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Message of Dr. James H. Carlisle as Fraternal Messenger from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1880

James H. Carlisle

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MESSAGE OF

DR. JAMES H. CARLISLE

As Fraternal Messenger

From

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH

To

The General Conference Of The Methodist Episcopal Church

Meeting In Cincinnati In 1880

James H. Carlisle, LL. D.

Born at Winnsboro, South Carolina, May 4, 1825; died October 21, 1909.

Graduated with honors from the South Carolina College in 1844.

Taught four years in Old Fellows' Institute in Columbia and five years in Columbia Male Academy;

Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy, Wofford College, 1854-1875;

President of Wofford College, 1875-1902;

President Emeritus and Professor of Ethics and the Bible, Wofford College, 1902-1909;

Member Secession Convention, 1861;

Member State Legislature, 1863-64;

Member State Board of Education under Hampton's administration;

From the admission of layman, in 1870, a member of seven successive General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South;

Fraternal Messenger to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Cincinnati, 1880;

Delegate to first Ecumenical Conference in London, 1881; and to Ecumenical Conference in Washington, 1891;

Received the degree of LL. D. from the Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas, 1870;

A frequent and valued contributor to the periodicals of his Church;

Author of the "Young Astronomer," and editor of "Selections from Arnold and Ascham";

For fifty-five years connected with Wofford College, by common consent the most commanding figure in Southern

education, he taught with power and authority because he was himself the embodiment of the best and finest in human character;

A Christian teacher, who served his Church in loyalty to her faith and practice, and trained successive generations of young men in truth, honor, courtesy, justice, sympathy, purity;

In the thought of the Church, her greatest layman;

Lives forever in the characters he formed, the principles he taught, and the uplifting influences he set in motion.

In 1880 it required courage and Christian statesmanship to deliver his memorable address at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The South at its best found therein voice and utterance. Surely the Methodists of this generation, sixty-three years later, should not be satisfied to live on any lower levels than those of the South at its best.

R. T. Jaynes.

Walhalla, S. C.
September, 1943.

MESSAGE OF DR. JAMES H. CARLISLE AS FRATERNAL MESSENGER FROM THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH, TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH MEETING IN CINCINNATI IN 1880. THE PRINCIPAL PART OF THIS ADDRESS WAS PUBLISHED IN THE ALABAMA CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE OF MARCH 26, 1925 AT REQUEST OF BISHOP MOUZON.

BISHOP MOUZON'S NOTE

In 1880 Dr. James H. Carlisle, president of Wofford College, Spartanburg, S. C., was the fraternal messenger from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. He delivered a never-to-be-forgotten address. It is given below, with the omission of two or three short paragraphs. I may be permitted to say that Dr. Carlisle was the greatest man I ever knew. I know of no living man today in the same class with him. He was South Carolina's greatest layman. The South at its best finds voice and utterance in the address of Dr. Carlisle given below. And we Methodist preachers and laymen must not be satisfied to live on any lower levels than those of the South at its best. —Edwin D. Mouzon.

Mr. President, Fathers, and Brethren: It is an era in the history of both parties when one million human beings speak through any medium to two million and say: We are brethren. "But all this is only a form," it is sometimes said. The splendid bridge which spans the noble river near us is only a form, a dead passive thing; yet the current of trade and travel rolls over it ceaselessly to enrich your city. What is the metal tube which carries water or light into your dwelling but a form? Yet it gladdens your home. What was the salutation with which your friend met you this morning but a form? What are all courtesies among men? What are all human usages and institutions but forms? In this sense the salutation between churches is a great form, empty in itself, but open to receive all that either side can pour into it. This form has so much value

that some of our church, as in yours, cannot enter into it heartily. One of the saddest results of recent events is that some in every part of our country have lost confidence in their fellow men, their fellow citizens, their fellow Christians. There is a loss greater than that. Some have lost the power to confide in others. This, if general, would be national bankruptcy in its most dreadful shape. There is, however, a loss even beyond that. **Some have lost the wish to confide in others.** They are not only reconciled to their disability, but they glory in it.

These represent a class described by Arthur Helps as men who, imprisoned by their prejudices, like madmen mistake their jailors for a guard of honor. Let us hope there are not more of these in any part of our country than can be profitably used as instructive object lessons.

It is a painful condition of things in a country when, through lack of confidence, silver and gold are hidden away in secret places and trade decays. It is more painful when in a Christian land suspicions and distrust prevail, so that any kindly impulse left is idle and unproductive, forbidden to pass from lip to lip, from heart to heart, in that generous commerce which is doubly gainful and blessed. There was a time when this was the case with our churches. There have always been in each church not only good men but, what is rarer, fair-minded men who could respect Christian worth of those across the lines. But they were embarrassed by the painful fact that their churches as organic bodies held no intercourse. It may be a little thing to send or receive a messenger, but it was a great thing for years this little thing was not done. It is not surprising that in a terrible season of war bad tempers should rise; but must they be lasting? An hour of pain may cause a spasmodic convulsion, but must it become a ghastly lifelong distortion?

A great missionary tidal wave is spreading over our whole land just now. Can you imagine that as taking place and the churches still unreconciled? Think of two great communities substantially of the same faith and order each consumed in burning zeal for the poor heathen on the other side of the globe and yet treating with indifference or contempt God's image in the brethren by their side! Would that be comedy or tragedy? Let us render thanks to the bishops and leading men of both churches, the best of all being that God was with them, who have saved us from that shame. It is not a little thing that the painful silence of years has been broken and vague impulses have taken articulate form and shape. It

cannot be displeasing to Him whose name we alike bear that we may now kneel together and say: "Our Father! thy kingdom come! Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." We may never all see alike or think alike or vote alike in Church or State, but we have much, very much, in common.

The sacred and eternal points of agreement which draw together are stronger than the temporal and transient points which divide us in spirit. Our sympathies should be stronger than our antipathies. We agree wonderfully in our interpretation of the Bible. This fact should have far more significance than the fact that we disagree in our interpretation of some passages in the Constitution of the United States or of some passages in recent or current history. "Religion is the only remedy for diseased States," says Vinet. Methodists share largely with sister churches a responsibility for the success or failure of Christian civilization in these lands. A careful study in the census pictures, which show graphically in colors the relative strength of the leading denominations in our country, must suggest to a thoughtful Methodist other feelings than those of complacency or pride. We ought to be felt in forming the tone of public sentiment of this great and rapidly growing people. This does not mean in deciding the political dress of the nation; but we ought to be felt in shaping the character and through that the history and destiny of our people.

Twenty-five years ago, when England was engaged in a foreign war, a thoughtful minister expressed a hope that all the cost and sufferings of the war might, as one good result, lessen or destroy two great vices in his native land. He mentioned party spirit and thirst for material wealth. What effect may have been produced on England in either of these respects by the Crimean War is not now a question before us. It can scarcely be hoped that the effect of the Civil War would be to lessen either of these national evils with us. Rather the instant effect was to intensify fearfully one or both these gigantic evils. It has been said that perhaps there has not been in two centuries a public question in Christendom with so many complications and difficulties as gather around the Civil War, its causes and its results. As one of the results, it was inevitable that church lines must largely coincide with geographical and party lines.

But if religion comes in to perpetuate and intensify party spirit instead of curing it, the future of the country is dark indeed. If the light that is in us become darkness, how great

will be that darkness! This is too great and too goodly a land to be given up to the genius of discord and hate. You will let a laymen declare with all possible emphasis that one of the greatest difficulties in the way of the common man is the fierce temper so often carried into religious quarrels and into public quarrels by religious men. If the Christians of this land could meet all the great questions now confronting us, not as angles may be supposed to meet them but as patient, tolerant, largehearted, Christian and Christlike men, this would do more for the spread of Christianity than all the volumes of evidences that this generation of scholars can write. Must we every fourth year pass through a strain on our whole texture of society which makes good men everywhere serious even to sadness? Let the solemn fact be solemnly alluded to even here and now that while our country is divided, not very unequally, into two great parties, each fairly representing the intelligence, wealth, and moral worth of the land, neither party today willingly trusts the other to open a box and count the little pieces of paper in it. Surely there is solemn, earnest, Christian work to be done by all American churches and all Christian men and women. When the great problem presented is to educate and Christianize the public mind and heart and conscience of our common country, "He may be unwise who is sanguine, but he is unpatroitic and unchristian who despairs."

In our immediate church relations there are seven strong reasons why we should meet this crisis like Christian men. Two great bodies with all important points in common, each pledged to spread holiness through these lands, ought to have a clear and full understanding. If such grave interests were not involved, it would be amusing to watch the position and attitudes of our churches. There are two stout, comely Methodist lads not quite a century old. They have all the sanguine, complacent feelings which are natural to the early stage of historic growth. They are not afflicted with that excessive diffidence which is so painful in some young people. They are not afraid of that which is high or of large designs. A few years ago they had a most unbrotherly struggle. Since that time each has felt it a religious duty to consecrate in prose and poetry not only the heroic incidents but the spirit and sentiment, even the moods and tempers, of his story of the fight, while he often suggests to his brother that he ought to let the past go and never allude to this matter before company.

Each one with the charming simplicity of youth says open-

ly to the whole world: "I see the way very clear for me to achieve the great mission to which I am certainly called, but alas for me! I have a twin brother and is he not rightly named Jacob? For he supplants me on all occasions in birthright and in blessings." Each one of these Wesley boys is in a great chronic distress about the other's eyesight. Each one is forward on all occasions, in season and out of season, to offer his whole stock of oil or vitriol, his lancet, and his tomahawk to take the mote out of his dear brother's eye. Surely it is time to put away these childish things. "What can war but endless wars still breed?"

Are we to forever be approaching and never reaching the last word? There are important questions affecting us which we cannot wisely settle in haste or passion. Sometimes a division of a small circuit has given rise to feelings and tempers which die only with existing generations. Two great organizations touching at so many points and overlapping in not a few must meet very often with questions which at best are complicated and delicate and which through a little indiscretion on other sides may become irritating. We have formally agreed to seek peace. We must now pursue it even if at times it seems to avoid it. There must be on each side some positive spontaneity, some generous venture, a willingness to risk something. Confidence is not a plant of rapid growth at any time, but it cannot grow at all if a cold, east wind is blowing all the while and enemies sowing tares besides. Let us place this great interest where a few ill-tempered pens and tongues on either side, or on both sides, cannot disturb it. Let all the lines be manned by watchmen who are not only vigilant but brave and therefore generous, wise and therefore prudent, pureminded and therefore peaceable. Let them be men who can't sink to become talebearers or gossips. If either church seriously departs from historic landmarks in doctrine or in life, let the righteous smite. But all petty "bushwacking" around the walls of Zion must be stopped. Let every Methodist—North and South, East and West—beware lest while his neighbors are praising him (and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself, thy section, or thy party) the words which win their praise may draw down upon him the solemn rebuke from the skies: "Thou slanderest thy own mother's son."

Let the simple truth be known and felt in every Methodist pulpit, office, school, home and closet that the right and left arms of the great Methodist body can gain nothing but sorrow and shame by tearing each other. If neither half respect the

other, how can the world respect both or either? If with us it is a little thing on any trivial occasion to sneer at our brother's sincerity of faith, outsiders will sneer at us both and at all religion. Indulging in this censorious, quarrelsome disposition, we may, before we are aware of it, train up in our homes and schools a race of narrow Pharisees or of open scoffers. Let him who can decide which of these is the more to be dreaded.

Someone has attempted to calculate in dollars the value of growth of all our varied crops to the whole country of one hour's common sunshine in spring. It swells up to a mighty sum. No human arithmetic can compute the worth of even a short season when strifes are hushed, when passion sleeps, when slumbering memories and sympathies revive and a wearied nation is bathed in the heavenly sunshine of peace so quiet and yet so powerful. The proverb says that he who does not lose his reason on some occasions has none to lose. Wisely interpreted, this is a wise maxim. Who has not in the family circle had his happiest hours when abandoning himself to the current of emotions which reason did not directly produce or control? What patriot is there who has not on some signal anniversary—February 22 for example—enriched and strengthened his patriotic sentiments and impulses by a process in which logic had little power? Who that loves the stones and gates of Zion has not felt the full tide of sacred joy inspire and elevate his nature, not as the result of a toil or struggle, but of a surrender not from active efforts but as passively receiving all the enriching influence of some favored hour? This weary, heavy-laden land needs rest. It cannot live by bread alone. The churches—our churches—need peace and sunshine—cheap, common, blessed sunshine. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, Samaria, and Galilee," is the simple but touching record in a verse of the historical book of Acts. The geographical names, no doubt, had then a vivid significance which they have now lost for us. That is a happy provision which makes it impossible for these geographical turns to cast their dark shadows indefinitely down through the generations of men.

In modern phrase it might read: "Then had the churches rest throughout all the Southern, Middle, and Northern States." Blessed shall be the historian whose pen may seek relief from war's mournful chapters in that glad verse. Blessed even now is the Christian man or woman who does something to prepare the church for that happy hour. We could not have a greater curse inflicted on us than that we should be doomed—that

is, should doom ourselves—to continue hateful and hating one another. Some difficulties which disturbed us have been removed. Others yet remain and new difficulties will often appear. But all must give way if "love drives our chariot wheels."

Christian fraternity is not a magic phrase. It is a simple name for a great Christian duty and privilege. It is not poetry to which we can attain only on rare and elevated occasions. It is the prose which we must speak along life's common pathway. We shall try your patience hereafter. You will try ours. Supposing you to be just like ourselves with twice our aggregate number, you may have twice as many of those who form the effective, quiet, workers, the valuable rank and file of the Methodist army—the men and women who try to do all the good they can while trying to do no harm. In this Army you have a possibility of good which if right to do so we might envy. But you are entitled to carry twice as much baggage as we are afflicted with. You may have twice as many of those who not only steadfastly believe the great doctrine of human depravity, but who so consistently illustrate it that it becomes impossible for others to doubt. These will be to us excellent teachers of patience. Under such tuition we give you formal notice that we will surpass you in magnanimity, generosity, and long-suffering if we can. We are willing to believe, however, that we have at last rounded the Cape of Good Hope and have before us a wide Pacific sea which is vexed only by such storms as are inevitable in our earthly atmosphere.

We are certainly now in that crisis of our intercourse as sister churches where every man sees just what he wishes to see. If he is a lover of peace, he will often see occasion on which by tongue or pen, by influence public and private, he can strengthen the bonds so auspiciously formed. If he is not at heart a lover of peace, he will on any day find occasion, as he will believe, to cry out the monotonous, the inevitable, and the unanswerable "I told you so. Look at your fraternity." That now, in the solemn afternoon of the nineteenth century, there are men—Christian men—to whom the phrase "Christian fraternity" scarcely rises to the dignity of a good joke and suggests only a pointless sneer is fresh cause for humiliation to us all.

Our last Sabbath school lesson carried us to the Mount of Transfiguration. The astonished disciples came down from that sacred mountain with its celestial visitors to find poor human nature torn by a demon at its base. You are here to

overlook the many and far-reaching interests of your vast organization. If our wishes and prayers can avail, you will find every day in the social and religious intercourse of this place an ever fresh, enriching influence. In all the prosaic drudgery and details of a laborious session you will find it good to be here. You may go down to common life when all these claims have been met perhaps to find a great nation torn by the spirit of discord and strife. If we ask—and what thoughtful patriot has not asked again and again—in sorrow and surprise, “Why can we not cast out this evil spirit?” the sad answer is at hand, “Because of our unbelief,” our want of faith in God and man. We suppose our common Father to be like to one of ourselves. We cannot rise to the high conception that North and South, as we often use them, are words which he does not recognize. We unconsciously suppose that he regards, just as we do, State lines and party lines. These are very important and necessary for many purposes. But they do not, they cannot restrain or bound his all-embracing love. Blessed be his name. And we necessarily lack faith in our brother man. We too often judge him by the badge or regalia he wears. We do not rightly prize the immortal jewel within. With our backs on the irrevocable past and our faces turned to the available future, can we not gather from all the associations and the inspirations of this hour some lasting impulse which will connect them with this suffering nation?

The North and the South! These short words have gathered strange power to move the swiftest instincts of our nature. they have “turned the coward’s heart to steel, the sluggard’s blood to flame.” Must they forever be the watchwords of an undying strife? Must this still represent a gulf across which no love or sympathy can reach? Is there no one high relation which can adjust and subordinate them, no one overpowering sentiment which can unite them? Will not all Christians of all names in all parts of this vast nation, surprised and saddened, but made humble and wise by their painful failure, carry this distracted land, the common mother of us all, to Him who can give peace and quiet? Brethren, we solemnly pledge you the sympathy and prayers of many thousands of earnest men and faithful women who will join you and your people in urging to heaven an appeal which may satisfy all the purest longings of patriotism and piety: “The North and the South, thou hast created them. Possess them thou who has the right, As Lord and Master of the whole.”