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Payne, [Daniel A.] - Bishop Payne's First
Annual Address to the Philadelphia Annual
Conference of the A.M.E. Church

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BISHOP PAYNE'S

FIRST ANNUAL ADDRESS

TO THE

PHILADELPHIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OF THE

A. M. E. CHURCH.

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TO THE PHILADELPHIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

THANKS be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, through whose abundant goodness and mercy we are permitted to assemble in the Thirty-Seventh Annual Conference of the Philadelphia District.

Custom and propriety make it my duty to present you an annual address, in the opening of which permit me to hail you as brethren dearly beloved, and fellow-laborers in the common vineyard of our glorious Redeemer, who has manifested his parental care over us in the bestowment of many blessings, temporal and spiritual; also, his sovereign mercy towards the churches under our pastoral care, by the conversion of souls. In presenting my exhibit of the condition of the District, permit me to begin with

THE TEMPORAL

CONCERNING CHURCH-BUILDING.

I am pleased to inform you that no less than four houses of worship have been finished, and dedicated to the service of the Most High, within the boundaries of the Philadelphia District. These are neat, and sufficiently commodious for the population around them. Two others are nearly finished, and will, doubtless, be consecrated within three months from the present date. I regret, however, that candor compels me to state that they have not *all* been constructed on the health-promoting principle; by which I mean to say, some are too low in their basements, others are not sufficiently ventilated. These are great physical evils, and have their origin in the ignorance of building-committees, and the indifference of the master-builders who constructed them.

I hereby solemnly protest against this mode of building, because it has been laying the foundation of disease and premature death, among both people and preachers, for the last forty years. Every basement ought to be ten feet high, at least, in the

clear, and the smallest house of worship at least sixteen feet, in the clear. The windows in a basement ought to be at least six feet six inches in the clear, while the windows in the body of the church ought to be at least nine feet six inches in the clear. These windows should always be suspended upon pulleys, so as to let in the air from the top of the sash. This will enable the preachers to speak with more ease, and much longer, if it be needful, without danger of hoarseness, or an attack of bronchitis: while the women and children would be less subject to fits and fainting.

Our people should be informed of the fact that, every time a person breathes, a gallon of air is poisoned or corrupted; and that wherever a large number of persons are assembled in a room, hall, or church, this corrupted air is manufactured very fast; and if there be no openings to carry it off, it will lay in their bodies the foundation of disease, that will, sooner or later, destroy their health, and precipitate them into an untimely grave,—particularly persons who are weak in the breast, and predisposed to consumption.

In view of this fact, who can wonder that such gifted preachers as Joseph Corr and Thomas Woodson were cut down in the very midst of their usefulness, and at a time when the Church most needed

their talents and piety? May it not be proper to pass a resolution at this Conference, advising building-committees, who may be appointed to secure the erection of a church, to submit the details of the same to the inspection of the Bishop, who, from his extensive travels and observations, may be in possession of sufficient architectural knowledge to give judicious advice on such an important subject.

**CONCERNING EDUCATION AMONG THE RISING
GENERATION.**

In the towns and villages we are, with few exceptions, but poorly provided. These exceptions are in favor of Norristown, Fetersville, West Chester, Burlington, and Bordentown. These schools are not only provided with teachers of respectable qualifications, but are also continued throughout the year.

Other villages have schools only six, some only three months in the year. These are the fall and winter months; the remainder of the time is spent in running about like the wild ass's colt.

Another evil existing in many schools, is that of having a male teacher during the winter, and a female in the summer. Parents seem not to know, that this perpetual change of teachers is very injurious to their children. For unless they have been

trained in the Normal schools, it is difficult to find any two teachers whose mode is the same; so that the habits of study inculcated by the one, are almost always eradicated by the other. 'Tis equally true, that it takes the greatest number of children six months at least to become thoroughly acquainted with the method of a teacher; in consequence of which, they are ever learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth.

Then, there are also parents who, for the most trifling accounts, keep their children from school, some a half day, some two or three days in each week. Now this is also a great injury to a child's progress in knowledge. I beseech you, brethren, endeavor to remedy these evils.

As to the City of Philadelphia, it has, for more than twenty years, enjoyed peculiar advantages in this respect. During this entire period, she has had almost always from seven to fourteen private and three or four public schools. At present she has no less than seven public, sixteen charity, and seventeen private schools, making no less than forty to a population of about twenty-four thousand.

According to a recent statement made in the annual report of Mr. Benjamin Bacon, the agent for our schools in the "City and surrounding Districts," there were (on the 1st of March, 1853), in the pub-

lic and charity schools, 1914; in the private, 325; making a total number of 2,329 scholars. The increased average attendance in the public schools, has been for the past year, 190; in the private, 44; making a total increase of 234.

This is cheering, but yet it is not what it ought to have been. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, to put forth your energies, and make this increase more than double itself during the present year.

And this you can do by preaching on the subject once in six months at least, and by urging the parents, in your pastoral visits, to keep their children in school. • Whenever my numerous duties did allow, I have visited the schools in every village, town, and city. In Philadelphia, I have visited those private schools kept by Miss Sarah Douglass, Miss Margaretta Forten, and Miss Ada Hinton. As far as they go, they are *excellent*, and these young ladies should have the esteem and patronage due their qualifications and devotion to the intellectual and moral development of their scholars. At the head of all the institutions of learning in the Philadelphia district, stands our High School. Professor Charles Reason is the principal, assisted by Miss Grace Mapes, a young lady whose qualifications are said to be of a highly respectable character. The Professor is himself acquainted with several of the ancient and

modern languages, an excellent mathematician, and well versed in polite literature. In addition to these attainments, he is one of the most accomplished teachers in the United States. In my humble judgment, it seems as if he was born for the important office of an Educator, not only on account of his peculiar fondness for it, but also because of his extraordinary aptness.

Descending himself to the root of things, he has the faculty of taking his scholars along with him, and thus making them also radical. That boy or girl must, indeed, be an incorrigible dolt, who does not learn under his training. Last Tuesday morning, I rode over the distance of twenty-seven miles to be present at his first semi-annual examination, and all who were present will justify me in the remark, that the excellent attainments of the male class demonstrate the superior abilities of their preceptor.

May I not beseech you, brethren, to urge the parents belonging to our churches to fit their children for, send them to, and keep them in the High School, until they shall have reaped the full benefit of its advantages.

RESPECTING THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE
AMONG ADULTS.

I rejoice to state that in the city of Philadelphia a new chapter has been opened in our history. For in connexion with the High School, the Directors have established a reading-room, with upwards of a thousand volumes; this is merely the beginning. There are funds sufficient to increase the number to ten or twenty thousand. So we have been informed. This library has been collected with great care, so as to exclude the poison and chaff of light literature, while the pure wheat of useful knowledge is plentifully furnished without price to every parent and every child.

Three evenings in the week are appropriated to the males; one afternoon to the females. Those who do not choose to spend their leisure in the reading-room can, under proper regulations, take home any book they may desire, and from its contents enrich their minds with the treasures of religion, of science, or philosophy.

O that the Lord would arouse our whole community to see and enjoy these advantages!

Another leaf in this opened chapter, is the attention which our people are giving to scientific lectures. During the month of March, a lady learned in

medical science,—I mean Mrs. Oliver Johnson,—delivered two courses of lectures on Physiology and Hygiene to the ladies of our city. These lectures were well attended. In the month of April, Dr. Archibald Miles delivered another course of eight or ten lectures, on the same subject, to multitudes of both sexes. These latter lectures were kindly given by the Doctor without money or price; the happy results of which will be felt by unborn generations.

Here let me introduce that department of our affairs, which is compounded of both the temporal and spiritual, I mean

THE BOOK CONCERN.

Touching this, you will be advertised of its financial aspect through the General Book Steward and his associates. My oversight and experience have informed me of three obstacles in the way of its success, which I feel in duty bound to bring before your notice.

The first, is *the ignorance of the mass of our people*. There are thousands among us who are utterly unable to read, hence, they feel no interest in literary measures, and will, therefore, give no support to our paper or publications. A glance over the congregation of Bethel will convince you of this; for in an

audience of from one to two thousand souls, you cannot see one hundred using our hymn-books.

The second obstacle *is the want of capital.*

Had we this, we could publish many works, which would be purchased by the reading community, not, indeed, on account of any regard they might have for our religious sentiments, but on account of their intrinsic literary merits; the profits of which could be applied to various benevolent purposes, such as the support of worn out ministers, the widows and orphans of those who are deceased, the publication of tracts for gratuitous distribution, and the cause of missions.

The General Conference ordained the raising of such a fund, but did not institute an efficient agency to secure the judicious measure. About the middle of last fall, I opened a subscription to aid the measure, and collected sixteen dollars, but the approaching winter caused me to desist; since then, I have not had the time to do anything in that direction. Fifty cents from each member would put the sum of \$10,000 into our hands in less than three months. What church will lead off in this measure? Who will be the first to assist in this noble charity? Will it be Bethel in Philadelphia or Bethel in Baltimore?

The third obstacle *is the apathy of many in the itinerant ministry.* And you may be assured, that until every man will do his duty in relation to this

matter, the affairs of the Book concern will continue to languish. It is hoped, that this Conference will do something to remove these obstacles.

THE SPIRITUAL

REGARDING SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

These are generally established wherever we have societies. Some of them are tolerably conducted, others miserably. In the greater number of cases, the teachers are not qualified to unfold neither the beauties, nor sense of the word of God to the minds of the young. Some teachers attend in the morning, others in the afternoon—few attend both times; then there are others who attend both morning and afternoon, but always a half hour behind the time. These are the chief evils that retard the progress of our Sunday schools. Now, permit me to advise the remedy.

First.—Let a Bible class of the teachers be formed in every Sunday school. Let this class meet once a week for mutual instruction. Let each member of it be furnished with the following books, viz.: “The

Bible Geography," "Bible Dictionary," "Natural History of the Bible," "Nevin's Biblical Antiquities," "New Biblical Atlas," "Teacher Taught," and "The Mine Explored;" all of which can be purchased for the small sum of \$1 25. Then let each school be furnished with a complete set of the maps published by the American Sunday School Union. Carefully and thoroughly studied by the teachers, these books can qualify them for an intelligent and efficient discharge of their duties. With illuminated minds, they will be able to shed such light upon the lessons of their pupils, as to make the schools places of attraction and delight; and thus, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, the Sunday school will become the garden in which plants shall be cultivated to bloom for ever amid the paradise of God.

Let exhorters be pressed into this glorious service. They tell us, that God has called them to prepare for the ministry. If so, they will be obedient, and ready to go wherever they are sent; especially if it be to take care of the tender lambs of the Redeemer's flock. If they have no heart for this, then let the Quarterly Conference take away their license; for that man who cares not for the souls of little children, was never called of God to care for the souls of old people. And let me beseech you, my dear brethren, by the mercies of God, to preach at least twice a year

on the duty and necessity of family religion, in order that our children may be early taught *to love the Lord, with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their might.*

O that the God of Israel could say of every mother and father among us, what he said of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." *Respecting government. It is to be lamented that there is so little oneness in the administration of discipline. In many respects we rule as though we were not of the same household. It often happens that an elder is appointed to a certain station or circuit; he is a man of incorruptible integrity, of great order, and good government; one whom money cannot bribe, nor threats deter. He will discipline the church and bring it into a prosperous condition. But his term of office expires; another elder is sent in his stead, who, from rashness and want of common sense, will undo in six months, all that his predecessor had done in two or three years.*

Sometimes the difficulty will be created by the stewards, sometimes by the trustees, who will do everything which discipline enjoins, or the constitution commands, until their pride or love of power is touched; then, instead of consulting the higher, and

highest authorities of the Church, they will run to a lawyer. Of course the lawyer, ever on the lookout for money, will be sure to give an opinion that has tendency and power to foster the strife; thus he fans the spark of discord into a flame, and in one week the whole congregation is set on fire. Nor can any power in or out of the Church extinguish it, until the lawsuit ends or a division takes place.

The trustees of Bethel Church in Baltimore done this very thing in 1848, which resulted in shedding the blood of one of its most gifted and faithful ministers in the very altar, and a cost of about \$1,000, besides the secession of the disaffected party.

Others, who read the newspaper ten times more than their Bibles, have formed an idea that the Church must assume the same democratic or republican form as the state, and consequently be governed by similar rules; so, conceiving the resultant idea that the discipline gives the ministry too much power, they will commence a scheme of revolution, nor will they cease until the Church is rent in twain.

Now, men who will run to lawyers to find out what the discipline or article of the Church constitution means, before consulting all the authorities, and exhausting the powers of every ecclesiastical court, ought to be *immediately impeached, tried, and expelled.*

To those who would have the Church of the Living God reduced to a form corresponding to the American republic, let me say, Stop, and consider well what you are about. Do you not know that every form of government has its evil as well as its good? its disadvantages as well as its advantages? A monarchy oppresses the peasants,—the American republic oppresses and enslaves every man who has a drop of African blood in his veins, and hunts the panting fugitive like a wild beast. Now, so far as oppression and power are concerned, whether is better? It is a fact as disgraceful as it is painful, that no despot in Asia, Europe, or Africa is as cruel and relentless in the persecution of its victims as the American republic. For, not only do its politicians tell you that the black man must be oppressed and enslaved, in order that its own existence may be perpetuated; but its doctors of divinity do also declare, that "*Christianity itself has not sufficient power to make the Anglo-Saxon and the descendant of Africa live together in peace and equality.*" So then, it is a fact which no man can set aside, that the *purest democracy under Heaven is the most despotic and unrelenting towards its victims. The form of a government is nothing; its just laws, impartial administration, and equal freedom everything.*

To all, whether they be stewards, trustees, or pri-

vate members, who are ever running to lawyers for counsel against their brethren and against the authorities of the Church, I address the burning rebukes of the Apostle, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matter? Know ye not, that we shall judge angels? how much more the things that pertain to this life? I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?"

And now, let me offer some advice, respecting the Church in which we are now assembled.

According to the last parochial report, there were 1604 communicants. Now, let twelve of its principal men lead off the six hundred and four, and establish another church of our connexion, in the western, southwestern or northwestern part of the city. Let this be done as soon as a convenient place can be procured, wherein to hold the meetings. The following reasons are the grounds of my advice.

1st. The man is not living, who can discharge all the obligations which such a Church imposes.

Beside the various duties which our discipline requires an elder to perform, take the following, found on page 111. "Family religion is wanting in many branches, and what avails public preaching alone, though we could preach like angels? *We must, yea, every travelling preacher must instruct the people from house to house.*"

Now let any elder execute this rule, in a church as large as Bethel, and what time will be left him for reading and study? What time for the instruction of his own wife and children?

2d. In a church as large as Bethel, there is too much latitude for evil-doers. It is like the great city of New York or Philadelphia, where many thieves, robbers, and incendiaries escape, by reason of the multitude of hiding-places. The classes also are too large, in consequence of which, insubordinate leaders have the power to do a great deal of mischief.

3d. It is the surest method which can be adopted to prevent another schism. The seeds of insubordination are already sown in this Church, and if my advice is not heeded, the men are now living, who will see a more fearful and scandalous schism, than was witnessed two or three years ago.

4th. It will do good, because it will extend the boundaries, influence, and wealth of our connexion. All other denominations act upon this principle.

There is talent now in this Church that cannot be brought into requisition, just because there is no space for its exercise; and like a pent up fire, if it is *not put out, it will burn down.*

Therefore let Bethel take my advice, and the men who are now aspiring to be leaders, exhorters, preachers, stewards, and trustees, will find ample room for the exercise of their gifts and graces.

We are now brought to view

THE EDUCATION OF THE MINISTRY.

Touching this important subject, most affectionately do I offer the following advice and reflections. As there are twenty-four hours in each day, settle down upon the resolution to spend at least three hours every day in the cultivation of your minds.

Let those who have not passed through the studies prescribed in discipline commence them at once, and cease not until they shall have been mastered. Let those who have passed this course ascend to the higher studies. Let them study Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

The Latin will not only introduce you to the

learning of ancient Rome, but also make you radically familiar with your own vernacular.

The Hebrew will make you acquainted with that laconic, that poetic language, in which Moses and the prophets wrote and sung.

The Greek will make you master of that copious tongue in which Christ and the Apostles taught and preached. The study of their grammatical structure *alone*, will give to the mind a *clearness of conception, and a power of analysis*, which no other study can confer, excepting Mathematics. This will be an ample reward for all the time, labor, and money you spend in their acquisition.

Try this course for one year, and so sweet, so abundant will be the fruits, that I doubt if you will cease studying so long as you live.

.. The Christian dwells, like Uriel, in the sun.'

If, indeed, the private Christian dwells there, where, then, should be the abiding-place of a minister of Jesus? I answer, in that purer and brighter light of which the sun himself is but a shadow. Even the light of truth, from which all ignorance is expelled. This light is the Bible. And O, what an amount of learning, knowledge, and wisdom is required to unlock the mysteries, evolve the transcen-

dent beauties, and appropriate the inexhaustible riches of that wondrous book, to the intellectual, moral, and religious wants of a benighted, wicked, idolatrous world! Lord Bacon, one of England's greatest philosophers, has said that "Knowledge is power," the truthfulness of which is demonstrated by England's own illustrious history.

Permit me humbly to add, that sanctified knowledge is a power at once beneficent, glorious, and tremendous. It is beneficent, because it is always delighting in good works, and conferring blessings upon mankind—it is glorious, because it shines forth with the brightness of the unclouded sun;—it is tremendous, because the man in whom it dwells is like an angel of God, armed with thunderbolts, crushing the strongholds of the empire of Satan!

We now approach the highest part of our glorious vocation, the salvation of souls in

THE REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

Truly they have not been as deep and extensive as in the years 1841-2. Yet we have abundant reason to be glad. For though the Head of the Church has not overwhelmed us with the thunderstorms of his grace, yet he has most kindly distilled upon us the evening and the morning dews of his sovereign mercy.

Yes, brethren, be glad, for angels have rejoiced in the conversion of penitent sinners during the past year throughout our circuits, and in all our stations! But cannot something be done during the opening Conference year, that will make the field still more productive?

Yes, there can be more holy living among those who bear the ark of the Lord of Hosts—more zeal and devotedness in the cause of our Redeemer—more love for the souls of perishing sinners—more tender solicitude for the reputation and usefulness of one another!

O yes! There can be found in every one of us more of the mind that was in Christ, his meekness, his gentleness, his patience, his courage, his self-denying, self-sacrificing spirit. Above all, and over all, his unspotted holiness; maintained, fortified, and rendered invulnerable by his incorruptible integrity towards God and towards man!

Then shall we be as a *shining light, yea, as a flaming fire, burning now and burning ever*. Then shall the shout of the King be heard in the camp of Israel, our conquering Immanuel will lead us on from victory to victory, and the slain of the Lord be *many*.