished "more than fifty per cent of the entire Army," did the fighting and had not one single prominent officer.²¹

One of Simpson's dissatisfied friends, the Reverend J. H. Whallon, resorted to a frontal attack. Openly declaring to Chase and Welles, "As a people we are ignored," he let them know that he expressed Simpson's opinion. It was galling to realize that although the Methodists did "a large share of the voting and fighting" they were "not known in the Government in any department." From Chase and Welles he went to General Joseph Lane, former governor of Oregon Territory, and a friend of Simpson from Indiana days. Lane agreed to discuss the matter with the President but asked for a letter from the bishop. The time had come for action, Whallon wrote to Simpson. The President would listen to the Methodists now, "and I know you are the Oricle of our people with him Speak He wants to be Prest again he cannot well do without us." Incidentally, he would be pleased to have the bishop's "earnest support" for the governorship of a territory which he thought would be created.²²

As the elections of 1864 approached, Simpson and his associates began to plot the means of enforcing upon the government appropriate honors for Methodism. The least which should be expected was a place in the cabinet. The Methodist best qualified for such a position, and the one most available, was Senator James Harlan of Iowa. A graduate of Indiana Asbury during Simpson's administration, a lawyer, a former preacher and college president, he had had a phenomenally successful career in Iowa politics culminating in election to the United States Senate in 1854 and reelection in 1860. As a senator he had largely supported the President's conservative policies, in opposition to Ben Wade and the Radicals. By 1864 it was "quite generally recognized" that he had some measure of influence with Lincoln.²³

Simpson decided to concentrate upon this one office, to the exclusion of all others. As his friend James Mitchell wrote, it will "take all the power we can muster to force our member" on the government. In consequence, the bishop refused to lend his influence to other office seekers, in the fall of 1864, even to Joseph Wright who wanted a judgeship. By mid-December, Governor John Evans of Colorado Territory, calling on the President in company with others, found, "The matter of Senator Harlan looks well."²⁴

III

Political preferment was only one of the matters that took Simpson to the War office and the White House. As the Union forces gained control in Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana, the churches in general, and the Methodists especially, began to reflect upon their responsibilities and opportunities in the conquered areas. Many of the southern preachers had fled from their pulpits before the Union armies, leaving their congregations without regular preaching.

For two decades the leaders of northern Methodism had reproached themselves for permitting the division of their beloved Zion; and recently they had suffered reproach from others, including Methodists, for failing to tear the church apart once again over the slavery issue. Only through the war had they found relief—and, as if to purge themselves of their transgression, they entered into it with the fierceness of zealots. Equating God and patriotism, sin and rebellion, they sought to put down the forces which they believed had fostered disunion in church and state alike.

In 1863 the bishops at their regular fall meeting planned to have the southern territory then within the Federal lines "explored," with a view to making temporary arrangements "for the supply of the spiritual needs of the forsaken people." "Providentially," and largely through the preaching of Simpson in 1861, there was a surplus of nearly half a million dollars in the treasury of the Missionary society. As a beginning the board appropriated the modest sum of \$35,000 for carrying on the work.²⁵

Simpson, charged with the supervision of the territory in East Tennessee, immediately requested a report on conditions in Nashville from a chaplain who had followed the Union armies into that city. The chaplain reported that most of the pastors had deserted their flocks. The churches were empty or occupied by the army, and the Methodist Church, South, was "disorganized beyond the hope of recovery." He believed it possible to "regain" the churches "if the matter could be properly presented to the government authorities." It would be easy "to show to our government that the M. E. Church South as a body was thoroughly disloyal, and more, that every cent of

her property belongs to us." On the latter issue Simpson had no doubt. Had he not written the legislation of 1848 repudiating the plan of separation? And had he not bitterly criticized the Supreme Court for awarding the property to the Church, South? ²⁶

At that moment Bishop Ames hit upon a scheme to enlist the support of the War Department. Apparently the idea was suggested to him by Brigadier General John P. Hawkins of the Union forces, stationed in Louisiana. Hawkins, who had heard of Ames's success in land speculation (it was a proverb in Indiana that "a scheme in which the Bishop has a hand is sure to succeed"), proposed that he encourage northern farmers to colonize the abandoned plantations. By using Negro help they would soon be able to make the small farms "better gold mines than California ever saw." The *tour de force* of Hawkins's letter, however, was his observation that many of the Negroes, destitute for help, were Methodists and ought, therefore, to have the protection of the church. ²⁷

Ames hurried to Washington to consult Stanton, notifying Simpson of his intention. The secretary of war, always ready to oblige the church in its combinations with the government against the common enemy, issued an order which directed the generals commanding the Departments of the Missouri, the Tennessee, and the Gulf "to place at the disposal of Rev. Bishop Ames all houses of worship belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in which a loyal minister, who has been appointed by a loyal Bishop of said church, does not now officiate." In December he issued a similar order to three other departments, instructing commanders to turn over church property to Bishops Simpson, James, and Baker. ²⁸

Ames set out for western Tennessee and Louisiana almost at once, and reported in a short time that he had "appropriated, under the order of the War Department," and supplied nine churches "formerly belonging" to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The *Methodist*, in New York City, remarked that the occupation was to be temporary, and that the question of possession or ownership would not be raised until civil rule was once more established. However, it continued hopefully: "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is shivered to atoms. It is doubtful if its General Conference will ever meet again." Therefore the people of the South, as they returned to their homes after the defeat of their armies, should be "gathered into

loyal churches." Some spokesman for the northern Methodists made the unfortunate remark that the policy should be to "disintegrate and absorb" the southern church.²⁹

Meanwhile, "Parson" William G. Brownlow, in the self-appointed role of John the Baptist, began to make preparations for the advent of Bishop Simpson in East Tennessee. Pouring his vitriol into the columns of his Knoxville *Whig and Rebel Ventilator*, he heartily approved the action of the Federal armies in seizing the churches of Knoxville and using them as hospitals. They "would be used for better purposes if turned into *grog shops*, selling mean corn whiskey for rebel money, than to be used to preach and pray such treason, blasphemy and blackguardism, as have disgraced their walls and pulpits for the last three years."³⁰

On January 15, 1864, Simpson arrived in Nashville "to look after Methodism" in that "benighted region," and to see what he could do "toward reorganizing and reestablishing its institution." The "desolation of war" was "everywhere apparent," a retribution to the seceding states for "their crime." He found everywhere a "deep prejudice against the North," and nothing of the warm welcome for himself and his enterprise that Parson Brownlow had prophesied.

Conducting his business with dispatch, he placed M. J. Cramer in charge of the work at Nashville, authorized Chaplain Calvin Holman, at Chattanooga, to confer with generals of the Army "as to Churches that may be occupied under the direction of orders from the War Department and to receive and use the same in my name," and commissioned the chaplains to receive members and ministers "that may be truly loyal."³¹

Back at home, he received reports of the success of his agents. Cramer, in the face of vigorous opposition from the southern church, secured an order from General Grant giving him possession of McKendree Chapel and the German Methodist church at Nashville, and instructions to the army to make any necessary repairs. Holman had difficulty getting the army out of the building at Chattanooga; he held services anyway, but had only thirty in attendance, "mostly blacks." The first chaplain of the Union Army at Murfreesboro at once secured an order from General George Thomas for the possession of the Methodist chapel. When the southern preacher protested, the general, with no eye for fine distinctions, replied that the chaplain was a Methodist, and that if the "Rebel Methodists" could not

worship with him "they could go without worship." At Knoxville the chaplain found the Methodists in East Tennessee "extremely anxious for our religious services," but "particularly sensitive to outside interference." The troublesome southern preachers were spreading the incendiary rumor that the War Department was helping the northern Methodists to "establish a Religion by the Sword and at the point of the Bayonet." Parson Brownlow, unmoved by the opposition of the southern preachers, urged Simpson to return for an official conference in the summer, and began to beat the drums for a union of East Tennessee Methodists with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Fully two-thirds of the membership of the region, he said, "are loyal." "Only the *Preachers* showed themselves to be traitors," and even a fair proportion of them were loyal.⁸²

Simpson was jubilant over the prospect of an enlarged Methodism, a church whose banner should fly from Canada to the Gulf, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. There is "a vast field opening, which we must enter or be derelict in Christian Duty," he told the Missionary Society of the church at its anniversary meeting. There were hundreds and thousands of "white refugees" who had been left "utterly destitute," and the church must "sustain ministers of the sanctuary among them till they are able to do it themselves." Of that "other class" which had been "so strangely and wonderfully made free," he thought "God has thrown on our Church a tremendous responsibility." His stirring peroration, mingling the emotions of patriotism and religion, recounted the war maneuvers at Lookout Mountain. The result "was in doubt until the clouds dispersed, when the Stars and Stripes were seen flying on the top of the mountain." The outcome of the war, too, was uncertain; but the mists "would soon be dispelled, and we should see the flag of the Union floating over the whole South. What a work will there be to carry the Gospel to them; they have it not. Once back in the Union we will tell them that the door of the old Church is wide enough to let them all in, and we will all be happy together."⁸³

Lincoln, in the meantime, remained quite unaware of the order which his secretary of war had issued, and of the ambitious enterprise of the Methodists. He had countermanded an order of the provost-marshal of St. Louis giving control of a southern church to the northern Presbyterians; and a month after the issuance of Stanton's order to Ames he denied that he had ever interfered "as to who shall

or shall not preach in any church." Nor had he knowingly tolerated similar interference by anyone else under his authority. Confronted with Stanton's order in behalf of Ames, he addressed an acid note to the secretary of war. Stanton immediately issued a second order exempting Missouri from the provisions of the first. His only intention, he explained to Lincoln, was to provide "a means of rallying the Methodist people in favor of the Union, in localities where the rebellion had disorganized and scattered them."³⁴

The incident was well designed to alienate the Methodists from Lincoln and to move them in the direction of sympathy with the Radical Republicans. By 1864 the church had little reason to remain in the conservative camp. Slavery, outlawed by the quadrennial general conference meeting that year in Philadelphia, was already a dead issue. The church was united in its deep-felt enmity toward the South; even the border, embittered by long years of conflict, supported the bishops in their aggressions.

Hiding behind the ambiguity of the President's order and his own free construction of the rights of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Simpson continued to occupy the territory his agents had taken over in East Tennessee. Ames likewise stubbornly held onto the properties he had seized in Memphis and New Orleans, even when the President, thoroughly exasperated with the "most extraordinary" situation, for a second time ordered him to surrender the chapel at Memphis.³⁵

The conflict between the bishops and the President was, however, far from open warfare. Still playing for Lincoln's favor, the general conference of 1864 passed a series of resolutions and detailed a committee under the chairmanship of Bishop Ames to present them to Lincoln in person. The resolutions, affirming the duty of Christian ministers and citizens to do all in their power "to sustain the Government," and asserting the loyalty and devotion of the church "to the best interests of the country," pledged remembrance of the President and his chief officers in "never-ceasing prayer," called upon the government to prosecute the war "until this wicked rebellion be subdued," and demanded the outlawing of slavery by constitutional amendment.³⁶

One member of the committee, anticipating the political advantage of a formal reply from the President, notified his secretary, John Nicolay, that the delegation would call, and obtained an inter-

view in which, without informing the others, he presented in advance a copy of the resolutions. When Ames and his party entered the White House the next morning they were ushered in to the President and introduced by the secretary of state, William H. Seward.

A member of the committee read the address and formally presented a copy of it. The President, much to the committee's surprise, reached into his desk for a paper and remarked good-humoredly that, having seen the address, he had prepared his reply.

Lincoln was acutely aware of the very real service which Simpson and Ames, and the Methodist church, had rendered, not only in engendering an intense patriotism but in keeping thousands of border citizens in the Union. He had no intention, however, of committing himself on the property question, nor of alienating the other northern churches. His reply was astutely ambiguous.

"Nobly sustained as the government has been by all the churches," he said, "I would utter nothing which might, in the least, appear invidious against any." He thought the Methodist Episcopal Church, "by its greater numbers, the most important of all. . . . It is no fault in others that the Methodist Church sends more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospital, and more prayers to Heaven than any. God Bless the Methodist Church—bless all the churches—and blessed be God, who, in this our great trial, giveth us the churches."

While the committee waited for the secretary to make a copy of the President's statement, Ames turned the subject to the rights of the Methodist church in southern territory. The President skillfully evaded a direct answer.

Thwarted in their desire to gain some advantage in the property question, the members of the committee were none the less generally pleased with the result of their mission. As they took their leave, one of them said, "Mr. President, we all hope the country will rest in Abraham's bosom for the next four years." Lincoln joined in the laughter, and the interview closed.³⁷

XXI

YANKEE PURITAN

FOR the most part Matthew Simpson was cautious and a little uncomfortable in the presence of Lincoln and official Washington, whether he sought political preferment for his friends or bounties for his church. His province was eloquence, not politics, and even in his oratory he eschewed that which was openly political. But speak he must. The cause of the Union possessed and overwhelmed him. The mingled emotions—his hatred of slavery, his frustration from the long years of struggle with the southern church, his intense love of country and church, quickened to deep passion by the alternate anxieties and exaltations, the fluctuating griefs and joys of war—all boiled within him and overflowed in a torrent of words.

He believed with the conviction of a zealot in the operations of Providence—that God was “working out some great wise purposes in all the movements of men, and in all the combinations of evil men.” His was a romantic faith born of the phenomenal advance in technology and of the incredible sweep of civilization across the American continent. He saw Providence in every detail, from the “strange combinations of circumstances preceding and connected” with the discovery of the western world, to the great cataclysm of war itself which must come even to God’s chosen people when they would not seek His ends peaceably.¹

For the first two years of the war he spoke chiefly to the Methodists, at their conferences, missionary rallies, and special conventions.

Early in 1863, at the first anniversary of the Christian Commission at Philadelphia, he carried his message of optimism beyond the confines of his church. The Commission, organized shortly after the beginning of the war under the sponsorship of the Young Men’s Christian Association, promoted the “spiritual good” of the soldiers and sent its agents among the sick and wounded to distribute food,

clothing, Bibles, and good cheer. The Academy of Music auditorium, the largest in Philadelphia, was crowded for the celebration. For an hour, interrupted by frequent applause, he poured out his praise of the nation and his faith in the future.²

He was immediately besieged by requests from other communities for aid in their public meetings in support of the Commission. The demands of his own church were so heavy, and his residence at Evanston so far removed from the centers of population, that he often had to decline. It was regrettable, wrote George H. Stuart, chairman of the Commission, that the bishop had not "the power of being in more places than one at the same time" so that he might arouse "by his fervid eloquence the multitude of Christian patriots."³

For months the remoteness of Evanston from the affairs of church and country had weighed heavily upon him. He spoke frequently and traveled much. Train connections were poor, travel conditions difficult, Evanston inaccessible from Chicago. He was not well—largely, he felt, because the lake air disagreed with his lungs. His brethren in several cities of the East besought him to make his home among them. It was rumored that he would move to Washington. He looked seriously at a house in Baltimore, but at last chose Philadelphia, where the laymen purchased a house and presented it to him. In midsummer, 1863, he moved his family to the East and plunged immediately into the affairs of the church and community.⁴

His new residence made it possible for him to be more often in Washington. He preached frequently at the Methodist charges in the Capital and numbered among his auditors many political leaders, including Chase, Stanton, Harlan, and the President himself.

He was called upon repeatedly for his "War Address." Various called "Our National Conflict," "State of Country," "Future of the Country," and "The Providence of God As Seen in Our War," it achieved widespread and enthusiastic favor. It "swept like a whirlwind over the hearts of the hearers. Men clenched their hands, shouted, stamped, stood on their feet, and were left at the end in a tumult of patriotic excitement." In Philadelphia standing where he had stood to celebrate the Christian Commission, he was repeatedly interrupted by "bursts of enthusiastic applause." At Chillicothe, Ohio, the audience grew wild with excitement. "Ladies threw away their fans and handkerchiefs; men threw their hats in the air, stood erect, and mounted the seats." The Rochester *Democrat*, after the

presentation in that city, stated that nothing could exceed the "fer-
vor and animation" of the bishop. Was it wise, the editor queried,
"to employ such men in presiding in Annual Conferences"? "Ought
they not to travel . . . at large . . . to address the public mind upon
those great questions which concern so vitally the Church and the
nation?" A college president, not a Methodist, thought, "The Govern-
ment should employ that man to visit all the principal cities in the
loyal States." Secretary Stanton praised him as "one of the most
eloquent, learned, and patriotic men of our country and age." No
one, he wrote in introducing the bishop to General Sheridan, had
done "so much to encourage and strengthen loyal and patriotic senti-
ments and to sustain the army by appeals to the benevolence of the
people."⁵

At Washington, President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton, and a
number of members of Congress heard him in a presentation which
the *National Intelligencer* thought "worthy of the name and fame of
the distinguished divine and orator." He caused considerable merri-
ment, in which the President "heartily participated," when in prais-
ing the self-made character of the leaders of the nation he remarked
that "some may have heard that even a rail-splitter may become presi-
dent." At the conclusion Lincoln warmly congratulated him for the
manner in which he had marked out the progress of the country, add-
ing shrewdly, "But, Bishop, you did not 'strike 'Ile.'" Simpson prom-
ised not to overlook thereafter the newly discovered oil interests.⁶

In the summer of 1864, shortly after the close of the general con-
ference, Lincoln made a singular request: that the bishop, substitut-
ing for him, officially open the Sanitary Fair at Philadelphia. Simp-
son, at West Point attending the annual examinations as a member
of the Board of Visitors when the request came, hurried home to pre-
pare his address. "As the bishop's eloquence is well known," stated
the *Philadelphia Press*, "the President will no doubt be well repre-
sented."⁷

The occasion was an important one: the raising of funds for the
United States Sanitary Commission, which was charged with super-
vising the medical and sanitary facilities of the army camps, and not
infrequently supplying the men with clothes and food. The fair,
initiated by the City of New York, had proved to be the most suc-
cessful enterprise for the raising of money: New York had made a

million dollars for the Commission, and Philadelphia expected to do as well.

Made up of sixteen buildings, promenades, ponds, playgrounds, the Philadelphia fair extended over a two-mile area. The main building was sixty-four feet wide, five hundred feet long, and had an arch of fifty feet. There was an art gallery, a display of horticultural wonders, of military curiosities, and many other attractions. A speakers' platform stood near the main building. As the crowds gathered for the formal opening the cannons roared out a salute, there were exercises of prayer, the transfer of the buildings and their contents from the Executive Committee to the people, and orations by Mayor Alexander Henry, Governor William Cannon of Delaware, and Governor Andrew Curtin of Pennsylvania, and Bishop Simpson.

The bishop adapted his remarks to the occasion, but his theme was unchanged: he preached the providence of God in the affairs of the nation. He drew applause as he paid tribute to the absent President, and again as he denounced the leaders of the South, and "long-continued and deafening applause" as he soared briefly in oratorical praise of the Union soldier and the flag he served. He contemplated the woes of the war, the "multiplied thousands of husbands, and brothers, and sons . . . lying among the sick and wounded"; but he found solace and hope in a recital of the resources of the country. He praised the noble spirit of much giving, the devotion of "families of narrow means—the laboring man, the working-woman." He praised the city of Philadelphia; he praised the women upon whom the success of the fair and the Sanitary Commission was chiefly dependent. In a series of sharply etched pictures, crowded together with the dramatic movement of a cinema, he mingled together pathos and humor, swept his great audience alternately from "tremendous cheers" to the quick silence of pathos, and back again to "cheers and laughter," and finally he brought them to a "tremendous outburst of applause" as he called by name and praised the heroes of the war: Sherman, "a Northern man with Southern proclivities"; Howard, who, "one-armed, is still within himself a host"; Butler, "the terror of the Confederacy"; Pennsylvania's Hancock and her "*Meade* of honor"; and added to all of these, the "giant West, from the shores of her broad Mississippi, sends a Grant of unconditional victory!"

He closed by dedicating the treasures of the fair in the name of the people and for the benefit of the wounded soldiers and sailors. "May God, in his infinite mercy, restore them to health and to their friends and to their country!" The audience shouted: "Amen! Amen!"⁸

II

The summer and early fall of 1864 were filled with uncertainty and even gloom for the North and for Lincoln and his sympathizers. In July the southern general, Jubal A. Early, in a bold raid advanced within sight of Washington; in the bloody Peninsula campaign Lee was successfully holding off Grant from Richmond. Greenbacks fell to their lowest point; Horace Greeley and others sought to achieve peace through negotiation; the Radicals in Congress, attempting to displace Lincoln, sponsored an abortive Chase-for-President boom; and Lincoln himself wrote out and sealed into an envelope a prediction of his own defeat. As the elections drew near there were signs of victory for Lincoln and the North: Atlanta fell to Sherman, the peace negotiations came to naught, and the Radicals, finding it expedient to support the President, abandoned Chase.⁹

Simpson spoke twice that fall on the war theme: in Pittsburgh in mid-October, when he aroused the audience to pandemonium; and at New York on November 3, five days before the election. Mark Hoyt and the Methodist laymen of New York had high hopes for the address in that city. The *Tribune*, *Times*, *Evening Post*, and *Herald*, all promised full reports. To speak in New York five days before the election with newspaper coverage was to speak to the whole nation. Five thousand war-weary people crowded into the Academy of Music to hear the bishop.¹⁰

His address, well suited to dispel doubt and despair, was in the epic mode,—if chauvinism may be described as epic—a narrative of the greatness of the American nation which rose to the brazen, climactic theme, "God cannot afford to do without America." It was, thought the London *Saturday Review*, the very essence of Yankee Puritanism, characterized by the "fearless Puritan handling of religious names," and the Puritan preempting of God.¹¹

At the outset the bishop announced his intention to "stand far above all party dialect," declaring his belief in the Providence of God

and his conviction that "the old ship will yet ride among the breakers, and by and by, in spite of all dangers, shall be safely moored in the haven of peace and prosperity." The audience responded with "great applause," and the emotional tone of the address was set.¹²

He could see four possible results of the conflict: first, the nation might fall prey to some foreign power; secondly, it might be divided; thirdly, it might remain united, but with its institutions overthrown and those of the South established; and fourthly, "having passed through this fiery ordeal," it would come out "purer, stronger and more glorious and more useful than ever before." The audience applauded, and renewed its applause a moment later when he said he believed it "the design of Providence" to secure the last alternative.

He recited the stories of the ancient nations, Phoenicia, Greece, Rome, all of which had endured more than a century; he told of the adventures of Columbus in the discovery of the long-hidden continent—how the prows of his ships were pointed to the West Indies, and the great land area reserved for the English and the settlers in search of a place to worship God. Would God have allowed other great countries to endure so long and this one "to go down in ruins in so short a period," unless it had "disobeyed His laws more than any other nation"? And was not this country discovered and settled in a manner to suggest that "God had intended this nation to work out greater destinies than any other nation"?

He then assembled the evidences of national greatness. For one thing, the nation had severed church and state. Again, it was an "asylum for all the nations of the earth." Its education was superior to that of any other nation, for not only had it taught the masses, but it had taken the mothers of the coming generation and fitted them to educate "a grand race of sovereigns." It had opened the way for all to rise to highest offices: "The humblest cabin-boy may lead our armies, and the poor hostler may sit in the Senate. Who has not heard of Henry Clay the mill boy of the slashes [applause] and Jackson the child of poor Irish parents [applause] and some may have heard that even a rail-splitter may become President." Every few sentences the audience applauded, and at the reference to Lincoln it broke forth in "tremendous applause and cheers."

The second and third propositions—that the nation might be divided into two confederacies, and that the South might prevail—he ridiculed. But he could find a series of Providences which assured

him that God would bring out of the conflict a nation "purer, grander, and more glorious than ever before." He saw the hand of Providence in the invention of new plows, drilling machines, reapers, all designed to husband labor; he saw Providence in the building of the railroads so that the West was able in the hour of crisis to send its produce to the eastern cities; he saw Providence in the simple matter of the sewing machine, in the discovery of the electric telegraph, in the starving of the poor in England at the time when they sympathized with the rebellion; he saw Providence in the sending of food by the North to England in "beautiful fulfillment of the Scriptures," "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." He cited the providential migration from England, twenty years before, of a young engineer "with strange notions in his head about running vessels with hot air engines, and about iron-clad monitors," and he told with some detail the story of the providential acquisition of California and the discovery of gold and silver.

He paid tribute to the heroes of the war, calling their names one by one, citing in short epigrammatic phrases the deeds of each. "I used to pray," he said, "for a General Jackson and heard others praying for the same. I heard them often say, Oh for a man with independent purpose such as Old Hickory was when he fought the battle of New Orleans . . . But I have ceased to say so. The prayer has been *Granted*." The audience responded with "tremendous cheering."

He praised the advances made against slavery, paid brief tribute to the Negroes for the part they had played in the conflict, suggested that they be given a state of their own, perhaps on the border between Mexico and Texas, and then concluded with a dramatic peroration, an apostrophe to the flag.

Taking up a "war-torn, shot-riddled flag" which was greeted with "tremendous cheers," he advanced a step toward the audience and said:

Your 55th Regiment carried this flag; it has been at Newbern, and at South Mountain and Antietam. The blood of our brave boys is upon it, the bullets of Rebels have gone through and through it, but yet it is the same old flag.

The audience, high-keyed and ready for emotional outburst, could take no more. Beating their hands in enthusiastic applause, they rose

to their feet to give three "rousing cheers" for the flag. The noise of the explosion subsided and Simpson continued:

Our fathers followed that flag; we expect our children and our children's children will follow it; there is nothing on earth like it for beauty!

Again there was cheering, "long and loud." As the crowd quieted Simpson moved to his climax. His tall frame towering above the people, his shoulders erect, his face aglow with feeling, his tenor voice throbbing with emotion, his mist-filled eyes gazing into the future, he exclaimed:

Long may those stars shine! Just now there are clouds upon it and mists gathering around it but the stars are coming out and others are joining them, and they grow brighter, and so may they shine until the last star falls in the heavens, and the great angel swears that time shall be no longer!

The crowd took over, and the meeting broke up with great cheering and hurraing and waving of hats and handkerchiefs.

Only the New York *Tribune* carried more than a brief report of the address, and that appeared on November 7, the day before the election, too late to speak to the nation. In the meantime, Sherman was on his way from Atlanta to the sea, and the reelection of the President seemed certain.

III

Simpson was in Washington in January to deliver the War Address, and again in March to attend the inauguration exercises. Things looked well for the Methodists: Harlan was to be in the cabinet as secretary of the interior, Evans continued as governor of Colorado Territory, Simpson had been invited to preach in the Capital on the Sabbath after inauguration, and Lincoln received him cordially at the White House.¹⁸

Saturday March 4 was overcast and gloomy with occasional rain, hardly fit for the inaugural ceremonies. The crowd, milling about in the muddy streets, grew silent as Lincoln stepped forward to read the Second Inaugural: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right . . ." He then took his place, the Vice President elect, Andrew Johnson, beside him, to receive the oath of office. At that moment the clouds broke

and the sun shone brightly, lighting the scene up "with dazzling splendor." The court dress of the diplomatic corps sparkled with diamond light, and the golden rays glittered from the sabers and bayonets of the soldiers.¹⁴

The following morning the hall of the House of Representatives was filled to capacity for the sermon of Bishop Simpson. In the audience were President and Mrs. Lincoln, Chief Justice Chase, Secretaries Seward and Stanton, Speaker Schuyler Colfax, and the Honorable Simon Cameron. The bishop spoke of the doctrines of the cross—the brotherhood of man, the equality of races, universal liberty, and a community of interests. War, he said, had once been the rule of all nations; but it had become the exception, an outlaw among all peoples. And even this war among brothers, the most terrible of all wars, was about to end. He could not but think "when yesterday the sun burst brightly upon the chief magistrate of the nation, just as he stepped forward to take the oath of the highest office in the land, that so the sun of peace would suddenly, and without noise or warning, burst upon the nation and dispel the clouds of war."

Although it was Sunday morning, and a sermon, "the people clapped their hands, stamped their feet, and waved their handkerchiefs" in approval of the hope he had expressed. Mr. Lincoln himself pounded vigorously on the floor with his cane, and the tears coursed down his bronzed cheeks.¹⁵

XXII

HIGH PRIEST OF THE RADICAL REPUBLICANS

THE good omen, the benediction of the eternal sun, was short-lived, clouded over in a moment by the arrogant depravity of man. There were five weeks of hope: Grant advancing on Petersburg and Richmond; Sherman consolidating his position and holding Johnston at bay in North Carolina; Jefferson Davis fleeing from Richmond; and Abraham Lincoln walking the streets of the Confederate capital, unmolested.

On the afternoon of April 9, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox. At dawn cannons roared the announcement in Washington, government departments declared a holiday, and the crowds, delirious with victory, swarmed into the streets cheering and singing. That day the President sat for a photograph, his sad face yielding to a scarcely perceptible smile.

On April 11 he spoke to the people, a great throng on the White House lawn, eager for the victory celebration. He addressed them, not in rousing periods that called for antiphonal hurrahs, but in close-reasoned argument, a defense of his own mild and generous policy for reconstruction of the states of the South. On April 14, Good Friday, he met the cabinet, and again discussed the terms of reconstruction. That night he went to Ford's Theatre.¹

The play had reached the third act when a shot rang out, and a man, balancing a moment on the rail of the President's box, jumped to the stage, paused to shout, some said, "Sic semper tyrannis" (Ever thus to tyrants), and hurried off the stage, dragging a foot which he had injured in the leap. And then from the President's box, following the shot like a delayed echo, came a woman's scream, pitched high with anguish.²

Matthew Simpson read the story in the black-bordered columns

of the newspaper: how the frenzied crowd swarmed into the aisles, wrenched seats from their moorings, clambered onto the stage, poured into the streets; how the soldiers arrived, cleared a passage-way, and bore the unconscious President across the street into the humble house of a tailor. Even the early press reports gave no hope. The President was "just alive at 3 a.m.," said a dispatch from the War Department. At six o'clock his pulse was failing, at 7:22 he breathed his last. Phineas Gurley, kneeling at his bedside, prayed for the comfort of his country and his family.³

The cabinet wired, inviting Simpson to take charge of the funeral services. He hurried to Washington, called upon Mrs. Lincoln, prayed with her, heard from her a recital of the events of the President's last day and the story of his view of two reflections of his own face in the mirror—one of the living man, the other of the dead.⁴

At the White House services the bishop offered the opening prayer: invoked God's grace "to bow in submission to Thy holy will," begged consolation for the widow, guidance for the sons, wisdom for the successor to the late lamented President; and pledged that "by every possible means" the citizens of the North should give themselves to their country's service "until every vestige of this rebellion shall have been wiped out, and until slavery, its cause, shall be forever eradicated . . . 'Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.'" ⁵

From Washington, Simpson hurried to his conference at New York, and to further reflection on the career of the President, for he had been asked to deliver the funeral oration at Springfield.

The slow procession; the black-draped train, bearing the body of Abraham Lincoln made its way to Springfield, sixteen hundred miles over the triumphant route he had traveled in 1861. It was a pageant of mourning: every city hung with crape, flags at half-mast; Baltimore grief-stricken; three hundred thousand people crowding the streets of Philadelphia, nearly a million in New York; throngs in Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, Chicago; public rites in major cities—silent, weeping crowds filing past the open coffin, a score of funeral addresses, dirges, the reading of the Second Inaugural, Protestant, Catholic, Jew uniting in solemn obsequies. At the villages and the country crossroads, too, the people gathered,

grim-visaged and bareheaded, to see the train go by. Thirteen days from Washington to Springfield.⁶

At noon on May 4 the coffin was taken from the place where it had stood in the Illinois capitol at Springfield, and the procession—governors, senators, congressmen, state and municipal authorities, clergymen, and military men—moved to the burial ground. A little to the left of the vault, at the foot of a knoll, was a platform for the band and the choir; beyond that, the speakers' stand; and sweeping back over the hillside, the thousands of listeners. There was the chanting of a dirge, the reading of Scripture, prayer, a hymn, the reading of the Second Inaugural, the chanting of another dirge. Then the bishop rose to speak.⁷

He recalled for the people Lincoln's farewell remarks at Springfield—the tall man eloquent, on the rear platform of the train, speaking simply and humbly to his neighbors of his pain in parting, of the great responsibilities which had fallen upon him, of his desire for their prayers, of his hope that all would be well.

The people's grief was understandable, said the bishop, for "Mr. Lincoln was no ordinary man." Providence had had a hand in his early life, through the physical toil which gave him an iron frame for his herculean labors, and even more important, through his "identification with the heart of the great people, understanding their feeling, because he was one of them, and connected with them in their movements and life."

His greatness rested on the mental characteristics of "a quick and ready perception of facts," "a memory unusually tenacious and retentive," "a logical turn of mind, which followed sternly and unwaveringly every link in the chain of thought." And who among men in reading his messages had failed to perceive "the directness and simplicity of his style," which had "so powerfully influenced the destiny of this nation," and which should "for ages to come influence the destiny of humanity"?

It was not, however, chiefly through his mental faculties that he gained such control over mankind. "His moral power gave him pre-eminence." He called able counselors. "He summoned able generals into the field, but . . . the great act of the mighty chieftain, on which his fame shall rest long after his frame shall molder away is that of giving freedom to a race."

Simpson praised the words of the Second Inaugural—"With malice toward none"—but even as he repeated the words of mercy he charged the people to go on to their "painful duty." To the deluded masses he would extend the "arms of forgiveness." But every man who, as a senator or a representative, had aided in the rebellion, must be "brought to speedy and to certain punishment," and every southern military leader, educated at public expense, must be "doomed to a traitor's death." Men might attempt to compromise and to restore these "traitors and murderers" to society again. But the American people would "rise in their majesty and sweep all such compromises and compromisers away."

From this vengeful mood, he returned quickly to words of praise for his country and its flag, and a final tribute to the late President:

Chieftain, farewell! The nation mourns thee. Mothers shall teach thy name to their lisping children. The youth of our land shall emulate thy virtues. Statesmen shall study thy record, and from it learn the lessons of wisdom. . . . We crown thee as our martyr, and humanity enthrones thee as her triumphant son. Hero, Martyr, Friend, farewell.⁸

The *Chicago Tribune* thought the address "a critical and wonderfully accurate analysis of the late President's character" and "one of the most masterly efforts ever delivered by this eloquent speaker."⁹

II

In March, 1865, Matthew Simpson, sitting in the House of Representatives to observe the inauguration ceremonies, had been outraged. Andrew Johnson, the Vice President elect, was obviously intoxicated. That night, jabbing his pen into his diary, Simpson characterized him with trenchant brevity: "Heard Mr. Johnson—drunk."¹⁰ But the death of Abraham Lincoln brought him up short. How could he reckon with this event, how could he explain the sudden elevation of Johnson, if he did not find the hand of Providence in it?

A week after the assassination he had determined his answer. Speaking to the New York conference, he praised President Lincoln's goodness and mercy. His death was sad and heartbreaking, but in the end great good would come of it. "God does all things well." Mr.

Johnson in some respects was not the equal of Mr. Lincoln; yet he was "probably his superior in the determination to crush every vestige of rebellion, and punish the leaders."

The conference of ministers approved the remark with "great applause," and the bishop continued. "He was driven from his home in Tennessee, his property destroyed, his family made refugees, his son-in-law fell in the battle of Nashville—he has in himself the strongest cause to hate the rebellion."¹¹

Some two weeks later Bishop Simpson with four other ministers journeyed to the White House to pledge the "hearty support" of the "loyal Methodist public" of Philadelphia. The President received them "handsomely" and responded by "referring to his antecedents for assurances of what may be expected in the future," especially in regard to "the punishment of treason as a crime of the highest magnitude."

Mr. Johnson also seemed friendly and *right* on the Methodist property question. Several months earlier, as governor of Tennessee, he had said to Bishop Davis W. Clark, "Tennessee will tolerate no two sects of the same denomination, one founded upon slavery and treason, and the other loyal." Johnson had thought so well of his remark that he had repeated it.¹²

Nor was the new President disposed to disregard Methodist claims in the matter of James Harlan. Lincoln had designated Harlan as his Secretary of Interior, but out of consideration to the retiring secretary, had delayed the appointment until a few weeks after the inauguration. Johnson inducted Harlan into the office without hesitation.

Matters did not go so well, however, with Simpson's old friend Governor Evans of Colorado Territory. Months before the assassination Evans had been censured in Congress for the unseemly conduct of Colonel John M. Chivington, United States Marshal for Colorado. Chivington, a militant Methodist preacher who had declined a chaplaincy during the war because he wanted a "fighting commission," had directed a surprise attack against a band of Indians encamped peacefully on a government reservation at Sand Creek, Colorado. His men, angered by Indian raids on white settlers, slaughtered the Indian women and children and warriors, indiscriminately. The nation was horrified by the massacre. Evans, in Washington at the time, explained satisfactorily to Lincoln that

he was in no way responsible; but a committee of Congress, investigating the incident, and urged on by Evans's political opponents, recommended his removal as governor late in May, 1865. Harlan, who had defended him in the Senate, now hurried to Seward and secured from him a pledge that he would not act until Evans had an opportunity to speak for himself.¹³

It soon became apparent that Evans would be removed without a hearing. Considerably worried, Simpson made the trip to Washington three times to talk with the President but was unable to get an interview. When Harlan told him that Seward was the man to see he went to Cape May, New Jersey, where the secretary was vacationing. Seward was "personally satisfied" with Evans, but not at all disposed to provoke the Congress into an unnecessary attack on the administration. On the other hand, he had no desire to alienate the Methodists. He would, therefore, allow the bishop to name Evans's successor. Appeased, Simpson promptly suggested A. W. Cummings, the Philadelphia publisher. Seward approved, and late that summer the President accepted the resignation of John Evans and named Cummings to succeed him. Simpson was disturbed, however. He had learned that Johnson was not Mr. Lincoln. He did not "seem to have a heart."¹⁴

In the meantime, trouble had developed over the Methodist holdings in the South. Simpson, along with the Radicals in Congress and much of the northern press, had expected the new President to be severe in his reconstruction policy. Johnson's first militant utterings had confirmed their expectations; but he soon tempered his policy to conform largely to the one which Lincoln had promulgated: amnesty for all who would take the oath of allegiance; an early end to military occupation; speedy return of the states under rewritten constitutions—the rights of citizens, including the enfranchisement of the Negroes, to be determined by the individual states.¹⁵

In Nashville, Tennessee, Samuel D. Baldwin of the Church, South, looked on Johnson's moderate policies and rejoiced. For some months he had attempted to regain the property seized by the Methodist Episcopal Church. When the northern preacher in charge denied his claims Baldwin applied to Simpson, who likewise refused to yield possession to the chapel. Now, armed with the President's amnesty order, which restored the rights to property as well as to citizenship, Baldwin called on Simpson's preacher at McKendree

Chapel. The preacher replied somewhat testily, first, that Johnson's policy did not revoke the order of Mr. Stanton; secondly, that he would not give up the property without a "special order" from the President; and thirdly, that he would not give it up "even *with it*."¹⁶

Baldwin reported the incident directly to the President. But he was not satisfied to rest his case on the impertinent remarks of a northern preacher. Knowing Andy Johnson well—and how he had stumped East Tennessee in opposition to a consolidated federal government—he taunted him with "*other questions*":

- 1st. Are great consolidated national churches desirable in a *free* government?
- 2nd. Do not great hierachies tend to great national despotisms as did the national church of Rome?
- 3rd. Is the reunion of the two great methodist hierachies of America desirable . . . as a duality will they not neutralize any despotic tendencies . . .¹⁷

The questions cut into Andy Johnson's temper like a rasp. Angrily, he sent for Simpson. Confronting him with the issue, he demanded that he give up the Nashville chapel. The bishop demurred, the two argued the case at length, and the interview ended inconclusively. The matter dragged on for two months until August 12, when Seward telegraphed to Simpson that Johnson wanted to see him. They had a "long talk." Johnson was insistent, and Simpson, not yet an ally of the Radical Republicans, yielded the point. He wired instructions to the preacher in charge at Nashville to turn the building over to Baldwin.

The decision was a great blow to Simpson's preacher. His trustees were "much disheartened." They would have preferred putting the President "to the necessity of ejecting us by Federal forces." Through Simpson's order they had lost "the benefit of sympathy that an ejection would create for us North and which would aid us much in securing funds to build."¹⁸

Simpson's astute lieutenant in Maryland, John Lanahan, saw in Johnson's action a precedent which the "old church" might follow in recovering property in Virginia. In 1861, in consequence of the action on slavery at the general conference of 1860, a large number of churches in Virginia and Maryland had withdrawn from the Methodist Episcopal Church and formed an independent organiza-

tion. It was now rumored that they were negotiating with the Church, South, and that they would unite with that body at its general conference of 1866. Could not Johnson's Nashville order be used to regain these properties for the Methodist Episcopal Church?¹⁹

Bishop Ames had no doubt about it. Johnson, having restored property to the Church, South, was "shut up to the necessity of granting what we propose to ask." If he should refuse "we shall have a good case to take before the country—which will be worth more to us both in money, and influence than ten fold the value of the property involved." He demanded that Bishops Janes and Simpson meet him in Washington: "Do not fail for it is a grave matter." Janes demurred: "Getting possession of churches by military authority has a great deal of odium attached to it." Simpson was also reluctant; but in the end both agreed to meet Ames in Washington.²⁰

The three bishops, accordingly, prepared a plan of action and went to see the President on January 17, 1866. Simpson talked with him first, explaining the Nashville matter "satisfactorily," and then his two colleagues joined him. They had "a very pleasant interview" with Johnson. He "seemed very fair as to church property" and "requested" them to see Secretary Stanton. They, having already drafted an order which they wanted the adjutant general's office to issue, hurried to Stanton and secured his approval.²¹

The order provided that church edifices and parsonages in Virginia were to be occupied by the church which had jurisdiction prior to 1861. Such occupancy was not to be construed as giving legal title—a matter which must be determined by the civil courts.

The order seemed innocent enough, and Johnson approved it the next day in an interview with Ames. The adjutant general issued the statement from his office almost immediately. Johnson, Ames reported, said "if there is any thing wrong in it we must stand by him—for he did just as we advised." "The President is fully aware of its import," Ames said, "and issued it after mature consideration hence its moral value to us as a Church."²²

It was soon evident that Johnson did not understand the "full import." "Laus Deo," wrote Ames to Simpson. "I find there are 210 Churches and 32 parsonages." It was a figure he had neglected to mention to Johnson. The news was too good to keep. Long before he was able to seize the property, Ames boasted of his conquest. A

committee of "rebel" Methodists immediately called on the President, who "entertained them very kindly, to the exclusion of other important business." Johnson denied that he had issued any such order as that of which Ames boasted.²³ A few months later the "rebel" preachers, unimpeded by Ames, voted to adhere to the Church, South, taking most of their 210 churches and 32 parsonages with them.

III

Quite aside from the effort to enlist the aid of the government in the seizure of southern property, the Methodist Episcopal Church had been moving on the South from many fronts. The general conference of 1864 authorized the bishops to organize annual conferences in southern territory and to make the necessary appointment of preachers; and it created the Church Extension Society, which was to aid in the purchase and construction of buildings. In 1866 the church set aside \$400,000 for the work in the South.²⁴

The policy of the church was not, as the South charged, simply a systematized and malicious scheme to "disintegrate and absorb" the southern church, albeit some northern preachers and church papers were thoroughly committed to disintegration and absorption. The program was compounded, rather, of two elements: Methodist evangelical zeal—the simple and time-honored Methodist technique of opening up a new territory by sending in the most aggressive preachers available—and the utilization of such political tactics as might be improvised to meet the immediate situation. The evangelical task was complicated by the fact that the chief opponents in the field were not Baptists, nor Presbyterians, nor Universalists, nor any others whose doctrines and "usages" could be assailed, but fellow Methodists who could be attacked only for "disloyalty" and proslaveryism. Slavery had been ended by the war, and so "disloyalty" proved to be the better issue. The passions of war were transferred from the military to the ecclesiastical front.²⁵

The campaign was vigorous and aggressive, and not too concerned with the finer points of southern rights or Christian charity. The press of the Church, South, complained that every Methodist chaplain in the Union Army was a self-constituted missionary. Finding a deserted congregation, he proceeded to take charge, saying to

the people that "it was all the same," that slavery was done away with, and "now the churches would unite." In a few places the people went over *en masse*. When the people resisted, the missionary resorted to argument or stratagem. He pleaded that they return to the "old church," or the "Mother church," or the "loyal Methodist Church."

The stratagem sometimes amounted to seizing property by what the southern press called "legal sham." Northern preachers turned up claims against church property, which they were then able to buy at a heavy discount. The South was not a little angered to read the happy report of a corresponding secretary of the Church Extension Society that he had been able to secure, for \$250, two small churches valued at \$1,000. In Charleston, South Carolina—in an operation which the New York *Christian Advocate and Journal* described as "delicate and difficult," and as exceeding even the "most sanguine hopes"—the official board was induced to pass resolutions requesting the commander of the military post to turn the property over to the missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In due time, a representative of the southern church "made a pilgrimage" to Philadelphia, persuaded that his "old acquaintance" Bishop Simpson would interfere and restore the property. He got "neither redress nor sympathy."²⁶

By the time of the general conference of 1868, the work was so successful that Bishop Simpson, in reading the Episcopal address, was able to report that he and his colleagues had organized eight new conferences in southern territory, with a total of 373 traveling preachers (besides a large number of local preachers), and a membership of more than 90,000. One hundred of the traveling preachers and 40,000 of the members (constituting almost the entire accession of whites) were from Tennessee.²⁷

Simpson as an executive removed from the field of conflict, and as an orator attuned to the emotional values of particular cases, was much less concerned with means and techniques than with needs and results. He did not doubt for a moment that the Methodist Episcopal Church must be planted firmly in southern territory. Nor had he forgotten his own part, in 1848, in the repudiation of the plan of separation. So far as he was concerned, the property in the South really belonged to the "old church," despite the adverse decision of the Supreme Court.

As an orator speaking to northern audiences on conditions in the South, he recounted the exciting scenes of warfare, and described the destitution of the white population and the bewildering plight of the Negroes. He discussed the shift of population from plantation to village, and the consequent need and opportunity to build churches. Sure of the spiritual "superiority" of his own church, and confident "that the denomination that builds the first Church secures the largest portion of the population and the greatest influence," he favored an aggressive program. He heard the complaints from the South and recognized that some of the northern preachers were "imprudent"; but he thought that most of the accusations were by "evil men" for "political" purposes.²⁸

He was particularly proud of the schools planted by his church among the Negroes. He was deeply moved by the zeal with which the young people among them were seeking an education, and even some of the old ones were buying spectacles and asking for primers. Sometimes, he said, "you will see these colored men and women, from sixty to seventy years of age, trying to learn their letters, spelling the name of Jesus, and rejoicing that they are beginning to read the word of God." He had been stirred, too, in conferences where he had heard colored preachers tell of their troubles and testify to their victory, their tears rolling down their cheeks "as they spoke of their gratitude to God, for having permitted them to see a conference, and to become members of it."²⁹

Simpson was no reformer. He differed with his colleague Bishop Kingsley, who favored the intermingling of black and white ministers in the southern conferences, and with Gilbert Haven, editor of *Zion's Herald* (elected bishop in 1872), who had radical ideas of equality and miscegenation. During the war he had been elected a member of the Freedmen's Relief Association; but he had also been named a vice president of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, within the month. Stanton urged him to take over the organization of the Freedmen's Bureau under the direction of the War Department, but he declined. Such an office was out of keeping with his understanding of his "ecclesiastical obligations." In 1865 he was elected president of the National Freedmen's Association (American Freedmen's Aid Commission), a position which he resigned some six months later "owing to the pressure of his other duties." Undoubtedly, he was also motivated by the fact that the Methodists,

dissatisfied with the part they had in distributing the funds of the commission, were about to organize their own Freedmen's Aid Society.³⁰

On the Negro question, he was essentially conservative, and motivated largely by his belief in evangelism, missions, and the historic call of the Methodist church "to spread scriptural holiness over the earth." In his famous War Address at the Academy of Music in New York in the fall of 1864, he had brought grief to one of his Methodist admirers when he advocated that the Negroes be sent to Africa "to evangelize that continent," or that they be colonized in Texas where they would constitute "a barrier between ourselves & Maximillian." He felt that the church had made a mistake when it first went into the South by giving too much attention to the colored people—the ministers "misconceived" their mission, and so alienated a large part of the white population. He favored separate conferences because, he said, the opportunities for leadership increased the effectiveness of the colored ministers. And when the *New York Independent* took him to task for promoting segregation, "a greater sin" than slavery itself, he testily replied that, notwithstanding its "anathemas," his church would do all in its power "for the down-trodden and the oppressed."³¹

Events, however, weighed more heavily than arguments. Despite his essential conservatism, Simpson soon moved from right to left; the forces which brought about his alienation from Johnson acted also to increase his sympathy toward the Radical Republicans.

Johnson, taking advantage of a long recess of Congress, had instituted a moderate policy for the restoration of the southern states. The Radicals were outraged. Reconstruction had been all too easy. Rebels still unpunished, "white-washed" traitors cleansed by the simple process of subscribing to the oath, had taken over the southern governments. Once admitted to Congress, the "traitors" could ally themselves with the moderates and dictate the policies of the nation itself. On the other hand, a coalition of the Radicals with the poor whites and the Negroes of the South would be powerful enough to control the federal government for years to come.

The ensuing attack of the Radicals on the President was one of the bitterest in American history. They had two powerful propaganda weapons: the charge that the President had violated the rights of Congress, and the indictment of the reconstructed southern govern-

ments for debasing the rights and liberties of the Negro. The first, they used to down the objections of the Moderates in Congress; the second, to appeal to the humanitarianism of the northern public. Power politics and the cause of downtrodden humanity proved to be invincible allies. Under the skillful but ruthless leadership of Thad Stevens and with the support of the public the Radicals forced their reluctant colleagues into line and seized control of the government.

Simpson was ready enough to sympathize with the Radicals. In his ejection from the Nashville chapel and the removal of John Evans, he had already suffered humiliation from Andrew Johnson. But his associations with two members of the cabinet, Stanton and Harlan, moved him much more precipitantly into the Radical camp. His friendship with Stanton had deepened appreciably during the war. On more than one occasion in Stanton's private office at the War Department, the doughty, bewhiskered secretary, discoursing on the problems of the war, had said, "Now, Bishop, pray." And Simpson had prayed.³²

He was much more intimate with Harlan. He could not forget the warm relationship of schoolboy and master. Through the years he had watched the success of his pupil with pleasure and admiration. Once when they had differed sharply over Harlan's status in the church, Simpson as bishop had ruled against him; but they quickly closed the breach. It was to Simpson that Harlan turned to share his sorrow over the death of his little daughter. Time bound them together in common causes and common griefs.³³

Harlan's success had been a boon to the church, particularly his appointment to the department of Interior. One of his first acts was to name the Reverend D. N. Cooley of Dubuque as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He made other changes, too—rather slowly, the bishop thought; but both had hope for the future.³⁴ His peremptory dismissal of Walt Whitman—he would not have the author of the "obscene" *Leaves of Grass* on his payroll—brought a storm of protest and made him the prototype for Brother Balaam in Mark Twain's *The Gilded Age*.

The ousted office holders complained bitterly against him, and by mid-August of his first year had aroused the New York *Herald* to an attack on the administration of the Interior Department. Harlan, meanwhile, had quickly cooled toward the President and his re-

construction policy. He and Stanton alike were equivocal—unwilling to take exception to Johnson's policies when they were discussed in cabinet meetings, but ready enough to lend secret encouragement to the Radicals.³⁵

Late in 1865 Harlan, unhappy with the duties of his department and out of sympathy with Johnson, began to maneuver for reelection to the Senate and turned to Simpson for help. A word from the bishop to two Methodist preachers active in Iowa politics might well assure his nomination for the long term. He sought other support, however, with the result, an opponent said, that there was much lobbying in his behalf, both by men connected with his department and by Methodist preachers "without number or piety." After a bitter intraparty struggle he was nominated at the Republican party caucus in January, 1866, and elected by the legislature. Since his term in the Senate would not begin until March, 1867, he held on to his cabinet post determined to prevent the President, as long as possible, from using the patronage of the department to fight the Radicals. Johnson, embarrassed by his presence, thought it "indecent for him to remain," but hesitated to force him out because he did not wish "to excite the hostility of the powerful Methodist Church." As the tension increased, Harlan finally resigned in mid-summer, 1866.³⁶

Simpson was having trouble with Johnson at the same time, and his own move toward Radicalism was coincident with Harlan's. By the time the secretary was out of the cabinet Simpson, having moved far toward the Radical Republican camp, was preaching that "God designs to do away with every vestige of slavery." Before the "rebellious States" could be received back into the Union "protection of the rights of humanity must be secured." And, as for the conflict between the two sections, "the statesmen of the North are able to cope with those of the South, and are in the majority, so there is no ground for fear."³⁷

IV

In the summer and early fall of 1866 Johnson took the stump in an effort to win support in the congressional elections. His famous "swing around the circle" began as a triumphal procession and ended a humiliating spectacle. Effective campaigner that he was, skilled

in the rough-and-tumble tactics of East Tennessee, he was unable to resist the crowds and replied in kind to Radical-inspired taunts. His performance, at best undignified for a President of the United States, was characterized by the Radical press as a drunken orgy.

At the polls that fall the Radicals won an overwhelming victory. Intoxicated with power, they moved in for the kill. They seized control of the Electoral College, abridged the President's power as commander in chief of the armies, ignored his constitutional right to call or refuse to call Congress into session. They even brought his cabinet under control by declaring, in the tenure of office act, that removal of cabinet members without consent of the Senate was a "high misdemeanor."

The ground was set for the removal of the President himself by impeachment. A year went by before Johnson gave the Radicals an occasion to move against him. Then, convinced of the unconstitutionality of the tenure of office act and exasperated by Stanton's perfidy, he discharged him. Stanton refused to surrender his office, barricading himself in the War Department. Congress moved at once to impeach the President.

James Harlan, erstwhile cabinet member, and now in the Senate, was openly for impeachment. He was well supported by the Methodist press, which was aggrieved not only by the President's obstruction of "justice" and his "boldly setting at defiance the laws of the land," but by his "moral corruption," which had "ever made him a disgrace to the nation."³⁸

Bishop Simpson was deeply stirred. Accompanied by his wife, he rushed to Washington where he listened to several speeches in Congress, talked with "many members," dined with the Harlans, called on General Grant, and went to see Secretary Stanton in the War Office. The Secretary was in "fine spirits," and they had a "very long religious talk . . . with prayer." Mr. Stanton wanted to know whether or not "the God-fearing portion of the people" endorsed his course of action. If they did not, what then ought he to do? Simpson assured him that the "loyal and Christian masses" approved his conduct and "hoped he would never surrender." Stanton, much pleased, requested the bishop to pray, "the hour being 2 o'clock in the morning."³⁹

Simpson, in frequent consultation with Harlan, worried over the course the Senate would take in the impeachment proceedings.

When the trial opened in March the Radicals regarded twenty Republican senators as doubtful. By May 1 the number had been reduced to eleven, among whom was Waitman T. Willey of West Virginia, Simpson's Methodist layman friend of many years. Active in the cause of temperance and Methodist affairs, he had had a prominent role in the Methodist centenary celebration of 1866.

As the impeachment trial neared its climax, it was whispered that Harlan and Simpson had conspired to bring the pressure of the church on the recalcitrant Willey. In Chicago the Methodist quadrennial general conference was in session. On May 13, three days before the first vote on the articles of impeachment, a motion was introduced which, by implication, condemned the President as a "wicked person" and called for his removal. A second resolution would have the conference set aside an hour to pray for the President's conviction. An aged brother objected: "My understanding is that impeachment is a judicial proceeding, and that Senators are acting under an oath. Are we here to pray to the Almighty that they may violate their oaths?" Both motions failed.⁴⁰

A Baltimore paper alleged that Senator Harlan, in a desperate effort to win Willey's allegiance, wired to Simpson, "I fear Bro. Willey is lost." Simpson is supposed to have replied: "Tell Bro. Willey he has a soul to save—pray with Bro. Willey." Harlan promptly denied the report. The *St. Louis Christian Advocate* of the Church, South, thought Harlan protested too much. Why was he so quick to issue a denial? Because he "well knew that every one who knew anything of the Bishop, would believe that such dispatches passed."⁴¹

In the meantime, there had been two more unsuccessful attempts to enforce action endorsing impeachment upon the Methodist conference in Chicago. Simpson, in an extraordinary departure from precedent, then took the floor and read a series of resolutions for the consideration of that body. He set forth several grievances: the fear that without the "rightful decision" the "religious privileges" of his church would be endangered in the South, and the "painful rumors" that "efforts are being made to influence Senators improperly." Since, he argued, "the evidence and pleadings in the case have been fully spread before the people, so that all may form an enlightened opinion," the conference should, therefore, resolve to ap-

point an hour of prayer to invoke God "to save our senators from error." The resolution was adopted without dissent. It had been "aimed at Senator Willey of West Virginia," the *Nation* remarked, "rather than at the Throne of Grace." The conference paper, the *Daily Christian Advocate*, apparently agreed with the *Nation*. The vote, it boasted, would "be heard in Washington"; it would "reach the penetralia of hesitating Senators, and establish them in the faith." ⁴²

Chief Justice Chase, who was presiding over the trial, was indignant. "Think of legislatures, political conventions, even religious bodies, undertaking to instruct Senators how to vote, guilty or not guilty." But the Radicals moved on to triumph over Willey, who was already under some pressure from his constituents. With the weight of the Methodist church behind them, and the pressure of the public, they "badgered and disciplined" him until early in the morning of the vote. He at last was said to have capitulated, to have agreed to vote guilty on the eleventh article. The decision of Senator Willey, wrote Secretary Gideon Welles in his diary, "was quite a disappointment to the President." It was to be explained, he thought, by the fact that "Bishop Simpson, the high-priest of the Methodists and a sectarian politician of great shrewdness and ability, had brought his clerical and church influence to bear upon Willey through Harlan, the Methodist elder and organ in the Senate." ⁴³

The Radicals immediately recognized the value of Simpson's service to their cause. The committee on arrangements for the Republican National Convention offered him the use of their auditorium on Sunday May 24, "for a public discourse at any hour you may think proper." "And I beg to add," the representative of the committee said, "that the citizens of Chicago will be most happy to listen to a discourse from you." ⁴⁴

The bishop sought no political prestige for himself. His ventures into politics were so closely related to the welfare of the Methodist Church that he scarcely thought of himself as a shrewd "sectarian politician." He declined the invitation, but did consent, as an office befitting a clergyman, to open the Republican Convention with prayer. His efforts were modest, untainted by political tirade. Offering praise for spiritual and temporal gifts, he sought help in the deliberations of the assembled group—that they might be

"peaceful and harmonious." Only the final benediction and petition, coming from the lips of the great and influential bishop, gave comfort to the Republican campaign committee:

We bless Thee that freedom has diffused its healthful influences all over the land, and that the States so lately in rebellion are being reconstructed in the line of peace and prosperity. Hasten the work so gloriously commenced; may there be nothing that shall mar its progress. And oh, hasten the moment when all parts of our land shall be firmly and intimately and fraternally united . . .⁴⁵

It was not long before the non-Methodist religious press was circulating the rumor that the bishop was to be Secretary of State in Grant's cabinet.⁴⁶

V

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, fighting for its very existence, and angry over the aggressive action of the northern brethren, was quick to charge that the Methodist Episcopal Church was an arm of the Republican party. Among people who had always heard preached the doctrine of the separation of church and state, and who were now unwilling victims of the Radical reconstruction policy, it was an effective propaganda weapon, one that helped to hold the Church, South, together.

Certainly the evidence was everywhere apparent. The success of the northern church in the South among the whites was largely in those areas where military and civilian personnel of the North demanded services of a "loyal" church. The members were largely Republicans; they were carpetbaggers, employees of the Freedmen's Bureau, and teachers sent out by the Freedmen's Aid Society of the church, and as such, they were strong supporters of Radical reconstruction. Governor Fletcher of Missouri remarked, "It is as necessary to maintain these Methodist Churches as it is to keep possession of the forts and arsenals."⁴⁷

When, at the general conference of 1868, Simpson recounted the success of his church in the South, the *New York Tribune* exulted. The progress of the Methodist Church, said the *Tribune*, had "a political no less than an ecclesiastical significance. *There are probably not a dozen voters in all the conferences named, who will vote*

the Democratic ticket." The rapid growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the South "must be hailed as one of the most promising proofs of all real reconstruction." Said the editor of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*, commenting on the *Tribune* story: "Brother Greeley and Brother Stanton know very well what Brother Simpson and Brother Ames are about."⁴⁸

Simpson, in the South on official business of his church, felt the impact of southern bitterness. Invited to preach in the Central Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, he was afterward notified that, "in consequence of his prominent position and influence at the North in favor of the Union during the war, the extended courtesy must be withdrawn." At Canton, Mississippi, he delivered an address of "beauty and great power," and preached also to the conference. But, said the reporter, "so great was the prejudice against our Church that only two or three white persons were present." Simpson himself found the impression "general" that "but for the troops in the South we could not safely hold worship at any place."⁴⁹

VI

In view of the bitter reaction of the Church, South, to the program of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it seems incredible that any of the responsible leaders of the latter should have anticipated reunion. Some of them, indeed, looked forward to a Pax Romana, a policy of "disintegration and absorption," of reunion by admitting the once recalcitrant but now repentant southerners back into the "old church."⁵⁰

The northern bishops made the first overture toward reunion in the summer of 1865. Rejoicing at the overthrow of the rebellion and slavery, and declaring that the "cause" which had separated the church had "passed away," they extended "a cordial welcome to all ministers and members of whatever branch of Methodism, who will unite with us on the basis of our loyal and anti-slavery Discipline." They also resolved, however, to "occupy, so far as practicable," those fields in the southern states "which may be opened to us, and which give promise of success."⁵¹

The southern bishops, in a "Pastoral letter," replied caustically: "While some talk of reunion of the two churches, we forewarn you of a systematic attempt, already inaugurated . . . to disturb, and if

possible, disintegrate, and then absorb our membership individually." 52

The Methodist press, North and South alike, bereft of the issues of slavery and war, eagerly laid hold of their new point of difference. They argued the property question, the tactics of the missionaries, the relevance of such "political" tests of membership as "loyalty" to the government, and antislaveryism, the status of the episcopacy; they revived the debates of 1844 and 1848 and disputed at length the points in the history of the separation; they proclaimed their own pious intentions and impugned the motives of their brother Methodists.

The men of the South, having perhaps the greater cause to suspect and complain, more often dipped their pens in acid as they wrote. They pointed scornfully to the "conduct of certain Northern Methodist bishops and preachers" in seizing churches; they accused the North of endeavoring, "by misrepresentation, to fix on us the invidious character of secessionists and schismatics"; they protested against the "political harangues" which passed for sermons in northern pulpits, and against the "dangerous" attempts of the northern bishops to dominate the government—through the control of elections and the appointment of their friends. "Is there not a purpose," asked Bishop Enoch Marvin, "to swell the church census and gain prestige, so as to control the government?" They heaped their censure especially upon Ames and Simpson. In reunion, said the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*, Bishops Morris, Janes, "and perhaps Scott" might be "acceptable" to the South. But "what Southern Conference could ever become so lost to all sense of self-respect, and to all feelings of Christian dignity and true manliness, as to sit under the presidency of Matthew Simpson or E. R. Ames . . ." 53

The northern bishops, in 1869, again took the initiative in the discussion of reunion, when Janes and Simpson, delegated by their colleagues, journeyed to St. Louis to confer with the southern bishops who were then in executive session. The northern men were received "with respect" and treated "courteously"; but the consultation on reunion was limited to an exchange of written statements. Reviewing the issues of separation, fraternity, and the northern invasion, the bishops of the Church, South, pointed out, "Heart divisions must be cured before corporate division can be healed." They offered, how-

ever, to appoint a commission to deal with the grievances of both churches.⁵⁴

The incident brought a renewed outburst of acrimony in the press. The St. Louis *Christian Advocate*, speaking of the "surprising overture from the North," thought Simpson "an unfortunate adjunct of the notable commission." It did not believe that Bishop Janes was "dishonest and tricky"; but, "as to Mr. Simpson, he is *capable de tout* in the Bishoping and political way." Bishop Enoch Marvin thought the "proposition for reunion" had come "at an inopportune moment"—just when the policy to "disintegrate and absorb" had failed. "The change of policy and tone are too sudden," he said. "Those warm words smoke with a suspicious odor . . . Time ought to have been given for fumigation, to clear away the effluvium of the so-recently dead 'policy.'" ⁵⁵

Simpson was never again active in the movement for reunion. The cause advanced, however, despite the obstacles of bitterness, open warfare, and the needs of the press. Fraternal relations were established, largely on the basis of the southern demands, and a commission was set up with power to adjudicate property claims, out of court.

Reunion was yet three-quarters of a century away, but the essential factor of Methodism, the experience of religion (supported by common usages, a common tradition, and a common symbolic name), like yeast, began to leaven the whole. Even in 1865 the southern bishops had testified "with pleasure" to the "nobler conduct and sentiments of many brethren among them"; and the caustic editor of the St. Louis *Christian Advocate* in the same year confessed that there were "thousands upon thousands of good and true Christian men and women among them." Responsible leaders of the North, in increasing numbers, came to deprecate their church's aggressive policy in the South, and to call for an equitable settlement of grievances.⁵⁶

Even Matthew Simpson, refused the pulpit of the South in the first years after the war, felt the change. From the first he had been invited into the homes of the laymen of the "better class," and had found the former leaders of the Confederacy, especially the military men, cordial in their business relations. By 1869, when he was in Texas on official business, matters had so far improved that

he was invited to preach to a congregation of the Methodist Church, South. Later in that year, in the Holston conference of East Tennessee, where the Methodist battle had raged most fiercely, about twenty preachers of the southern church were present to hear him preach at Jonesville. They fell under the spell of his eloquence, and "the tears of many of them flowed freely" under his "master strokes of power." They went away "feeling that Bishop Simpson is a Christian minister, and a very different man from what they supposed." The time would come when even a southern editor, aware of Simpson's war and reconstruction record, would praise him for his eloquence and claim him, along with Wesley and Asbury, for all of Methodism! ⁵⁷