



“Preserving—Sharing—Caring”

# Crossroads

## The 1844 Debates on Slavery and the Beginning of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South: Part I, The Harding Appeal

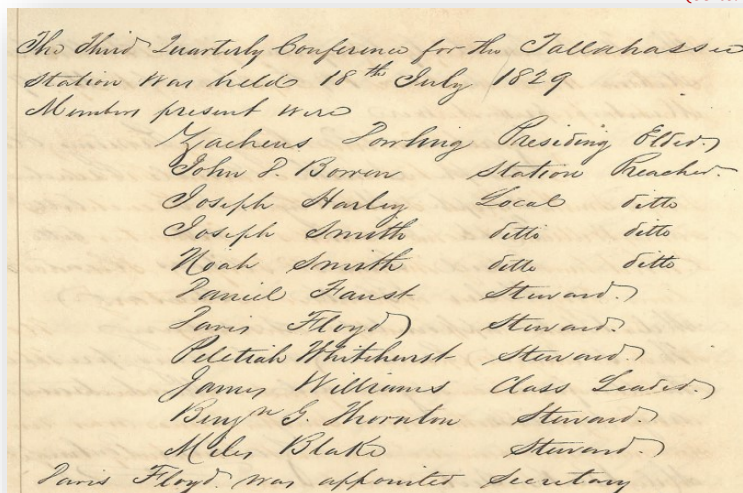
By Pamela C. Crosby

In September 2024, Trinity United Methodist Church of Tallahassee will observe its 200th anniversary. It could be argued that the anniversary’s theme “Faith of Our Founders, Living Still” might refer to the founders of American Methodism who opposed the entrenched institution of slavery that would forever tarnish the nation’s history. Among them were **John Wesley**, **Francis Asbury**, and **Thomas Coke**, though Asbury and Coke would soften their views on slave-

owning states in the early decades of the denomination’s history in the U.S. (Purifoy, 1966, p. 14; Bascom, 1845, p. 6).

In fact, powerful language opposing slavery as etched in the Methodist Episcopal Church’s (MEC) first *Discipline* would continually weaken in later editions of the rulebook by the time emotions would reach a boiling point at the 1844 General Conference. Debates at the Conference would result in

(cont. on p. 2)



The first stewards (church lay leaders) to meet at Tallahassee Station are listed in the July 18, 1829, *Quarterly Conference Minutes*: Daniel Faust, Davis Floyd, Peletiah Whitehurst, Benjamin G. Thornton, and Miles Blake.



### Inside This Issue:

Harding Appeal (ct.) ..... 2-14  
Making History..... 15-16  
Leadership Information ..... 16

### Bicentennial Observance

To learn more about Trinity’s Bicentennial Observance, go to

<https://tidings.tumct.org/faith-of-our-founders-living-still/>

To see Trinity’s comprehensive online timeline, go to

<https://www.tumct.org/welcome/about/history/historical-timeline/>

### Special thanks to

Dawn Adams, Cecile Baker, Dot Binger, Don Crosby, Melanie Gonzalez, and Pat Striplin for their assistance in providing resources, writing, editing, publishing, and/or promoting the issue.

### Contact Info:

Pamela C. Crosby, Chief Editor, at [pcrosby@tumct.org](mailto:pcrosby@tumct.org)

(cont. from p. 1)

an impasse when anti-slavery proponents could no longer tolerate slavery's increasing presence in the Church, and leaders of the proslavery movement could no longer tolerate this intolerance of their reliance on slavery as an institution—leading to the birth of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Purifoy, 1966; Bascom, 1945; Emory & Strickland, 1857).

Although exemplary men and women have shaped Trinity throughout its history by their moral leadership and stands on social justice, in truth, most if not all of Trinity's earliest lay leaders were owners of enslaved people, and as a consequence, Trinity benefited financially from the forced labor of African Americans. The legacy we enjoy today began with the financial support of these "founders." Among the first church officers of Tallahassee Station (the early congregation) to attend a Quarterly Conference (local meeting) of the church on July 18, 1829, were **Davis Floyd**, **Benjamin Thornton**, **Peletiah Whitehurst**, and **Miles Blake**—all slave owners ("Third..," 1829; Schweninger & Howell, 2003, pp. 142, 143, 144, 150; "Miles Blake," n.d.).

In this series of articles, the events leading up to the Great Schism are told based on reports of the 1844 General Conference in New York City, when Northern and Southern delegates debated the "evil" versus the "sin" of slavery and its Biblical and theological implications. Two major debates led Southern delegates to make official plans to separate. Details of the first debate, concerning the status of **Rev. Francis A. Harding**, traveling preacher and slaveowner of Maryland, are presented in this issue with details of the second debate concerning the status of **Bishop James Andrew** of Georgia included in the a future issue.

...

## Tuesday, June 11, 1844: The End of the Beginning

After a grueling and stormy six weeks, the 1844 General Conference in New York City adjourned at 15 minutes after midnight on June 11th. Later that day, Southern delegates of the Methodist Episcopal Church convened to prepare for leaving the Church to form their own separate denomination (West, 1844, p. 240; Brooks, 1969, p. 53).

Before they dispersed from NYC to their home districts, church leaders from these Southern states drew up a plan to break with their Northern fellow churches so as to "prevent" future "ecclesiastical anarchy" that they saw as inevitable was to lay out a proposal for a convention taking place in Louisville, Kentucky, on May 1, 1845,

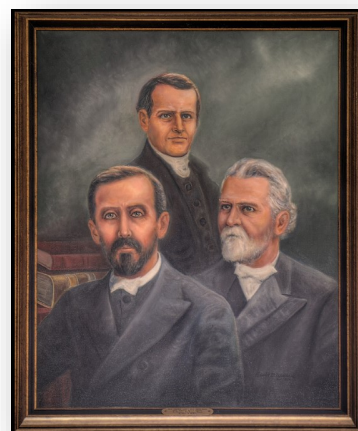
where delegates from Southern Annual Conferences would deliberate on what founding an independent denomination would involve (Norwood, 1923, pp. 90-91).

With so much resentment and distrust in the NYC gathering expressed by Northern and Southern delegates toward each other as well as prolonged emphasis on resolving the slavery issue, there was little time for anything else. The fact that new Annual Conferences received approval to organize hardly drew notice. One of the new conferences was Florida, consisting not only of East and Middle Florida but areas in Southern Georgia not already included in the Georgia conference. But, understandably, it would not be a time for celebration (Brooks, 1969, p. 53).

How did it come to this: leaders of a denomination—whose history went back hardly 80 years as a collection of societies and 60 years as an "organized... church"—bickering and squabbling in a six-week long dispute, only to reach an impasse? What would arouse such hateful emotions? Indeed, it was not a sudden phenomenon, for tensions and conflict had been brewing long—in fact, decades—before the delegates would meet in New York (Emory & Strickland, 1857, p. 9).

## Methodist Abolitionists: A Long Wait

Before the 1844 conference, Methodist abolitionists took actions to stir stronger resistance to slavery in Northern church leaders. Stressing the "sinfulness" of the slave trade and slave ownership, activists held three anti-slavery conventions. Their ultimate goal was to rid the church of slaveholders; if church leaders would not immediately take action, the remaining abolitionists would secede from the church as **Rev. Orange Scott**, noted anti-slavery activist, had done in establishing the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in 1842-43. Hoping to avoid further departures, church officials asked leaders of the movement to wait until after the 1844 conference when their petitions would be addressed and voted on



Painting of Martin Wells Knapp, [Orange] Scott (middle), and Seth Cook Rees on display at the World Methodist Museum, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Public Domain. [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Orange\\_Scott#/Media/File:19-22-297-museum.jpg](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Orange_Scott#/Media/File:19-22-297-museum.jpg)



to make any sweeping decisions (Smith, 1845, p. 373-374; Norwood, 1923, p. 25).

As it would turn out, it would be the Southern sympathizers of slaveowners who would be the ones to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church.

### Wednesday, May 1, 1844: The First Day

Delegates from all over the U.S. arrived at the Conference of the largest and most “rapidly increasing” of all other denominations—according to **Lucius C. Matlack**, reporter for *The True Wesleyan*, an antislavery journal. One set of delegates was described as “imposing” and “command[ing] respect.” These were the older leaders of the MEC—who had “commenced their spiritual labor of love when reproach and want were the sole rewards of their toil.” They were not “men of ordinary nerve” but had “principles that were of ‘stern justice and uncompromising right’ and who had made ‘noble sacrifices, and produced glorious results.’” On the other hand, there were the younger delegates described as “middle age” who “inhabit[ed] the cities their fathers had buil[t]” and consumed the “fruit of vineyards already planted” (Matlack, 1845, pp. 3-4).

Officials read the rules which were adopted, setting the time for each day’s session to begin. **Peter Cartwright**, antislavery activist, circuit rider preacher, and statesman who would later lose to Lincoln in an 1846 election to congress, wanted to make sure that the sessions began early. He noted that some of the preachers tended to lie in bed in the mornings too long while he, himself, had arrived at the meeting that morning at eight a.m., after a two-mile walk! (Matlack, 1845, p. 4; “Peter Cartwright,” n.d.; Hanna, 2005).

### Friday May 3, 1844

On Friday, the third day of the conference, the discussion heated up when anti-slavery petitions (or *memorials* as they were often called) were introduced drawing much attention from the delegates present. The first one was from the Providence delegation (a Northern Annual Conference), who argued that as in the Roman Empire, slavery was an “institution of heathenism” and a “concomitant of idolatry.” Although the petitioners did not insist that every slaveowner free his slaves, in states where emancipation of slaves was legal, there should be immediate emancipation (Matlack 1845, pp 11-12).

**John A. Collins** of the Baltimore conference proposed that a committee composed of a delegate from each Annual Conference convene to form a Committee on Slavery to address all memorials

related to slavery. **William Capers** of the South Carolina Conference, however, was shocked that words from these memorials would be so harsh toward those from slave-owning states. He had been pleased in the preceding days of the Conference that not one reference had been made about slavery, giving the strong impression that he wanted to continue on without discussing the topic (Matlack, 1845, p. 12).

Yet Collins argued that the best way to address the matter was to have a committee respond to it and report their comments; after all, it was proposed by an Annual Conference of the MEC and should be attended to, he said. The motion by Collins to appoint a committee on slavery carried by an “over-whelming majority.” And other memorials on slavery were presented from the Providence Conference, as well as from the New England, Maine, Northern Illinois, North Carolina, Black River, and Pittsburgh conferences with the total number of names of signers of the petitions being “twelve or thirteen hundred.” A question posed to the Mississippi Conference for any changes was met with the remark, “We are too well satisfied with Methodism to ask for any change” (Matlack, 1845, pp. 12-16).

Remarks recorded by the reporters of the conference show the human side of discussions and reflect the personalities of the participants. For example, according to Lucius Matlack of the *True Wesleyan*, **John Early** of Virginia declared his displeasure with abolitionists relating to “the subject of Southern feelings and views” veering off on a tangent so that “he seemed to forget what he commenced about.” Having had enough of this digressing by Early, **William Winans** of the Mississippi conference “called him to order,” with [Early] declaring that he thought he “was in order.” Matlack observed that Early’s thinking that he was in order was what “most men are very apt to [think about themselves].” **Henry Slicer** of the Baltimore Conference misspoke by calling the Providence Conference, the “Providence plantation,” drawing laughter from the audience with Slicer begging their pardon (Matlack, 1845, p. 17).

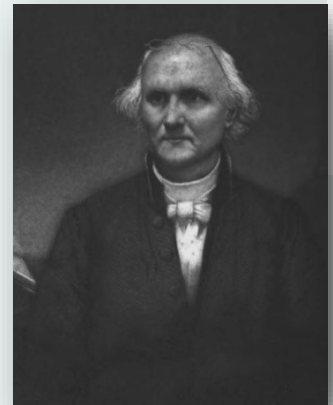


Photo of William Capers in W. M. Wightman (1858). *Life of William Capers, D.D. One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; Including an Autobiography.* Southern Methodist Publishing House, frontispiece.

(cont. on p. 4)

## Saturday, May 4, 1844

On the fourth day of the Conference, some attending made comments about the sounds from “vehicles” (likely, horse and buggies, wagons, etc.) passing by on the streets with requests that members speak loudly. In this session, names of members of the Committee of Slavery were announced. Among them were Peter Cartwright, mentioned earlier, and **Silas Comfort** (famous for overseeing a trial as presiding elder in St. Louis and his anti-slavery stance) of the Oneida Conference (New York) and **William A. Smith** of Virginia, spokesman for Southern slaveholders and some 30 or more others. The meeting adjourned for the weekend, but things would be heating up again on Monday (Matlack, 1845, pp. 18; 22; “Comfort...,” n.d.; Volkman, 2012, p. 68).

## Monday, May 6, 1844

In the Monday session, accusing remarks and finger pointing replaced polite greetings and conversation. William Smith rose to speak. Lucius Matlack, the reporter, would later describe Smith as

above the middle stature. His frame is large, well formed. He is somewhat bald. His expression of countenance is commanding, and his voice heavy. He is a master spirit. The South could not have chosen a man who would more truly represent the character, or more ably plead their cause. He is truly an eloquent speaker, and although my prejudices as an abolitionist sided with Mr. Collins, my judgment decided that W. A. Smith altogether his superior, in his power of eloquence, and ability for argument. (Matlack, 1845, pp. 60-61)

Smith was a philosophy professor, astute in argumentation and rhetoric, would serve as president of two different colleges, and would be known for delivering a series of lectures defending the institution of slavery (Russell, n.d.).

He made the case that it was the ministers—not the people—who opposed preachers’ ownership of slaves. One story he shared described a minister from the Southwest who was denied the opportunity to preach in Northern churches simply because he owned slaves. Members of the Northern congregations demanded that the Southwest minister be allowed to preach. When he addressed these congregations, he drew “crowded audiences” (Matlack, 1845, p. 28).

As evident in this story, Northern clergy were the ones who caused Southerners “trouble”—not the members themselves, Smith insisted. Of course, the anti-slavery memorials presented at the Conference had many signers, he admitted,

but that fact proved nothing. In another story, he described an individual in Albany who bet \$50 that he could persuade 500 people to sign a petition to hang a minister of good reputation, and he was quite able to do that (Matlack, 1845, p. 28).

In fact, Smith argued, Southerners, as was true of Northerners, could have brought many petitions to the Conference “filled with insulting epithets and degrading remarks, calculated to wound the feelings of our Northern brethren. But we scorn to stoop to such a contemptible mode of action” (p. 29).

Smith pointed out that there were three views of slavery in the MEC: those views of the ultra-abolitionist from the North and East, the anti-slavery of the Middle States, and the pro-slavery of the South. The anti-slavery party considered themselves “conservative,” and they wanted to be “chairman and to manage the whole subject. And they have managed it, as I have stated already.” Some people, Smith said, were silenced by the anti-slavery party, but he would never be, he assured his audience (Matlack, 1845, p. 29).

Although these anti-slavery men claimed to be in the middle, they were “like the two-wheeled cabs in your city, when the horse is taken out they always drop down on one side!” Smith accused the conservatives of “scheming” and pouring “torrents of abuse” upon the South and assured his listeners emphatically, threatening, “you may rest satisfied that we cannot be trifled with any longer” (Matlack, 1845, pp. 29-30).

**John G. Dow** of New Hampshire disagreed with Smith’s claim that the petitions were a result of manipulation by the preachers instead of the sincere wishes of the congregations, saying that the “private membership” in a letter insisted that the petition be presented. **Phineas Crandall** of the New England Conference contested Smith’s claim that Southerners had not been given the same attention and respect given to those from

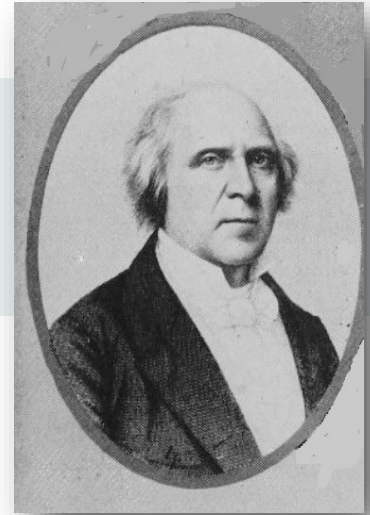


Photo of William A. Smith in M. L. Gray, & W. M. Baker. (1907). *The Centennial Volume of Missouri Methodism, Methodist Episcopal Church, South*. Burd & Fletcher, 19.



other states, citing examples. (Matlack, 1845, pp. 30-31).



Photo of Henry Slicer in Hurst, J. F. (1902). *The History of Methodism: American Methodism*. Eaton & Mains, 1244.

**Henry Slicer** of the Baltimore Conference argued that the Northern states could not claim to be free of all guilt of the slave trade, and they should just let the Southern states try to work out emancipation of the enslaved people on their own without Northern interference:

There are at the North many splendid mansions and wealthy estates,

purchased with the avails of the abominable slave trade, by which men, women and children were stolen from their native land taken by violence from the graves of their ancestors.... The North sold; the South bought; that is the only difference between them. The South... only ask[s] that while Northern men live in the peaceable enjoyment of their share of the gain, that they [the Southern states] be allowed to manage their own affairs and let the system work out its own results, under the auspices of a good Providence, associated with the influence of the gospel. (Matlack, 1845, pp. 31-32)

## **Tuesday, May 7, 1844: Harding Appeal Begins**

### **Background of the Case**

The acerbic remarks on Monday set the stage for the first debate that would begin on Tuesday (leading up to a formal vote relating to slavery on Saturday, May 11). This debate concerned the case of the traveling preacher, Rev. Francis Harding of the Baltimore Conference, which directly related to the change in the *Discipline*, earlier made in 1800 (Smith, 1845, p. 375). The rule in the *Discipline* read as follows:

When any travelling preacher becomes an owner of a slave—or slaves,—by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in our church, unless he execute, if it be practicable, a legal emancipation of such slaves, conformably

to the laws of the state in which he lives. (Emory & Strickland, 1857, pp. 329-330)

Harding had married a woman who had owned enslaved persons. In the state of Maryland, it was possible to free slaves if they were sent outside the state, while in other states such as Georgia, emancipation of enslaved people was illegal (Smith, 1845, p. 375; Matlack, 1845, pp. 36-38; West, 1844, p. 21; “Slave Laws. . .,” n.d.).

The fact that Harding was a traveling preacher who was associated with slavery in some way came up at the Baltimore Annual Conference during a customary roll call. A committee was appointed to study the specific details regarding the preacher’s situation, and it was revealed that Harding “had married a lady, who owned five slaves, viz., Harry, aged 52, Maria, 50, John, 22, Hannah, 13, and Margaret, aged 2 years” (Matlack, 1845, p. 34).

The committee devised a plan of action:

John to be free at 28, Hannah at 23, and the issue of the females to be free at the time of their mother’s emancipation. Of the two older ones, it was thought that their age was a consideration, in view of which, their bondage would not be a violation of the *Discipline*. (Matlack, 1845, p. 34)

The Baltimore Annual Conference delegates voted that Harding was to free all the enslaved persons, including the older ones, Harry and Maria, and he must pledge within a year to follow this plan of action. In reply to the Annual Conference’s plan of action, Rev. Harding said he could not comply because it was not *practicable*, referring to the *Discipline* rule added in 1800 (Matlack, 1845, p. 34; Emory & Strickland, 1857, p. 330).

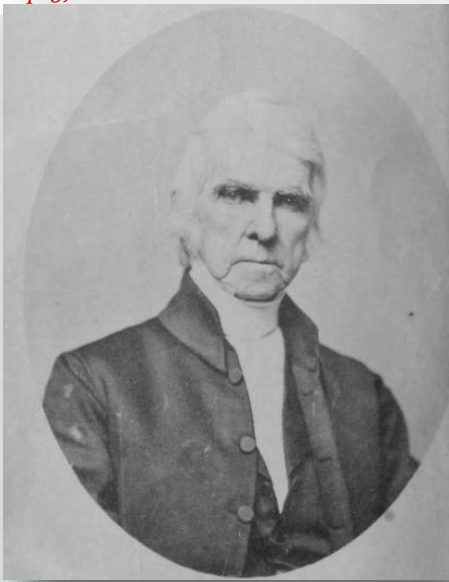
The meaning of the word *practicable* would be the key point debated throughout the dispute.

Because Harding said he would not comply with the plan of action presented to him at the Baltimore Conference, John A. Collins called for his suspension. A further committee was appointed to address the issue, but the committee could not convince Rev. Harding to pledge that he would comply. In light of his refusal, Collins moved for suspension until the next Annual Conference or sooner if he complied within that time. Harding’s refusal to comply led to the appeal of the decision that would now be addressed in this Tuesday, May 7, session (Matlack 1845, pp. 34-35).

According to Lucius Matlack, *True Wesleyan* reporter,

(cont. on p. 6)

(cont. from p. 5)



“Bishop John Early, from *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia*, from its introduction into the state, in the year 1772, to the year 1829, by William Wallace Bennett (1821-1887), Richmond, 1971, Frontispiece. Wikipedia. Public domain. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Early\\_\(bishop\)#/media/File:Bishop\\_John\\_Early.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Early_(bishop)#/media/File:Bishop_John_Early.jpg)

The Bishop read the Discipline, which refers to appeals. Deep and serious attention prevailed, for an important issue was now to be made, involving the whole question of slavery. The Conference voted to admit the appeal of this brother. (Matlack 1845, p. 35)

### William A. Smith’s Defense of Harding

*The Records of the Baltimore Conference Are Not Complete, Argued Smith.*

William A. Smith of Virginia, representing Harding, rose to begin his defense. Smith claimed he was only speaking for “an injured brother” who had “been deeply wronged by the Baltimore Conference.” He complained that he had found that the Baltimore Conference records provided little details of the Harding case, so those at the General Conference who were listening and adjudicating the case must now rely on only members’ memories (Matlack, 1845, p. 35).

Collins reminded Smith and his listeners that there had been “no trial, no testimony adduced—no witnesses examined [at the Baltimore Conference].” The reason that there was no trial was because Harding had “admitted the fact [of not being willing to free the slaves] giving testimony against himself” (Matlack, 1845, pp. 36-37).

*Slaves Could Not Be Freed Within the State of Maryland.*

John Early of Virginia stated his support of

Smith as a preacher who would want to give his opponent “every advantage” possible in the debate (Matlack, 1845, p. 38), while, as we shall see, Smith was especially clever and a trickster in the art of persuasion.

One of his pieces of evidence he presented was the opinion of **Senator William Dunhurst Merrick** of the Maryland Legislature who, himself, was a slaveholder (Walthall, 1996, p. 4), to support the claim that it would not have been *practicable* for Harding to manumit the slaves in his household:

Under the laws of no slave can be emancipated and remain in the state, nor unless provision be made by the person emancipating him for his removal from the state, which removal must take place, unless for good and sufficient reason the competent authorities grant permission to the manumitted slave to remain. (West, 1844, p. 21)

*Harding Pledged to Comply if Slaves Agreed, Argued Smith.*

Smith said that Harding had not violated the rules of the church’s *Discipline*. In fact, Harding had vowed to have the enslaved individuals relocated to Liberia or to a non-slaveholding state to comply with the civil laws if the slaves agreed (Matlack, 1845, p. 36).

Smith’s claim stirred controversy among those from the Baltimore Conference sitting in the General Conference audience, who were now listening to Smith. **Alfred Griffith** said he had not heard Harding make any such pledge to free the slaves. An exchange began among those who had attended the Baltimore meeting with the disputants quarrelling back and forth regarding who heard what. **John Gere** was the only one who claimed to have heard Harding make the pledge (Matlack, 1845, p. 36).

But Collins said, “I asked him [Harding] if the consent of the slaves to go to Liberia could be obtained, and he said, ‘No.’” Others joined in, including Henry Slicer, who said he had “no recollection of anything being said about a free State before the Conference or committee” and that the focus had been on Harding sending the slaves to Liberia if they consented (Matlack, 1845, p. 36).

Smith insisted that the fact no one heard Harding say he would free the slaves (as the law allowed) was not undeniable proof that he did not say it. After all, those listening were biased according to their own “purposes” (to punish Rev. Harding), but one delegate, Smith said, had distinctly heard it—that person being John Gere. In



fact, others may have heard it, but they were not there at the General Conference to speak up for Harding (Matlack, 1845, pp. 37-38).

Smith went on to say that it would have been wrong to send the slaves without their consent:

Mr. Harding could do no more than he proposed to do. It is admitted by all the delegation that he was ready to send every one of these slaves, with their consent, to Liberia. What more could he do, as a humane man? Should he send them there without their consent? Should he separate parents and children and their friends, without their consent, and compel them to find refuge in the bosom of Africa? Should he have done so? He was willing so to do, with their consent, and I ask what more could humanity ask or Christianity require? (West, 1844, p. 26)

One delegate (not named) speculated that Gere (who was the only one who had earlier said he had heard Harding agree to pledge) had probably mixed up the name *Harding* with the words of another preacher who had agreed to comply with the ruling of the Baltimore Conference regarding his slaves. Smith complained that when anyone heard Harding's pledge, the hearer was supposed to be in error, and those who did not hear his pledge were thought to be correct (Matlack 1845, p. 39).

*Harding Really Did Not Have Authority to Free Slaves Without Wife's Consent, Argued Smith.*

Smith tried another tactic. He wanted to underscore the point that Harding really did not have sole authority over the slaves because both he and his wife shared ownership. To provide evidence, Senator Merrick's opinion was used to show that because of recent legislation in Maryland, a hus-

band did not have authority over his wife's property (Matlack, 1846, p. 38).

There has lately (winter of 1843) been a statute enacted by the state's legislature securing to married females the property (slaves of course included) which was theirs at the time of their marriage and protecting it from the power and liabilities of their husbands. (West, 1844, p. 21)

The defense also presented an opinion from **Judge Edmund Key** of Prince George County:

by . . . act of our Assembly a husband has no other or further right to his wife's slaves than their labour while he lives. He can neither sell nor liberate them. (West, 1844, p. 21)

*The 1840 General Conference Resolution Allowed Those Holding Office to Own Slaves, Argued Smith.*

Smith cited the 1840 General Conference Westmoreland Report relating to slaveowners who held office in the church, noting the details of the report:

the simple holding of slaves or mere ownership of slave property, in states or territories where the laws do not admit of emancipation and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom, constitutes no legal barrier to the election or ordination of ministers to the various grades of office known in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church and cannot, therefore, be considered as operating any forfeiture of right in view of such election or ordination. (West, 1845, p. 25; "Report...", 1844, p. 171)

But Collins reminded Smith that the report was a recommendation, not a change in the rule of the *Discipline* (West, 1845, p. 26).

(cont. on p. 8)



Illustration in H. Bibb & L. C. Matlack. (1849). *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*, Indiana University, 129. Matlack, famous abolitionist and an editor of *The True Wesleyan*, reported on the 1844 debates of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was instrumental in publishing this book written by Henry Bibb.

"By this time, the soul drivers came charging up on their horses, commanding us to stand still or they would shoot us down.

"Of course I surrendered up for the sake of my family. The most abusive terms to be found in the English language were poured forth on us with bitter oaths. They tied my hands behind me, and drove us home before them to suffer the penalty of a slaveholder's broken law.

"As we drew nigh the plantation my heart grew faint. I was aware that we should have to suffer almost death for running off." (p. 130)

(cont. from p. 7)

### *Slavery Is Evil but Not a Sin, Argued Smith.*

Throughout his defense of the case, Smith described himself “as an anti-slavery man,” taking much care in assuring his listeners that he was “not an abolitionist in any sense of that term” (the abolitionists were considered by many in both the South and the North to be radicals who held extreme, unyielding positions on the issue of slavery [Matlack, 1885, p. 35]).

Smith later brought up the terms *evil* and *sin*—arguing that the meaning of the two concepts were distinctly different (Matlack, 1845, p. 41).

Smith explained,

while the Discipline deprecates the evil of slavery, it requires the members of the Church within those states to conform their action to the rules or laws of those states in which they live. This is assuming the doctrine that though slavery is an evil, and a great evil, it is not necessarily a sin. There's the other side of the question. And is it not clearly so? Now, we of the [S]outh take both sides of the question— it is a great evil, it is not necessarily a sin. . . we maintain that it is not a sin, and we demand this concession on your part. (West, 1845, p. 26)

In light of the context that slavery is evil but not sinful, Smith described two extremes he had heard relating to slavery—one was that it was “a great national and social blessing.” Smith said, “I never heard that doctrine from a [Southern Methodist] minister until I heard it on this floor! I appeal to my Southern brethren, if they ever heard such a doctrine advanced by a minister in all the South?” In response, voices saying “No, never” were heard from the room (Matlack, 1844, p. 42-43).

Smith eventually turned to the second extreme which he said was held by the “ultra abolitionists,” who said that slavery was “necessarily a sin” and was wrong in “all circumstances.” He reproached

the Baltimore Conference as “sympathize[rs]” with this view (Matlack, 1844, p. 44).

Smith used verbal tricks to demonstrate that slavery was not necessarily a sin claiming that slavery was not a sin if it (a) could not be avoided and (b) was better than the alternative. Sometimes circumstances vary according to these two criteria.

For example, the government used force to imprison and punish persons at “Sing Sing” (state prison), but the government was not wrong to hold them against their will in this particular context. In some cases murder was wrong; in other cases it was not (as in war). Both were unavoidable, and the alternative would be worse (Matlack, 1845, pp. 44-45).

Smith did some especially fancy footwork in arguing that what was wrong at the beginning could “become right by continuance”: “It was wrong to bring these slaves from Africa,” but he denied that it could “never be right to detain them” (West, 1844, p. 28).

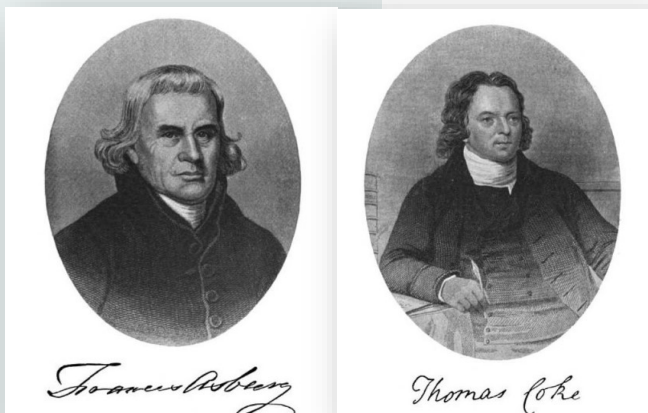
An early wrong could become right, he argued, when the correcting of the wrong would cause more harm and “cruelty” than not correcting it. Applying that to slavery, he was adamant that freeing slaves without their being ready for freedom would cause more harm than good. And in these particular *circumstances*, it was not a sin because it was unavoidable, and the alternative would be worse (West, 1844, p. 28-29).

Smith relied on Biblical history to support that slavery in the South at that time was not necessarily a sin. Slavery under Abraham, said Smith, must have been “divine sanction and by divine appointment”:

Does any one doubt that the patriarch Abraham was a slaveholder, or that slavery existed among the Jews, and that, too, under the divine sanction and by divine appointment? Of that we are assured on the authority of God's word. But, then, we are sure that the Divine Being could neither appoint nor sanction anything that was in itself independently and absolutely wrong. It must, therefore, have been right, under the peculiar circumstances of Abraham and of the Jewish nation. And what was right in one instance may be right in another.... (West, 1844, p. 29)

Slavery was also prevalent during Christ's time on earth, yet neither Jesus nor his disciples preached against it:

if in the days of Christ it [slavery] passed unproved, though existing in a bold and palpable form—if there were no warning epistles written to



Images of early American Methodist church leaders Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke in J. M. Buckley. (1898). *A History of Methodists in the United States Volume 1*. Harper & brothers, 157, 270.



the Churches on the subject at the instance of the apostles, surely it is fair to conclude that it is not "necessarily a sin." (West, 1844, p. 29)

As was often the case for proslavery proponents, Smith cited St. Paul to demonstrate that slavery was not always a sin:

The particular authority of the master over the slave was a great evil, yet Paul acknowledged both the civil government and the system of slavery. He required all Christians to submit to the civil authority, offensive as it was; and he required all masters to treat their slaves as became masters, and slaves to be obedient to their masters . . . (West, 1844, p. 29)

Smith cited justification of slavery at the time of Abraham, Christ, and Paul, and so it was with the Southern U.S.:

So we of the [S]outh see in slavery an evil; but in the circumstances we feel justified in our course, and, indeed, cannot avoid it. And we feel that we should be doing an infinitely greater wrong by altering the condition of the slaves, under present and existing circumstances. (West, 1844, pp. 29)

Smith underscored a common belief (or attempt at justification) at that time in Southern churches that enslaving African human beings was preferential to their having freedom because they could hear the gospel from their masters. He stressed that these souls would have never found Christ if they had not been brought over to the United States via the slave trade. And instead of focusing on freeing them immediately, the Church should focus on preaching to them:

Our duty as a Church and as ministers is to labour by preaching to bless both master and servant. Go preach among them. Get master and servant both converted, and thus bring about a different state of things, and then a different state of society will be practicable as well as desirable, and thus, and thus only, can we occupy the broad conservative platform of our Discipline. (West, 1844, pp. 29-30)

Smith next sought to persuade his audience by claiming that Southerners were to be praised for using slavery as a means to win souls:

Go with me to the [S]outhern plantation, where our missionaries have been preaching for years! Come with me through the length and breadth of this land! Converse with the slaves on the subject of religion, and you will find thousands "clothed and in their right minds"—happy in the love of God. Their condition is better, a thousand times better, than if they had remained in Africa. They would there have sunk lower and lower, without any knowledge of a Saviour, for there can be little doubt that had not their bondage and slavery awakened the sympathies of mankind in their behalf, there would not have been such mighty efforts to evangelize Africa and

other portions of the world. They were in darkness—gross darkness; but who will not say that "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light," and that the state of the slaves is now better than it was before their bondage? (West, 1844, p. 30)

Smith next praised himself as a preacher to the enslaved:

I feel a deep interest in this matter. I am emphatically a negro preacher. I watch over them, attend their revivals, lead their classes, and labour among them from year to year; and have a heart as full of sympathy and love for them as any man's. (West, 1844, p. 30)

Smith thought it was dangerous for church leaders to engage in "political relations" and "should let all political subjects alone." He bragged that he had had the "right to vote for more than twenty years" yet he had "never yet exercised it. It is no part of my business to meddle with politics.... I don't believe in this doctrine of Methodist ministers having to do with politics" for ministers "should confine" themselves to their "proper ministerial duties" and to spiritual mat-



Image of Beverly Waugh, one of the bishops attending the 1844 General Conference at New York City. In J. F. Hurst. (1902). *The History of Methodism: American Methodism*. Eaton & Maines, 1223.

ters" (West, 1844, p. 30).

Lucius Matlack, reporter, noted that it was interesting that Smith had neglected to bring up the matter that Jesus's disciples had not made mention of owning slaves themselves (Matlack, 1845, p. 45).

## Wednesday, May 8, 1844

### John A. Collins: Reply to Smith

John A. Collins, arguing for the Baltimore Annual Conference against the appeal of Harding, rose to reply to Dr. William A. Smith.

Reporter Matlack described Collins as a person of middle stature, with black hair, small, sharp features, and rapid in his movements and style of speaking. He is full of energy when speaking, has a clear voice, but fails in the management of it, and soon becomes hoarse. He is rather discursive in his style and lacks in logical acumen. But his remarks are pointed, and his rebukes withering. The

(cont. on p. 10)

(cont. from p. 9)

excitable temperament of his nature, while it prevents that clearness and concentration of thought, so desirable in securing the conviction of all his hearers, at the same time prompts to the utterance of many apposite thoughts, and led him to a range of feeling and expression, on the subject of Slavery and slaveholding ministers, that few expected to hear. He evidently forgot the caution that many would have observed, in his reference to slaveholding ministers, in view of their presence. (Matlack, 1844, p. 6)

He began his remarks by defending the Baltimore Conference in its devotion to eradicating slavery from the Methodist Episcopal Church and thus preserving “purity of our institutions.” Much attention had been directed toward slavery, observed Collins, and the question of how “Methodism and Methodist preachers with slavery” were “connected” would be fully examined (West, 1844, p. 31).



Photo of John A. Collins in J. F. Hurst. (1902). *The History of Methodism: American Methodism*. Eaton & Maines, 1026.

### *If Slavery Was Evil, It Was a Sin, Argued Collins.*

Collins congratulated Smith on his “conversion.” He had not known until “yesterday” that Smith actually considered slavery as evil, and he was surprised to learn that individuals in the South had never said that slavery was a “social good.” However, Collins mused that he “could not help thinking” about “a certain resolution” passed at the Georgia Annual Conference that stated “slavery is not a moral evil.” Collins offered more examples of various times delegates from the South had defended slavery. Puzzled, Collins asked Smith if it was not a moral evil, what kind of an evil might slavery be? (West, 1844, p. 31).

Collins accused Smith of committing an “apparent contradiction.” He continued,

He believes slavery to be an evil in fact, and a great evil; he says that the [S]outherners are groaning under it, and that it is their affliction and sorrow; and yet contends that circumstances can make that thing good which in its commencement was evil. He deprecates the African slave trade as abominable, and the means employed to secure slaves as vile and treacherous; but that circumstances have taken away all that was offensive in its character, until slavery, as existing now, is RIGHT. (West, 1844, pp. 31-32)

Collins gave much attention to Smith’s “able and powerful speech.” But he noted that

there was a great deal that had nothing whatever to do with the question; and if our case had had the small-pox, two-thirds of his remarks would never have caught it. (Matlack, 1844, p. 32)

### *There Was No Need for Trial Records, Argued Collins.*

In response to Smith’s criticism of there not being any trial records, Collins asserted again that there had not been an actual trial so there could not have been any formal records. The presiding elder had brought up that Harding had “become connected with slavery” as his name was called. Harding “assented” that the charge was true but refused to abide by the request of two committees for him to manumit the slaves:

When we found that all attempts at reasoning with him were disregarded, and that all the means that brotherly affection could suggest and employ were ineffectual, we suspended him, as the only resource we had in the premises. All this is stated in the journal; clearly, fully, fairly, distinctly stated. (West, 1844, p. 32)

### *There Was No Concluding Evidence That Harding Pledged to Manumit the Slaves, Argued Collins.*

Collins then pointed out that John Gere was the only one at the Baltimore Conference to have testified that he had heard Harding pledge to free his slaves. Collins asked Gere if that was still the case, saying

for I am not of the opinion of the Irishman, who complained of being found guilty of the charge of theft, on the testimony of one witness, on the ground that he could bring a hundred persons who could testify that they never had seen him steal. (West, 1844, p. 32)

Gere denied that his “recollection was distinct”; rather, his “impression” was “distinct” but that the impression might have been mistaken. He may have confused Harding with another



preacher and so he “may have confounded the two cases” (West, 1844, p. 33).

*Manumitted Slaves in Maryland Could Go Elsewhere, Argued Collins.*

Collins responded to the claim Smith presented that the “laws of Maryland do not admit of manumission.” Collins said that the 1831 law outlined how manumitted slaves could be freed. They could either be sent to Africa or to a non-slave-holding state or a sheriff would take them beyond the boundaries of Maryland (West, 1844, p. 33).

*Mrs. Harding Would Not Have Chosen Owning Slaves Over Her Husband’s Career, Collins Argued.*

Although Collins thought that the 1843 Maryland law had contradicted God’s law by saying that man is not the head of his wife, he argued that it did not “destroy the power to manumit.” The wife needed only to agree with her husband to manumit, and it would not be likely that Mrs. Harding would have jeopardized her husband’s career in order to keep the slaves (West, 1844, pp. 33-34).

*Harding Had Disobeyed the Discipline, Argued Collins*

Collins was adamant in that Harding had violated the *Discipline*. And instead of earning “sneers,” the members of the Baltimore Conference merited “thanks” for “maintaining the firmness, in the face of a slaveholding community, to enforce the Discipline.” Collins said that the *Discipline* views members and their relation to slavery in three ways:

(a) private, (b) local preachers, and (c) traveling preachers

Regarding private members, Collins said that the only rule for this class [congregants who are not holding any office] is found in the General Rules, and only prohibits the buying and selling of men, women, and children, with an intention to enslave them. A man, by this rule, may inherit slaves, or they may come to him by natural increase, and he may will them to his posterity, and there is nothing in this Discipline that can take hold of him, this being the only law that reaches private members. (West, 1844, p. 35)

Regarding “Official members” or those holding office, the rule says that

no slaveholder shall be eligible to any official station in our Church hereafter, where the laws of the state in which he lives will admit of emancipation, and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom.

(West, 1844, p. 35)

Regarding travelling preachers (to repeat the *Discipline* passage quoted on page 5),

When any travelling preacher becomes an owner of a slave or slaves, by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in our Church, unless he execute, if it be practicable, a legal emancipation of such slaves conformably to the laws of the state in which he lives. (West, 1844, p. 35)

Collins explained the difference in the expectations of the three categories:

Private members and local preachers are residents and citizens of particular states and must abide by their laws at all times, whereas travelling preachers are citizens of the world. . . for the bishop has power to take up a brother from South Carolina, and send him into Massachusetts. And this is especially the case in the territory embraced by the Baltimore Conference, which includes part of Pennsylvania.... we are birds of passage, and can be removed at pleasure, by the authorities of the Church....(West, 1844, p. 35)

A slaveholding preacher would often be “unavailable.” Half of the Baltimore Conference was slaveholding country, and Harding “would have to be confined entirely to the slaveholding section” when given assignments (West, 1844, p. 38).

When Harding went through the process to become a deacon and elder, he had not owned slaves, and he had known that later when he became a slaveowner, he was violating the Baltimore Conference rules. Collins expounded on the role of the preacher in the MEC and his choice in marriage:

I hold that no Methodist preacher has a right to do just as he pleases.... No, sir, not even in the delicate matter of marriage has a Methodist preacher a right to do as he pleases. The character and standing of the conference are in some measure in his keeping, and he cannot at will shake off the obligation, and trifle with the trust that he himself has solicited, and which has been placed in his charge in perfect confidence and good faith. (West, 1844, p. 38)

Collins gave examples of how others in the Baltimore Conference had complied with the



Image of James A. Andrew, one of the bishops attending the 1844 General Conference at New York City. In J. M. Buckley. (1898). *A History of Methodists in the United States Volume 1*. Harper & brothers, 453.

(cont. on p. 12)

Conference's restrictions so that it was "proof that the thing can be done; so that, as far as the law of Maryland is concerned, there is nothing that renders it impossible." In summary, Collins maintained that Harding "could have manumitted these slaves, and they [Baltimore Conference] suspended him because he would not" (West, 1844, pp. 34-35)

Reporter Matlack indicated that the discussion on the topic was postponed while delegates turned to "the question of attending the Anniversary of the American Bible Society," scheduled for the next day—a much less volatile topic than slavery! And when that discussion ended, the meeting adjourned (West, 1844, p. 58).

## Friday, May 10, 1844

### John A. Collins

On Friday, May 10, the debate concerning the suspension of Harding resumed with Collins again referring to Maryland law to prove Harding shared ownership with his wife. He emphasized that Harding was only bringing up this defense now—and had not mentioned it at the Baltimore Conference (Matlack, 1844, p. 61).

### William A. Smith

After complaining about the lack of sympathy Rev. Harding was receiving from the Baltimore Conference and others, Smith made statements that would be a foreshadow of the upcoming division of the Methodist Church and of the country itself, when saying "Your decision in this case may be the knell of our long-cherished union" (West, 1844, p. 44).

Smith continued to repeat that Southerners "were not pro-slavery but antislavery," meaning that slaveholding was an unavoidable burden and that it was only a sin when masters were cruel and unjust. Harding had pledged to send the slaves to Africa or to a free state if they would consent to go. Smith complained that a delegate heard him say so, but the journals or records of the meeting did not "record his testimony." The defective journals were to blame for Harding's harsh treatment according to Smith because they neglected such crucial testimony by him (West, 1844, p. 44).

Smith also revisited the Westmorland petition and resolution of the 1840 General Conference which concerned local preachers owning slaves. Smith argued that the "resolution was adopted by the conference," Smith not mentioning again that the resolution passed by the committee was non-binding. In addition, Smith argued that even

though it specifically concerned "local preachers," it was about all preachers when it said, "slave ownership" did not cause any legal "barrier to the election or ordination of ministers to the various grades of office" in slaveholding states (West, 1844, p. 45).

Next, Smith addressed Collins's conclusion that a traveling preacher who owned slaves would cause problems because he would be unavailable in states where slaveholding was forbidden. Smith said this argument did not stand because other traveling preachers appointed at the time could be sent to non-slaveholding states. It would not be a unique situation (West, 1844, p. 45).

Smith accused Collins and the Baltimore conference of a "series of most offensive remarks" directed toward Rev. Harding "at the expense of Mrs. Harding's feelings," too, because all Harding did was marry her, and she happened to own slaves. He took offense at how Collins criticized the Southern slaveowners and those who supported them—such as those living in Virginia—Smith's home state (West, 1844, pp. 46-47).

Smith went on to argue that even if Harding were "convicted," for violating "the Methodist Discipline," he was only convicted of a violation of the *interpretation* of the rules of *Discipline* by an Annual Conference as if those interpretations were the Church's statutes—which, he said, they were not (West, 1844, p. 49). Smith explained,

He only violated a law of the Baltimore Conference—a law which they had no right to make; and which, being made, is a plain and palpable contravention of the existing rule of Discipline on the subject. The indictment, then, is illegal; the verdict is equally unjust; and the penalty, by consequence, unwarranted and oppressive. (West, 1844, p. 50)

After much repetition of past points, Smith closed his remarks asking for a new trial at the Baltimore Conference at the very least, and the meeting adjourned for the day. Reporter Matlack

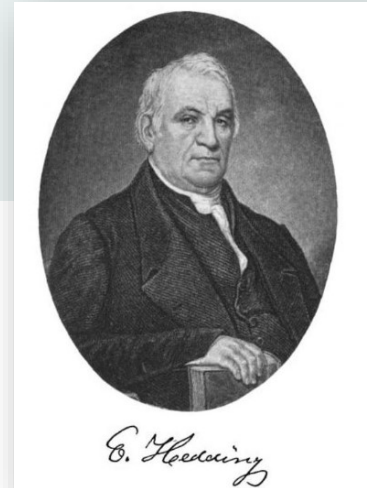


Image of Elijah Hedding, one of the bishops attending the 1844 General Conference at New York City. In J. M. Buckley. (1898). *A History of Methodists in the United States Volume 1*. Harper & brothers, 401.



remarked that he had been impressed all along with the “style of this champion of the South” even though Matlack—of course, was an abolitionist (Matlack, 1845, p. 64).



Photo of Thomas A. Morris, one of the bishops attending the 1844 General Conference at New York City. In J. F. Hurst. (1902). *The History of Methodism: American Methodism*. Eaton & Maines, 1223.

### Saturday, May 11, 1844: The Vote

It was Saturday morning, and after a week of fretting and fighting, serious accusations and defensive comments, Smith asked if he could make *even more* remarks that would be of a personal nature regarding Harding. Many in the room protested, but he was given permission. He then grumbled that insults to the

character of Harding were made, making it difficult to focus on the legal implications of the case. Persons from the Baltimore delegation insisted that was not true. Matlack wrote that “here a multitude of voices, regardless of order and decorum, were heard loudly exclaiming, ‘We never heard any thing like it.’ Tremendous confusion soon ensued.” (West, 1844, p. 51; Matlack, 1845, p. 65).

### The Vote to Reverse the Decision to Suspend

John Early of Virginia moved that the Baltimore Annual Conference’s decision to suspend Francis A. Harding from the ministry be reversed. Bishop **Thomas Asbury Morris**, presiding, directed the body to come to a vote. The motion did not pass with twice as many delegates voting “Nay”: 56 supporting a reversal of the suspension, and 117 voting not to reverse the suspension (Matlack, 1845, pp. 65-66).

Early asked that the names and votes be read, and as their names were called, Reporter Matlack wrote,

I looked at the Bishops to see what I might conjecture their feelings were in view of the crisis, for crisis it was, that they were now passing. [Elijah] Hedding was calm. [Beverly] Waugh seemed thoughtful. [James O.] Andrew had absented himself at the mo-

ment. [Thomas A.] Morris, who presided, preserved his dignity in a becoming manner. But [Joshua Soule] looked anxious, as if expecting an afterclap. The South took it calm as summer’s evenings be; but it was the calmness that precedes the whirlwind of passion, and the earthquake of power. (Matlack, 1845, p. 68).

### A Second Vote Is Demanded

Although Bishop Morris said that the voting results confirmed the suspension, Smith of Virginia continued to protest, saying the vote only confirmed that the suspension could not be reversed while there was no vote to affirm the suspension itself or allow for a new trial, hoping that “surely the Baltimore delegation [would not] go off with the matter settled in this way, by implication merely. Many voted not to sustain, who intend to vote for sending it back for a new trial” (Matlack, 1845, p. 68).

Matlack described the procedure of the second vote that had been insisted by Smith:

The President stated the point distinctly, so that those voting to sustain the decision of the chair understood that they were voting that the decision of the Baltimore Conference should be sustained. Smith said he was satisfied. A hand vote was taken.... And more than two-thirds of the Conference, twice over, voted in effect, to sustain the Baltimore Conference in the stand she [referring to the Conference] had taken against slaveholding ministers. (Matlack, 1844, p. 68)

### Fear and Anguish: An Uncertain Future

Looking back on this day that ended the first debate at the 1844 General conference, we can see the cracks growing larger in the structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The sound of discontented and celebrating voices continued so that Matlack observed,

Somebody thought all discussion out of order, now. At this time, Bishop Soule is leaning on his elbows, his face covered in his hands, as if in deep and anxious thought. (Matlack, 1844, p. 69)

(cont. on p. 14)

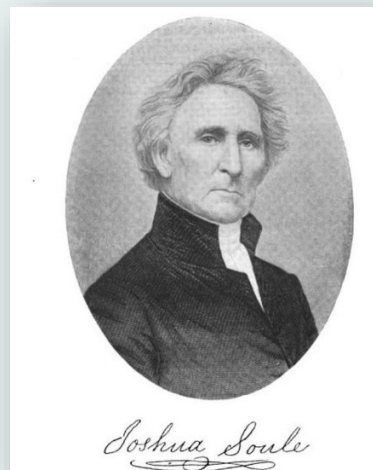


Image of Joshua Soule, one of the bishops attending the 1844 General Conference at New York City. In J. M. Buckley. (1898). *A History of Methodists in the United States Volume 1*. Harper & brothers, 431.

...

A future article in this series on the 1844 General Conference debates on slavery will focus on the case of Bishop James O. Andrew. This case would be the tipping point that would incite Southern delegates of the Methodist Episcopal Church to initiate formal proceedings leading to the Great Schism.

## References

- Bascom, H. B. (1845). *Methodism and Other Matters in Controversy Between the North and the South: Being a Review of the Manifesto Of The Majority, In Reply to the Protest of the Minority, of the Late General Conference of the Methodist E. Church, In The Case of Bishop Andrew*. Hodges, Todd & Pruett. [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Methodism\\_and\\_Slavery/V\\_wvIZrufBUC?hl=en&gbpv=0](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Methodism_and_Slavery/V_wvIZrufBUC?hl=en&gbpv=0)
- Brooks, W. E. (Editor). (1969). *From Saddlebags to Satellites: A History of Florida Methodism*. Parthenon Press.
- "Comfort, Silas, Dd." (n.d.) In McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia. <https://www.biblicalcyclopedia.com/C/comfort-silas-dd.html>
- Emory, R., & Strickland, W. P. (1857). *Story of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church: Revised, and Brought Down to 1856*. Carlton & Porter. [https://www.google.com/books/edition/History\\_of\\_the\\_discipline\\_of\\_the\\_Methodi/M6AHAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0](https://www.google.com/books/edition/History_of_the_discipline_of_the_Methodi/M6AHAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0)
- Hanna, J. G. (2005) "How a Frontier Preacher Made His Mark on Politics." *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*. [https://www.iwu.edu/magazine/2005/winter/cartwright\\_Winter05.html](https://www.iwu.edu/magazine/2005/winter/cartwright_Winter05.html)
- Matlock, L.C. (1845). "Proceedings of the General Conference, of the M. E. Church, In Session at New - York City, May 1844." In Lee, & Smith (Editors), *The Debates of The General Conference of the M. E. Church, May, 1844 to Which Is Added a Review of the Proceedings of Said Conference* (pp.3-95). O. Scott for the Wesleyan Methodist Connection.
- "Miles Blake." (1775-1840). (n.d.). <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Blake-10755>
- Norwood, J. N. (1923). *The Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church 1844: A Study of Slavery and Ecclesiastical Politics*. (Doctoral Thesis). Cornell University. The Alfred Press (Alfred, N.Y).
- "Peter Cartwright." (n.d.) Northern Illinois Digital Library. (Source: Sandburg, Carl. *Abraham Lincoln The Prairie Years*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925). <https://digital.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-lincoln%3A31896>
- Purifoy, L. M. (1966, July 1). "The Methodist Anti-Slavery Tradition, 1784-1844," *Methodist History Journal*, 3-16. <https://archives.gcah.org/items/9c7c4474-fd8f-406a-ad56-a4ffcd9d3f7>
- "Report of the Westmoreland Resolution." (1844). In journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Volume II 1840, 1844 (pp. 167-171). Methodist Episcopal Church. [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Journal\\_of\\_the\\_General\\_Conference\\_of\\_the/NjFl3dXVjwcC?hl=en&gbpv=0](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Journal_of_the_General_Conference_of_the/NjFl3dXVjwcC?hl=en&gbpv=0)
- Russell, K. (n.d.) "William A. Smith." Documenting the American South. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/smith/bio.html>
- Smith, E. (1845). "Review of the M. E. General Conference." In Lee, L., & Smith, E. (Editors), *The Debates of The General Conference of the M. E. Church, May, 1844 to Which Is Added a Review of the Proceedings of Said Conference* (pp.373-382). O. Scott for the Wesleyan Methodist Connection (Publisher).
- Schweninger, L., & Howell, M. R. (Editors). (2003). *Race, Slavery, and Free Blacks, Series II, Petitions to Southern County Courts, 1775-1867, Part A*. LexisNexis. <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/9147602/front-coverp65-proquest>
- "Slave Laws of Georgia." (n.d.) In Georgia Archives: University System of Georgia. [PowerPoint]. [https://www.georgiaarchives.org/assets/documents/Slave\\_Laws\\_of\\_Georgia\\_1755-1860.pdf](https://www.georgiaarchives.org/assets/documents/Slave_Laws_of_Georgia_1755-1860.pdf)
- "Third Quarterly Conference Minutes." (1829, July 18). In E. L. McLarty (Editor). *Quarterly Conference Minutes 1828-1841*. Yates Heritage Center. Trinity United Methodist Church archives. <https://www.tumct.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/1828-1841.pdf>
- Volkman, L. P. (2012). *Houses Divided: Evangelical Schisms, Society, and Law and the Crisis of the Union in Missouri, 1837-1876*. (Dissertation). University of Missouri.
- Walthall, C. J. (April, 1996). "Burlean Hall—Summary of Research, Part II." *The Record*, 71, 1-5. <https://charlescountyhistorical.org/April1996.pdf>
- West, R. A. (1844). *Report of Debates in the General Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church, Held in the City of New-York*. Calton & Phillips.

## Call for Stories and Articles

- **"I Remember When" snapshots:** These are short descriptions that recount church life memories. They are usually **25–100 words long**. See below for general guidelines.
- **Oral interviews:** Interviews may be audio or video taped. Trinity historians write up the interviews in narrative form with approval from the persons interviewed before publication. Videos or audios of the interviews may be posted on Trinity's website with permission from persons interviewed.
- **Firsthand stories:** Individuals may submit stories based on their firsthand experience at Trinity. The stories are generally **500 words, but can be longer**. See "General Guidelines."
- Submit Word document to **Pamela Crosby**,
- editor, at [pcrosby@tumct.org](mailto:pcrosby@tumct.org).



## Making History: Quarterly News from Trinity's Historical Society and Committee for the Preservation of Church History

### Celebrating Dot Binger and Rhonda Work

**H**istorical Society and the Committee for the Preservation of Church History (CPCH) members dedicated their December 6 meeting to two outstanding officers who retired in 2023: **Dot Binger** who was recording secretary and **Rhonda Work** who served as CPCH chair. Their contributions have advanced historical preservation, research, and publications at Trinity. Rhonda passed the gavel to **Cecile Baker** who will oversee the historical activities and projects in 2024 with her notable leadership skills. Cecile will carry on the impressive legacy of Rhonda and **Linda Yates**, our inaugural chair.



Standing, L to R: Pam Crosby, Cecile Baker, Pat Striplin, Susan Mick, and Dawn Adams; seated, Lynn McLarty, Dot Binger, Rhonda Work, and Nancy Kerce.



### Narthex Display Focuses on Yates Center

The display for January 2024, created by **Lynn McLarty**, highlights many features of this historical room.

### Rev. Judi New Plays Significant Role in Support of Trinity's Research

The Reverend Judi New has been a substantial resource for *Crossroads* editor **Pam Crosby** and historian **Lynn McLarty**. As director and archivist of the Florida United Methodist Heritage Center and Archives on the Florida Southern College campus in Lakeland, she has always been ready to conduct last-minute searches for photos and documents relating to the current topic Pam or Lynn might be researching.



Rev. New is an ordained elder in the North Carolina Conference, holding a master of divinity from Duke University. She earned her bachelor of arts degree from Florida Southern and certificate of archival studies and master of library and information sciences from Louisiana State University.

Trinity's Historical Society hosted a luncheon for Rev. New on Friday, January 12, at noon, when members engaged in lively conversation about Florida Methodist history with Florida UMC's expert historian. Rev. New was the first guest clergy to preach during the church's bicentennial year, presenting on Sunday, January 14, 2024. She was honored with a reception following her sermon at the 11 a.m. service.

### Yates Heritage Center Welcome Hours

Trace events in the timeline wall display, peruse copies of decades-old *Tidings*, admire an old hitching post and other artifacts, and/or look at photos and read World War II letters arranged in scrapbooks in the **Yates Heritage Center** on 3rd floor.

The Center's weekly "welcome hours" for viewing and researching are from 8:30 to 9:40 on Sunday mornings (before Sunday school), and on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 to 6:30 (before Lay Academy). For more information or to view the Center at other time, contact, Pam Crosby at [pcrosby@tumct.org](mailto:pcrosby@tumct.org).

(cont. on p. 16)

**Gather 'Round for Story-Telling at This Year's  
Winter Lay Academy**



Photo from "Clergy Chronicles: The Rev. John Willis and Pat Willis, Part One" by Pam Crosby. Published in *Crossroads*, October 2019, based on an interview with Lynn McLarty, recorded by videographer Rex Adams.

**Presented by Trinity Historical Society  
Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m., Room 305  
January 17-Feb. 7**

Members of Trinity's Historical Society are the church's official story-tellers, and they are presenting this session's Lay Academy classes on Trinity history. Among the stories being told in these gatherings are the 2000 United States Presidential election in the state's capital and its historical ties with Trinity and other Trinity tales as recounted by **Rev. John and Pat Willis**, as well as a travel through the church's timeline with Trinity's historian and archivist **Lynn McLarty**.

*Participants could come by early to view the Yates Heritage Center in room 309. Doors opened at 5:30 p.m.*

**Crossroads Publication of Historical Research  
Trinity United Methodist Church**

**Physical Location: 120 W. Park Avenue**  
**Mailing: P.O. Box 1086, Tallahassee, Florida 32301**  
**Website: <https://www.tumct.org/welcome/about/history/>**

*Send your comments, corrections, and requests for printed copies as well as inquiries about submissions to  
Pamela Crosby, chief editor, at  
[pcrosby@tumct.org](mailto:pcrosby@tumct.org)*

*The purpose of **Crossroads** is to provide descriptions of historical events and to publish news related to the Trinity United Methodist Church Historical Society. Its intent is not to endorse or criticize theological or ethical positions related to issues that these descriptive accounts might raise.*

**Committee for the Preservation of Church History and  
Historical Society**

**Cecile Baker**, Chair, Asst. Editor, *Crossroads*  
**Susan Mick**, Recording Secretary  
**Dot Binger**, Asst. Historian Editor  
**Pamela C. Crosby**, Publications Editor  
**E. Lynn McLarty**, Membership Archivist  
**Pat Striplin**, Asst. Publications Editor  
**Rhonda Work**, Retiring Chair  
Associate Members: **Marti Chumbler**, **Dan Drake**, **Sally Huggins**,  
**Nancy Kerce**, and **Judy Levy**  
Advisors: **Brett Ingram** &  
**Rev. Dr. Matthew Williams**  
*In Memoriam*  
**Linda Herold Yates**  
**Bob Yates**  
**Mary Margaret Rogers**