My God

By Lola Matilda Buck

They art a God of joy,
God of the dawn on the sea,
When the white waves run to the light,
Call to the day that will be.

They art a God of strength,
God of the strong, whom peaks,
As they stand uplifted in white,
Harnessed by Thy voice as it speaks.

They art a God of love,
God of the unfading flower.

[Methodist Episcopal]


Bishop John Christian Keener

By Bishop E. E. Moss

The death of this eminent minister of the gospel, which took place on the 19th inst., after a short illness at his residence in New Orleans, was not a great surprise, for he was known to be about eighty-seven years old, having been born in the city of Baltimore February 27, 1813. Nevertheless it will be an occasion of genuine and widespread sorrow in his own church, and of no little interest in other denominations. During the past fifty years no sealer figure has appeared in Methodist circles. From every point of view he was an uncommon man, towering far above the ranks of ordinary mortals, and commanding attention by the sheer strength and vigor of his personality. My own conviction is, moreover, that great as he seemed in the eyes of his contemporaries, he will loom larger and larger still in the eyes of his successors. History has a way of correcting past judgments, sometimes by reversing them altogether, but more frequently by showing them down or touching them up so as to bring them closer to the truth. Only those who are liberally worthy can stand the stress of governmental criticism. If John C. Keener does not belong in the first rank, then all the signs are at fault. He was the first native of Baltimore, that cradle of American Methodism, to come into the succession of Asbury and McKendree and North, the second being Alpheus W. Wilson, who likewise has his membership in the Southern branch of the Church, and now succeeds to the post of seniority in the College of Bishops. A good heredity is a good beginning, and Bishop Keener had that advantage. His father, Bishop Keener, was a leading layman, and enjoyed the close friendship of many of the chief ministers of the Church. At the division in 1844, he naturally followed the Baltimore Conference and achieved North. He took a deep interest in all ecclesiastical movements and enterprises. It was primarily due to him, for example, that the last named was a missionary to California. His wife was also a most pious and useful woman. The couple were wholly worthy of such a son as God gave them.

With William Fisk was a young man who spent a year or two teaching in a private family in Maryland. On his return North to become principal of Williamsburg Academy, he took young Keener, then a lad of ten or eleven years, back with him. The story of their journey, as the Bishop once related it to me, was very interesting. In Philadelphia he got lost and wandered about for some time, an ever-present boy with yellow hair and a freckled face, before finding his way. At Williamsburg he remained three years, and then passed on to the Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., of which Dr. Fisk had, in the meantime, become President. Through this early period of his life he was more or less given to fade. Among other things, he became under the influence of the old gentleman with whom he boarded, an enthusiastic vegetarian, and during one winter, to quote his own language, ate potatoes enough to bury himself under. The traditions are that he was not a particularly diligent student. Though utterly free from gross views of any sort, he was full of fun and frolic. His old friend and college mate, Dr. E. E. Wiley, once said to me if any student went on in college, it was generally understood that Jack Keener had a hand in it. The late Dr. Frederick Merrick, whom Arthur Edwards credited with having been eighteen years old at the time Hanlott left, also gave me similar information, and expressed surprise that a man so lacking in seriousness should have been chosen to the episcopacy. Bureaucracy has different ways of shuffling men.

In a long conversation eight or ten years ago, I asked Bishop Keener the direct question: "Did they have a full curriculum at Middletown in your day?" "No," he replied, "they didn't teach much, and I didn't learn what they did teach." "What, then, were you doing all the time you were there?" "Oh, well, I was doing various things. Musically I learned to skate and to eat collard, but chiefly I was engaged in studying New England character." In spite of such half-parochial remarks, it is certain that he got much good out of his college life. His new surroundings were provocative of thought. Among his fellow students were many who subsequently became famous; such as Daniel Curry, Joseph B. Cunings, Erastus Wentworth and Charles Collins. Association with such young men could not fail to be a stimulating force. But nothing counted for so much in his development as the presence and influence of Dr. Fisk, who by all accounts must have been a most charming character. None of his biographers has been able to set him fairly before the public. All alike, and in spite of their evident admiration for him, they leave the impression that he was rather thin and commonplace. But the boys who sat at his feet never ceased to sound his praises. Bishop Keener joined in the chorus most heartily. To the end of his life he could think of no words that were too eulogistic to be applied to his old teacher.

After his graduation Bishop Keener returned to Baltimore, and went into business as a wholesale druggist. Before many years, however, he abandoned this venue and removed to Alabama, being largely influenced to take this step by the fact that the young layman to whom he was engaged had gone there before him. Soon after reaching that state he entered the Itinerant ministry on trial—about 1842. From the first he was successful in his new vocation. His preaching was characterized by evangelistic fervor. Wherever he went as pastor good revivals of religion followed. Nor did he ever lose the gift of urgent appeal. Long after he had passed his three score and ten he was still perfectly at home in the midst of a religious upheaval. On the strength of the record which he made in Alabama, he was transferred to Louisiana and stationed in New Orleans, which has always been one of the hardest fields in the United States for Protestant churches. Up to that time Methodism had managed to maintain there only struggling and doubtful existence. To him more than to any other man was due whatever success it has achieved in later years. He possessed all qualities of a great man. Nothing frightened him. The greater the obstacle the more he adored the man of iron, and of interesting himself in his work. His friendships were all a credit to him.

First and last he filled nearly all the offices in the church; was pastor of both white and colored congregations, presiding elder on large districts, agent for missionary College, missionary (to the soldiers in the Confederate army), and editor of the New Orleans Christian Advocate in every one of those positions he showed great ability. No judge of a United States Court ever took his duties with a keener sense of their importance than he did in presiding over a Quarterly Conference. It was said of him that everything began to move up as soon as he set his foot inside of a pastoral charge. More than fifty years have elapsed since he wrote "Post Oak Circuit," a humorous and
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Inclusive treaties, in the form of a story, on the financial methods of the Methodist Church, but it is still selling right along. To read it without laughter, indulgence, and indulgence is an impossibility. For the littleness, meaness and parsimony that afflict so many professing Christians, he had a feeling whichbordered on contempt. As an editor he easily stood in the front. Nobody went to sleep over his paper, in the years immediately following the war, he did yeoman service in inspiring and encouraging the scattered hosts. He never trimmed or equivocated. Everybody knew where he stood on all emergent issues. Even those who were not willing to follow his leadership were compelled to admire his persistent candor.

Bishop Keener first appeared at a General Conference in 1854. One of his colleagues from Louisiana, considerably his junior, was Holland M. McTyeire. For some reason of petty jealousy he was not elected in 1858. But in the reconstruction General Conference of 1868 and 1886 he was once more on hand, and very influential. The Daily Christian Advocate under his editorship fairly sparkled. When it came to choosing the four new Bishops he received a large vote, but not quite enough to put him in. Weightman, Doggett, Marvin and McTyeire being named. Again in 1870 he played a most important part. Bishop James and Dr. Harris were present on a mission of fraternity and union from the Methodist Episcopal Church and were received with great courtesy. But at a critical stage of the proceedings Dr. Keener arose with a copy of the Journal of the preceding General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in his hand, and challenged the authority of the two Commissioners, on the ground that the resolution under which they were acting empowered them to deal directly only with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This was the first time the question of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was put before the General Conference in such a manner, and it was adopted.

Bishop Keener was a tall, keen,南方人式的人, he had a wide outlook. He had intellectual interests and a wide knowledge of the world. He was a man of the world, and his influence was very great. He was a man of the world, and his influence was very great. His intellect was broad, and his mind was quick.

In the chair of a deliberative assembly, he was no mean speaker, but he was no orator. For the mere letter of the law he had less regard than many others, but he kept always within the spirit of it. For Church trials he had a horror, and did not hesitate to say that the most difficult way to get rid of an unworthy minister or member was to be.

It is stated that he once consented to let a preacher out of one of the Texas Conferences without a trial, provided he would sign a written pledge never to apply for ordination again.

His conduct of the church was usually to be implicitly trusted. It is a matter of knowledge that he tried to make great men out of scoundrels who could not justify the good opinion that he held of them. Not did he take much pleasure in revising his estimates, though he would do it when the facts were not clear.

He was delightfully human even in his prejudices. Nothing could be further or more negative than his dislike of the negroes. He was glad to see him and Bishop Doggett.

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When I was elected bishop, I put my hands on my shoulders and said, 'Now, boys, I can't hold you any longer. I can't hold you any longer. I can't hold you any longer.'

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John Christian Keener was a Baltimorean, having been born there Feb. 7, 1819. He graduated at Wesleyan University, Connecticut, taking his A.B. in 1835 and his A.M. in 1836. He then entered the drug business in Baltimore and remained in it two or three years. In the meantime, his sweetheart, Miss Mary Anna Spencer, had moved with her parents to Alabama. Alabama then held great attraction for young Keener, and to Alabama he came. Here he married Miss Spencer, and here, too, he was licensed to preach at old Rehobeth Church, then on the Linden Circuit, but in Wilcox County. Other appointments on that circuit included Dayton, Demopolis, Linden, Spring Hill and nineteen others—twenty-four in all. Shortly after Brother Keener was licensed to preach, the pastor of the Linden Circuit missed the way, went astray, and young Keener was appointed to fill out the unexpired year's work. He was admitted on trial into the Alabama Conference in the fall of that year—1842—and was appointed to serve as junior preacher, with the distinguished Dr. Lovick Pierce as senior preacher, at Franklin Street and West Ward, Mobile. In the middle of the year 1843 his presiding elder sent him to Demopolis. Here he held a great revival meeting. Demopolis was made over. Formerly a point on the Linden Circuit, it now became a station and has remained such until this good day. He reported 68 white members and 115 colored members. He served Demopolis through 1845; he served Tuscaloosa during 1846 and 1847. His next appointment was at Montgomery, where he served only one year, transferring at the end of that year to the Louisiana Conference. It was while serving in New Orleans that he was elected a Bishop in 1870. His son, Dr. J. O. Keener, was for many years a member of the Alabama Conference, and served with rare distinction as President of the Southern University at Greensboro.
Dr. Robert Kemmon, one of the most beloved ministers of that section.

J. H. Vincent was born at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Feb. 23rd, 1832. His parents were northern people, his father having been born near Milto P.a., and his mother at Philadelphia. She was Mary Raser. In early life she was left an orphan, and came South to be with her brothers, one Mobile and one in Demopolis. The elder Vincent met her at the home of her brother, and they were married at Demopolis. They later moved to Tuscaloosa and were living there when, in 1832, J. H., Jr., was born. Mr. Vincent had been reared a Presbyterian and Miss Raser a Lutheran. After their marriage they joined the Methodist Church in which you can find their baptism. They returned to Pennsylvania till the latter part of 1837. Their son was licensed to preach in 1838. He filled various appointments in two of the Northern Conferences, and was elected a Bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1888. He was one of the founders and principal leaders of the Chautauqua Movement. He became the author of numerous books and pamphlets, and was known.

**EPISCOPACY**

of a number of books, including one of the most dependable Histories of Methodism ever written, a monumental work that ought never to be out of print. He was a church statesman and was so recognized by all who knew him. He became the first President of Vanderbilt University, which was originally a Methodist institution. In 1847 in Mobile he married Miss Anne Townsend. One of their daughters became the wife of Rev. John J. Tigert, who later became a Bishop in the Church, while another man...