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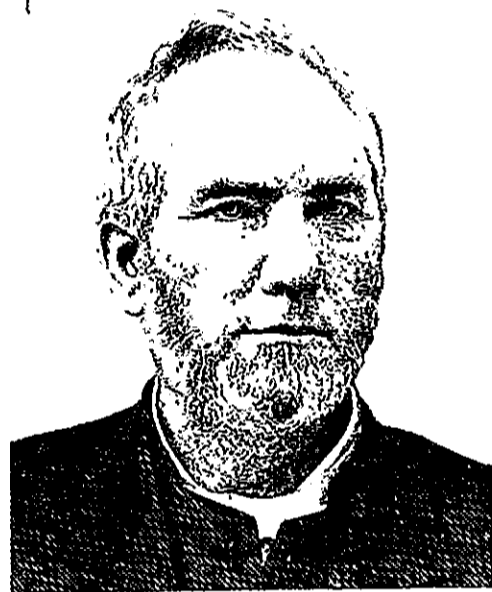
BISHOPS – MISSIONARIES

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MC TYEIRE, HOLLAND N., BISHOP

Pastor's Study



By WALTER N. VERNON

McTYEIRE:

Builder of Southern Methodism

The bishop called his denomination to action when it was at its lowest ebb; and it responded.

THE GREAT figure in southern Methodism during the crucial years following the Civil War was Holland Nimmons McTyeire—preacher, editor, bishop, educator. When he died in Nashville in 1889, all that was needed to report the event was the simple statement, "The bishop is dead." No other identification was required.

Bishop McTyeire's career was typical of the Horatio Alger success story and might be titled, "From

Farm Boy to Bishop." Born in 1824, this South Carolinian eventually led in the higher education movement that proved to be a determinative influence in creating a new South.

His beginnings were humble and his own education meager. Public schools being scarce, he was tutored for a time by a Methodist circuit rider. Later he attended Cokesbury Institute in his native South Carolina; and then, after a year out of school, Collinsworth Institute in Georgia. Both of these were conducted on the manual labor plan.

Though the financial drain was great, he was sent to Randolph-Macon College, where he graduated in 1844. He was licensed to preach in January of that year, and preached his first sermon in March.

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On June 8, 1844, the plan of separation was adopted by the General Conference, and young McTyeire joined the Virginia Conference at its first session as a part of the new Methodist Episcopal Church, South. His first appointment was at Williamsburg, the old colonial capital. Later he served in Mobile, New Orleans, and Montgomery, the latter at the close of the war.

Much of McTyeire's ministry was devoted to Negroes. He saw the evils of slavery, but was not an abolitionist. In his pastorates he usually had as many Negro as white members—sometimes more.

After the war he was active in helping to work out plans for the Colored (now Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church. Negro membership had dropped from over 200,000 to about 75,000, and it was evident that the Negroes would not remain with whites in a southern church. All church property that had been acquired and used for Methodist Negroes in the past—worth about a million dollars—was turned over to the new congregations.

When the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1870 at Jackson, Tenn., Bishop McTyeire was one of the speakers. In replying for the new church, Bishop Vanderhost said, "Brothers, say not 'good-bye'; that is a hard word. Say it not. We love you and thank you for all you have done for us. But you must not leave us—never."

While a young preacher at Mobile, he made two acquaintances who were important to his later career. One was Miss Amelia Townsend, who became his wife. The other was Miss Frank Armstrong Crawford, Amelia's cousin, who became the second wife of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt. And it was the commodore who provided the bulk of the early funds—and the name—for Vanderbilt University.

IN 1858, Pastor McTyeire became Editor McTyeire, with his election by the General Conference to edit the *Nashville Christian Advocate*.

He came to this task at a time of controversy and strife in the life of the nation. As a Southerner, he reflected the convictions and feelings of his background and of his associates. In *The Advocate*, he attacked abolitionists, Republicans, "Lincolndom," and the North generally. When war finally came, he kept publishing the paper as long as he could. But when Nashville was occupied in February of 1862 by federal troops, he felt it was time to leave.

"When generals give up and armed hosts retire," he wrote, "what can unarmed citizens do? The tameness of surrender, without a blow, must have made the bones of Andrew Jackson turn in his grave at the Hermitage."

Then the Methodist Publishing House, with its eight presses and

her equipment, was seized and used at different times as a printing establishment, arsenal, and hospital. In later years the United States government compensated the church for damages sustained by the publishing house.

Editor McTyeire sold his household goods for \$300 to raise needed cash and moved his family to a remote section of the woods of Butler County in Alabama. Here he was truly a refugee. A crude house was built and furniture, clothes, and even shoes were made on the spot.

When Mrs. McTyeire needed shoes her husband hunted in every store in Mobile, but none were to be had. According to *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire* by John J. Tigert (Vanderbilt University Press, \$4.50), to which I am indebted for many facts here: "The result and the prospect of being barefoot was imminent. . . . Madame began to get pretty close to *terra firma*." And the husband reported that he was wearing "new pants of cotton raised on the soil, ginned and spun and woven, cut out, and sewed here. . . . I am proud of them, for Amelia made them. . . ."

With the close of the war, McTyeire soon entered a new epoch of his life as a church leader. Leadership was desperately needed in those days. Many thought that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was disorganized beyond hope of reconstruction.

A Northern account of a meeting of the Tennessee Conference in Nashville's City Road Chapel in 1864 is preserved: "I entered the conference room. Behold! There sat [Bishop] Joshua Soule and 13 preachers. And this was the wealthy, proud, domineering Tennessee Annual Conference! . . ."

Across the South, Methodist college endowments were swept away and plants abandoned. The missionary program was disorganized and in debt. The membership was depleted, and funds of the church were reduced accordingly.

In such an hour the bishops—in an unprecedented action—requested Holland N. McTyeire to meet with them to determine whether the Southern Methodist Church could continue as an independent group. It was decided to issue a pastoral address to the entire church with a strong call to hold a meeting of the General Conference in New Orleans the next year. McTyeire was asked to draft the address. It had a challenging note and aroused enthusiastic response. Of 153 delegates to the conference, 149 were present.

This General Conference of 1866 was called "radical" and it was, in the sense that radical measures were required to meet the difficult situation facing the church. McTyeire was elected bishop in the closing days of the conference. Among the actions were these:

1. Adoption of lay representation

in the General Conference equal to clerical representation. (A similar provision was adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church soon after.)

2. Increase in pastoral limitation from two years to four.

3. Acceptance of plans for creating the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. About a million dollars in property and assets were turned over to this new church.

4. Re-establishment of the missionary program of the church, partly through apportioning a debt of \$60,000 among the conferences.

5. Authorization for rehabilitation of the publishing house at Nashville. At the age of 42, McTyeire entered upon his duties as bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The survival of the denomination was at stake. Bishop Soule's death in 1867 threw great responsibility on the newer bishops.

Bishop McTyeire conducted 125 annual conferences, an average of five and one-half for each year he served as bishop. He organized the Mexican Border Conference in San Antonio in 1885. He encouraged district conferences, which were eventually made a part of the conference system. He wrote half a dozen books and hundreds of articles.

His crowning accomplishment was the founding of Vanderbilt University. Originally incorporated in 1872 as the Central University of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, it was named for the com-

modore, when he gave the first \$500,000 in 1873. Before this gift was announced, the university had almost become a lost cause due to (1) opposition to a university (especially with a theological school) and (2) the difficulty of raising adequate funds in the impoverished South.

Commodore Vanderbilt made a condition of his gift that Bishop McTyeire should serve as president of the board of trust. The bishop set vigorously to work, bought land, contracted for building, hired professors—all in addition to his regular duties as a bishop.

Gifts from the Vanderbilt family reached nearly \$10,000,000.

Bishop McTyeire literally gave the "best years of his life" to Vanderbilt. Settling down in a home on the campus in 1875, he made it his headquarters until his death in 1889. Here he influenced the young Charles Soong (graduated from Vanderbilt in 1885), whose three daughters (Mrs. H. H. Kung, Mrs. Sun Yat-sen, and Mrs. Chiang Kai-shek) have been prominent in the recent history of China.

A life-long friend, Bishop Joseph Key, summed up the feelings of many when he said after Bishop McTyeire's death, "The grand man carried the whole work of the church on his heart." He was buried beneath the magnolias planted by his own hand on the Vanderbilt campus, side by side with William McKendree and Joshua Soule.

NEW CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE