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The social significance of Richard Allen in the organization and work of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

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Thesis
THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RICHARD ABILEH
IN THE ORGANIZATION AND WORK OF THE
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

by
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(B.B., Alberforce University, 1935)
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requirements for the degree of
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Bishop Richard Allen, whose achievements for his race and country, earned for his portrait a place with those of the fathers of Protestant America, in the archives of famous men of the Sterling Library at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

The Reverend Richard Allen was the primary prophet-patron of his race's prayer for freedom, the proponent of its educational and religious betterment. He was also the progenitor of its ambition; the inspirator of its endeavor. His achievement formed the ethically dynamic basis of his life which was a source of power for his race's perpetual upward trend.

W. Hilary Coston
Yale University '36.
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Chapter I

Introduction

A. Aims of the Present Study.

The aims of this thesis are: first, to give the social development of Richard Allen during one of the most important periods of American history; second, to show how his church served as a medium of self-expression in the social life of Negroes; and third, it is hoped to discover many of the factors that made his church a pioneer of a great social movement among Negro-Americans. No attempt, however, is made to write a history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church nor a biography of Richard Allen.

B. Scope of the Study.

The investigation is necessarily limited in scope. In view of the aims indicated, a study of the social aspect of the African Methodist Episcopal Church precludes any further historical analysis.

C. Sources and Method of Procedure.

This study deals with a field in which little work has previously been done. It has, however, been
possible to draw upon both primary and secondary sources. The Life, Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, written by Richard Allen, and many contemporary pamphlets, addresses, periodicals, conference minutes, and anti-slavery literature have been of unlimited value in preparation of this study. Such works as The Encyclopaedia of African Methodism by Richard R. Wright, and Richard Allen, an Apostle of Freedom by Charles Wesley contributed much to this study. Gratitude must be expressed to Wilberforce University, an African Methodist Episcopal school, for the use of historical church documents.

The method followed is primarily historical. For this reason, overlapping and repetition necessarily appear in the narrative. Direct quotations are used frequently to give validity to the writer's contention. No apology is needed for these common characteristics of historical studies of this character.
Chapter II

A Brief Account of Richard Allen's Life.

It may help to understand the work and social significance of Richard Allen better if something is known of the environment out of which he came and the house of bondage that gave determination to his life's efforts.

He was born "in the year of our Lord 1760, on February 14th, a slave to Benjamin Chew, of Philadelphia." A short time after his birth his mother and father and four children were sold to persons whom Chew had known in Delaware. The maintenance of slaves in Philadelphia was becoming less popular as sentiment against the system spread and rumors of independence from Great Britain developed. His master was also facing financial embarrassment as a result of a decline in his law practice.

As a consequence the family of Richard Allen—father, mother and four children—were sold into Delaware, near the city of Dover. This sale of the entire family in a group was one of the rare exceptions in the slave regime. Usually individuals were separated and sold as such because the profits were greater. 2

2. Wesley, Charles: Richard Allen, an Apostle of Freedom, p. 11.
Richard Allen being surrounded by excellent parental influences, "accepted Christ when he was only seventeen years old, and joined the Methodist Church." This was the dramatic change of his life from the ways of sin to the ways of righteousness. The experience through which he passed in the process of this change is graphically described by Allen when he says:

I went rejoicing for several days and happy in the Lord, in conversing with many old experienced Christians, I was brought under doubts and was tempted to believe I was deceived and was constrained to seek the Lord afresh. I went with my head bowed for many days. My sins were a heavy burden. I was tempted to believe there was no mercy for me. I cried to the Lord both night and day. One night I thought hell would be my portion. I cried unto Him who delighted to hear the prayers of a sinner and all of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and, "Glory to God" I cried. My soul was filled. I cried "Enough for me--the Saviour died."4

This kind of experience was not uncommon in Allen's day or many many decades thereafter. Modern thinkers would describe such experiences as a fantastic exaggeration. It must, however, be remembered that Richard Allen was the product of a rural system of bondage, and the church and camp meetings offered the

only education he ever received, and that in his day many white and black people saw these visions and experienced these changes in their lives. Regardless of what we may think of Allen's experience at this time, we may be confident that to this thoughtful leader of men, this was the most certain of realities. His sanity and sincerity in this experience are demonstrated by the profound influence which it had on his later life.

A traveling preacher by the name of Reverend Freeborn Garrettson, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, visited the Stockeley plantation to preach. The Reverend Mr. Garrettson had freed his own slaves in 1775 and was now publicly condemning slavery. On this occasion he preached from the text "Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting." In his sermon he stressed the characters of the different elements of society and among them referred to the slaveholders, who, he claimed, would not have the scales balance in their favor. Allen's owner, Mr. Stockeley, was touched by the sermon, and not only continued his kind treatment to the slaves, but began to think holding slaves was against the teachings of Christianity. Such privileges as having family prayer and freedom in worship were granted to the slaves by Stockeley. He later

proposed to Richard Allen and his brother the idea of purchasing their freedom.

Freeborn Garrettson preached from these words: "Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting." In pointing out and weighing the different characters and among the rest weighed the slaveholders; my master believed himself to be one of that number, and after that he could not be satisfied to hold slaves, believing it to be wrong. And after that he proposed to me and my brother buying our freedom for $2,000. Continental money, which we compiled within the year 1777.6

Richard Allen left the house of bondage to lead a somewhat of nomadic life. His itinerary took him to the states of Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. These travels and broad contacts helped to give Allen a practical education. Contacts with itinerant Methodist leaders, such as Francis Asbury, Freeborn Garrettson and others contributed to the making of Allen. But it was his wide and extensive travels that made him "ever mindful of the social aspect" of his people who looked to him for leadership in their great struggle. He took the leadership in this movement until his death in 1831.

Part II  
Chapter III  
The Leaven of Discontent in America  
During Richard Allen's Day  

A. Religious discontent.  

The early career of Richard Allen was passed in the period in which the spirit of independence was active in America. This was a period of religious revolution. In this period also the colonies were chafing under British restrictions. Allen's life was motivated by this situation as it manifested itself in the two social developments with which he came in contact, Methodism and the American Revolution. Methodism shortly broke with the Church of England. The Church of England was established in the United States before the Methodist Church, and "found its support very largely among slave owners. It was but natural that in common policy it would reflect the sentiments of the slaveholders when the issue of slavery became political." The change which this movement produced demonstrated that it was a social as well as a religious revolution. The American Colonies had been

led by the course of events following the French and Indian War to protest and then to seek their independence from Great Britain.

The spirit behind these movements affected the thinking and life of Richard Allen. He and his group became discontented with restraints as the American Colonists were in their relations with Great Britain. His experience in establishing the African Methodist Episcopal Church was similar to the rise of the movement for American independence; for back of both was the leaven of discontent silently at work, producing the spirit and the desire for independence.

Methodism was not only a religious expression but a social protest against the eighteenth century autocracy of the church. It was an independent movement which sought to turn attention away from the forms and ceremonies of an ecclesiastical institution to the spiritual needs of the individual on the one hand, and to all groups and classes of people on the other. To accomplish this, Methodism realized that a social reformation must take place, by adjusting religion to meet the crying needs of humanity. This was the real spirit that led to Weslyan secession, for Reverend O. Scott, in speaking of the Church of England, says:

The Church is a slaveholding church, none will deny. She allows her members and ministers unrebuked, to hold innocent human beings in a
state of hopeless bondage—nay, more, she upholds and defends her communicants in this abominable business!²

Under such leadership as John and Charles Wesley the anti-slavery movement grew rapidly as being "contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society;" but little did they think at the time that they were disloyal to the Church of England. Within ten years, however, from its beginning, Methodism had developed into an independent movement. The idea of independence and love for common people were the two outstanding features of eighteenth century Methodism. Ritualistic ceremony, aloofness and formality were denounced by the preachers of the new faith.

Efforts of the Methodists in humanitarian causes toward the Negroes continued throughout the eighteenth century. Slavery at this point was receiving the greatest attention, along with other social evils. John Wesley preached against it by claiming that "all slave holders, of whatever rank and degree, seeing men buyers are exactly on a level with men stealers."

A Wesleyan preacher came to this country in 1760 to establish the Methodist Church. This church had its beginning in the Methodist Society which was organized

5. Emory, John: The Works of Reverend John Wesley, p. 292
in New York in 1766. Barbara Heck was a leading spirit in this organization meeting, and Negroes were said to have been among the first members. Robert Strawbridge, at this time, began the organization of a Methodist Society at Sam's Creek near Frederick, Maryland. There were Negroes in this society also; and among them there was Aunt Annie Sweitzer, a Negro woman, who was a member of the first class which was formed at this mission. The first Methodist Church was built on John Street, New York City, in 1768. The names of many Negroes were upon the list of subscribers to the erection of this church.

Francis Asbury "was made by Wesley, his American superintendent, in charge of all churches and appointments, subject to Wesley alone." He became the most influential preacher in America, and Negroes were often present at various religious meetings that he conducted. Francis Asbury refers frequently to them in the Journal which he kept during his travels in the United States. In 1773 we perhaps get the clearest picture of how many Negroes attended these meetings from Thomas Rankin when he arose at a quarterly meeting and said, "See how many Africans stretch their hands to God!" This shows how

the Negro attendance continued to increase at these meetings.

The leaders of the Methodist faith were men of anti-slavery sentiments, and at the Baltimore conference passed laws requiring all preachers who had slaves to free them, for slavery does not "give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature."

At the Conference of 1784, further steps were taken against slavery by passing a law that stated specifically that the "buying, selling or giving away slaves was to be followed by expulsion." Slavery was declared to be:

contrary to the Golden Rule; and, universal emancipation was required of all members. The traffic was forbidden, and none were to be admitted into the church, until they executed and recorded, legally, instruments securing emancipation of their slaves.... To sell a slave is forbidden. The purchase of slaves is allowed, on condition of future emancipation, to be determined by the quarterly meeting conference.12

Bishop Coke and Bishop Asbury were strict abolitionists. Bishop Asbury even appealed to one of the southern governors to use his influence against slavery. Both of these great pioneers of Methodism appealed to George Washington for the emancipation of slaves.

10. Scott, Orange, Book for the Times, p. 27.
13. Ibid., p. 21.
15. Daniels, History of Methodism, p. 506.
Asbury even refused to ordain a preacher because he was a slaveholder, and urged the Methodists to follow the Quakers in their efforts in behalf of the slaves. The General Conference in 1800 voted that the annual conference might circulate petitions urging state legislatures to enact laws for gradual emancipation.

Bishop Asbury began to weaken in his attack on slavery around 1807, "when he began to tell the slaves to obey their masters with fear and trembling as unto Christ." The whites came to the meetings, brought their slaves, but segregated them in a special room. So we can notice at this point that many Methodists are opposed to slavery, but many church leaders compromised on the principles in order that the church might grow.

One can readily understand how the change of attitude toward slavery by the Methodists would lead to great social unrest among Negroes. The Methodists previously had been fearless, and championed the cause of the poor and oppressed. This action would naturally suggest that they were surrendering their birthright of independent action against social evils. Wesleyanism was losing its position among the leading humanitarians of

17. Ibid., p. 44.
their time. When this church which had ministered to the poor, and had made an effort to settle important problems of human relationships based upon color, ceased in this activity it was inevitable that some other solution would be sought to save the Negro from social injustices——Richard Allen led this endeavor.

The revolutionary social doctrines of the eighteenth century were spreading through all sections of American life. The spirit of absolute independence found its way into social and religious life; and the secession of the Methodist from Church of England, and the Americans from control of Great Britain are characteristic features of this aspect of national development.

When American independence was realized, when the philosophical controversy over the Rights of Man was active, and when the doctrines of the French Revolution were being prepared, it was not strange that there should arise a social leader like Richard Allen who was willing to demand his manhood rights in American life. The northern Negro population manifested discontent and began to express itself in independent movements. They had separate services by seating Negroes "on the end of each pew next to the wall, thus giving the congregation a picture of a white middle ground and
With the passing years, the number of persons in the segregated Negro section increased. Negroes were thus compelled to take their seats in the rear, or in the gallery of the church. Special periods for prayer and class meetings were set aside for them. Negroes were not permitted to partake of communion until the white people were served. They naturally became discontented with such conditions, and started to look for leadership to lead them from the prevailing "inhospitable attitude toward Negroes."

Richard Allen began preaching at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church "twice a day, at 5 o'clock in the morning and in the evening, and it was not uncommon for me to preach from four to five times a day." He was soon aware of the opportunity for service among his people as they were becoming a greater "social problem."

The increase in Negro membership led to great social embarrassment, and in November, 1787, Absalom Jones, and some of the Negro members arrived at the church, they were told by the sexton that they were

expected to take segregated seats. As they neared the seats set aside for them, the elder began to lead the congregation in prayer. They knelt, and Richard Allen says that shortly he heard considerable scuffling and talking in low tones. Raising his head he saw one of the trustees seize Absalom Jones and attempt to pull him from his knees. Conscious of the proprieties of the situation, Absalom Jones asked him to wait until the prayer was over. This request was refused and the effort was continued to move him from this particular place. Another of the trustees was summoned to assist. By this time the prayer was over, and the little group all went out of the church in a body and they were no more plagued with them in the church.

Their action was a direct expression of a spirit of independence. The discontent of the Negroes found its way into protest and later into independence. This was to be demonstrated in a more practical manner than that of simple protest and withdrawal. Their words and gestures were for them declaration of policy. The establishing of an independent organization was the practical accomplishment of their independence. From the Methodists they had learned the thirst for independence, and in their religious worship this thirst was

partly quenched.

This responsibility fell upon the shoulders of Richard Allen; for the Negro preacher was:

......the first and only professional worker among Negroes. But he has been considerably more; he has been the interpreter of values for the Negro group, moral, ethical and social. He has been the leader, the idealist, the link with the future on earth and beyond it. Similarly, the church has been the one Negro institution tolerated by the surrounding society. Neither the school nor the political institutions, nor even, in some instances, the family could stand as inviolate as the Negro's Church. It became the great common ground for spiritual growth and instruction, and the most important, if not the exclusive, channel through which impulses to group sociability expressed themselves.23

Many of the capacities in which Richard Allen served are mentioned above, but before he is discussed as a preacher and social worker, his early efforts will be reviewed to see what effect his struggle had on his later life and on the lives of his black brothers.


The thirst for independent action was the principle quality for the greatness of Richard Allen. He had manifested this spirit when he led the group out of the Methodist Church as a result of the principles which he believed to be right. He had the one idea in mind of building a social structure which would best serve as a

vehicle to aid his race.

After the reaction following the American Revolution when the mind of America was turning from state sovereignty and sectionalism to means and measures for establishing a strong centralized government, the slave and his problem dropped to secondary importance. "We were treated worse than heathens; and we were determined to seek out for ourselves." The first steps to overcome these evils was the formation of an organization which had for its purpose the development of a beneficial and self-improvement society. This was "the beginning of the independent Free African Society organized by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones."

The Free African Society received its articles of association on May 17, 1787. B. T. Tanner said that these articles provided:

We the free Africans and their descendants, of the City of Philadelphia, in the state of Pennsylvania, or elsewhere, do unanimously agree, for the benefit of each other, to advance one shilling in silver Pennsylvania currency a month; and after one year's subscription from the date thereof, then to hand forth to the needy of this society, if any should require, the sum of three shillings and nine pence per week of said money; provided this necessity is not brought on by their own imprudence.

Rules were adopted for the government of its

25. Woodson: The History of the Negro Church.
membership. It took a definite stand against many social evils. Attendance at monthly meetings was required, and for every absence the member was required to pay three pence, unless in case of illness. Widows of deceased members were to receive the benefits of the society, and the children of the deceased members were to be under the care of the society, so far as to pay for the education of their children, if they cannot attend the free school.

In 1793 this organization aided in the treatment of a yellow fever epidemic that broke out in Philadelphia. Its members were solicited to nurse the sick, and bury the dead. The colored people quickly responded under the leadership of Richard Allen. This is just one of the many social efforts that Richard Allen attempted, but he soon discovered that the Free African Society was too small to accomplish his social program. Allen learned one thing from the Free African Society, that his people must seek leadership from its own ranks if freedom is to be achieved. He did not understand that slavery was an economic problem and that it would take an economic reorganization to overcome it. Realizing that his work for emancipation could not be accomplished

with this group, he decided to leave the Free African Society in order to establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and to use it, not only for religious purposes, but also as a social institution. This was not, however, a discredit of the Free African Society for it was the first evidence which history affords of an organization for social cooperation among Negroes in America, with any definite social program. Steps to regulate marriage were taken. When any member was desirous of marrying he was instructed to inform the committee, who would present the request at the next meeting. A marriage certificate was outlined for members. The sick were cared for, employment was provided and education was paid for in many cases. Allen writes:

Besides the cost of hearse, the maintenance of our families for seventy days (being the period of our labor), and the support of five hired men, during the respective times of their being employed; which expenses, together with sundry gifts we occasionally made to poor families, which might reasonably and properly be introduced, to show our actual situation with regard to profit. 29

It was with this spirit of social independence that Allen started his greatest achievements—the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

29. Richard Allen: Life Experience and Gospel Labors, p. 34.
C. The establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The secession of Richard Allen and his group from the "mixed churches was largely a movement of self-assertion on the part of the oppressed. Independence seemed a necessary prelude to equality." The characteristic quality of independent thought and action is the foundation for the greatness of Richard Allen. He had the capacity to stand alone for the principles which he believed to be right. Upon this principle and upon this foundation he could build a social structure which would be able to render larger service to Americans of African black descent. He faced the opposition of the Methodist Episcopal Church and built an organization controlled and owned by Negroes. This quality made him one of the most outstanding prophets of social life that America has ever known.

The initial effort of Richard Allen found everything but a bed of ease; for the division which had existed for several years among the Negro members of the Free African Society led to an open break over the purchase of the lot for the Negro Church. He asserts that one group had selected a lot on Fifth Street for the

new building which was in the business section of the city. His group selected a lot at the corner of Lombard and Sixth Streets for the church which was closer to the Negro homes. Allen's selection of the lot in this section shows his desire to be near his people, so that a closer association might be made with the social problems of his race. He was determined, however, to proceed with the organization of an independent Methodist congregation and he resolved to make use of the lot which he had purchased. He bought the ground at great personal loss, because he had given his word to carry out the agreement. He had never been known to violate a promise, or to break a contract and that is why he lived up to the agreement.

Richard Allen began to realize his plans for the building of Negro Methodists. A special committee was appointed to undertake the purchase of a frame building which could be remodeled into a place of worship. Another meeting was held on May 13, 1794, and it was agreed to move the "old frame that had been formerly occupied as a blacksmith shop," to Sixth and Lombard Streets. Carpenters were employed to repair the building for church purposes and social gatherings.

32. Ibid., p. 20.
In speaking of this beginning, R. R. Wright says:

It sprang from a sense of duty, prompted by piety and pity. Its underlying motive was to save souls; to enlighten, evangelize and to lift up mankind. The founders saw their race ostracized, segregated, enslaved and crushed. They inscribed as an insignia upon their denominational banner--God Our Father, Man Our Brother, Christ Our Redeemer--

Thus in 1793, Richard Allen built the first Negro Methodist Church in America. On July 29, 1794 the Church "was dedicated by Bishop Asbury as a Bethel." Richard Allen reported that the Lord was with them in this service and that there were many "Amens which echoed through the house." This thirst for religious demonstration was probably another reason for the organization of two churches instead of one. The formal, quiet Episcopal service would not appeal to the emotionalism of the Negro. Methodism made its appeal to the emotions of the humble and lowly among the masses, and the Negro population soon found its ministrations especially suited to their desires.

A special committee, with Richard Allen as head, was instructed to draw up a public statement concerning the Church. This took place a little more than three months after Bishop Asbury preached his dedication

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sermon. The causes for the action of the little band of pioneers and the rules of their government were given. The general purpose of this committee was the discussion of inconveniences that have arisen from white people and people of color mixing together in public assemblies, more particularly places of worship, and the wisdom of Negroes enjoying social contact separate from the white people.

This meeting "adopted as their standard the doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and, with a few modifications, its form of government." It was agreed that they would continue in union with and subject to the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This, however, was not true of Church property as "Allen deeded the lot upon which the building had been placed to the Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church." It was generally agreed that a mutual fellowship with the white people would be in accord with the Christian principles. If anyone should be called from among them to preach they would present him to the Bishop or Elder for ordination, and they reserved the right by a majority of the voters to call any brother who seemed adequate to the task of preaching, without the interference of the Methodist Episco-

36. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Ed. 13, V17 and 18, p. 296.
37. Wesley, Charles: Richard Allen, an Apostle of Freedom, p. 79.
Bishop Asbury took quite a personal interest in this African Church, and in October 1795, he preached again to the congregation. This visit was made with a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church by the name of Mr. Cooper. Bishop Asbury "preached in the African Church, and administered the holy commonion," says Mr. Cooper of the visit:

This African Church is a congregation of black people, who have procured for themselves a house of public worship and put themselves under our charge.39

For many years this church was pastored by white ministers, and led by white class leaders. The contacts between Bishop Asbury and Richard Allen were continued for many years, and in 1799, Allen was ordained a deacon by Bishop Asbury, thus becoming the first Negro in America to receive ordination from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The ordination of Negroes was not made legal in the Methodist Episcopal Church until 1800, when the General Conference passed the following law:

he can obtain an election of two-thirds of the male members of the society to which he belongs and a recommendation from the minister in charge and his fellow-laborers in the city or circuit. 41

When this rule was adopted many of the preachers were opposed to it, especially those from Southern states. Some of these moved that it should not be printed in the Discipline, and a vote of the conference was obtained to enter it only on the journals. A surprising number were not willing that the law should be made public.

From 1790 to 1800, Bishop Asbury lived in hopes of keeping Allen's Church in the Methodist connection. He recorded in his diary on Saturday May 31, 1796, "I met the Africans, to consult about building a house and forming a distinct African, yet Methodist Church." 42 It was only a few months hence when Bishop Asbury began to notice an independent attitude on the part of this church, for, as he wrote in his Journal, "The Africans of this town desire a church which, in temporals, shall be altogether under their own direction, and ask greater privileges than the white stewards and trustees ever had a right to claim." They were at this stage declaring their independence. Richard Allen took the bold step for social and religious freedom when he

43. Ibid., p. 236.
declared that his church would be independent and manage its own affairs. He was not ungrateful for his relationship with the Methodist Episcopal Church, but he resented being pulled from his knees while praying and being segregated during worship in a church gallery. He was confident that the Negro in America, in his struggle for recognition, would achieve social freedom only under Negro leadership. Allen was not dealing with abstract social evil, but with a practical situation, and he thought that an independently organized group, guided by consecrated and social leadership, was the goal which he set for himself and his people so that they would not be crushed, insulted and assigned to a subordinate place in society. Richard Allen saw the ultimate end of an unorganized group, and he knew that degradation would eventually come if they failed to establish a church of their own.

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Part III

Chapter IV

The Early Organization of African Methodism

A. Cities that participated.

African Methodism is the outgrowth of Negroes' desire in several cities for an independent organized denomination. In many cities, Negroes had already established separate churches as a result of the unbrotherly and the unfair treatment given them by the parent church.

The Negroes wanted to sever relationship with the white members, but had no desire to discard the doctrines of Methodism since they believed them. They wished to remain loyal to Methodism, but in many places worship was sought in private houses, halls and barns away from the whites. The establishment and building of churches were later developments.

The Richard Allen movement, which began in Pennsylvania, was of great importance in leading "similar societies" to organize the African Methodist

Episcopal Denomination. In Baltimore steps were taken by the African Church to accomplish this end. This group was led by "Daniel Coker, who shares honor with Richard Allen in the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church."

Coker came to Baltimore in 1801 a runaway slave, and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was later ordained a deacon by Bishop Asbury. There he found the same dissatisfaction that caused the Negroes in Philadelphia to leave St. George Church. Difficulties arose there concerning the seating of the white and colored members, and their participation in the communion services. The Negroes were ordered to the gallery, and compelled to take communion after the whites.

New York City, under the leadership of William Miller and George Thompson, started the first African Church in 1796. The church, however, was not incorporated until 1801. This church grew out of the same social protest as could be seen in Philadelphia and Baltimore.

The African Methodist Churches, from 1794 to 1816, struggled for equality in worship and for permanence.

3. Rush, Christopher: A Short Account Of Rise & Progress of A.M.E. Church, p. 32.
as institutions. Richard Allen had led the group who
were faithful to the cause of Methodism until they had
acquired property and obtained an undisputed title to it
in 1816. Dr. Charles Wesley writes:

During the court contest of 1816 another person
planned to bring about the sale of the church.
Richard Allen, however, had held a judgment bond
of $3,969 and a mortgage of $1,464 since 1801.
At the public auction sale which followed, a man
representing one of the elders of the Methodist
Episcopal Church ran up the bid to $10,525 in
order to obtain possession. Richard Allen met
the bid and bought in the property, paying the
additional amount in cash. 4

Richard Allen proved here that "he was not only
a preacher, but a pastor, and an adviser of his people
in their temporal matters." Allen was only forty-six
years of age when this happened. His statesman-like
ability was at its peak, and he had the vision to call
deleagates from Baltimore, Maryland, Wilmington,
Delaware, Attolborough, Pennsylvania, Salem, New Jersey,
and smaller numbers in closer cities to Philadelphia,
for the purpose of establishing the African Methodist
Episcopal Denomination, and serving all relationships
with the white Methodist Episcopal Church.

B. The First General Conference of African
Methodism.

The year that Bishop Francis Asbury died, 1816,

4. Wesley, Charles: Richard Allen, An Apostle of Freedom,
p. 146.
5. Dubois, William: Negro Church, p. 32.
a convention was called by Richard Allen to be held in Philadelphia. Sixteen names of persons who attended are known to us; whether this was the entire group that attended, historians are not certain. Benjamin W. Annett in his book, *The Budget*, lists the men as follows: Rev. Richard Allen, Jacob Lapisco, Clayton Durham, James Champion, and Thomas Webster of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Daniel Coker, Richard Williams, Henry Harden, Stephen Hill, Edward Williamson, and Nicholas Gailliard of Baltimore, Maryland; Peter Spencer of Wilmington, Delaware; Jacob Marsh, Edward Jackson and William Andrew of Atleborough, Pennsylvania; 6 and Peter Cuff of Salem, New Jersey.

Richard Allen was elected chairman of the Conference and Rev. Daniel Coker, of Baltimore, was elected vice-chairman, and secretary. The following resolution was offered by Stephen Hill and was seconded by Daniel Coker: "That the people of Philadelphia, Baltimore, etc., etc., should become one body, under the name of African Methodist Episcopal Church." This resolution marks the first organized inter-state effort of the American Negro, and it starts not only a movement for

free worship but a social institution, as will be shown later, that has successfully fought the social problems of Negroes to this day.

On the same day, April 9, 1816, there occurred the election for the office of Bishop in the newly organized church. Upon taking the vote the body declared Daniel Coker Bishop-elect; but for several reasons he resigned the next day in favor of Richard Allen. One of the outstanding reasons given was the fair complexion of Daniel Coker; for his mother was "an English woman," and his father a Negro slave. His associates regarded his fair complexion as an obstacle to the African Church. Historians do not put much validity in the fact of color, but feel that Daniel Coker declined in favor of Richard Allen because of his high and personal admiration for the man.

The Baltimore district, under the direction of Daniel Coker, made great progress. In 1818 the conference reported 1,066 members, 1,388 in 1819, 1,760 in 1820 and 1,924 in 1822, while there were in Philadelphia about 4,000 members. The African Methodist Episcopal Church is indebted to Rev. Coker for his work in Baltimore. He was one of the precursors of this church, and whenever the names of the founders of the church are called Daniel Coker's name should be among them.

9. Ibid., p. 130.
After Coker's resignation as Bishop, Richard Allen was elected on April 10th and consecrated the following day by regularly ordained ministers. This action made Richard Allen the first Negro Bishop in the United States.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church had its first Bishop, and as an independent organization of Negroes was a symbol of Negro independence. Richard Allen had led Bethel Church into a new organization with an autonomous government. Its societies and churches were small, and its ministers few compared with the number of the more established Methodist Episcopal Church, but there was before the new connection a vast field of social labor.
Part IV

Chapter V

Richard Allen as A Social Worker

With the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Richard Allen gave impetus to a movement to institutionalize the Negro's religion. He realized early that the church was the strongest institution among the Negroes of his day. He treated the church as a phase of human society. He dealt with such habitual behaviors, practices, attitudes and experiences which may be termed religious as traits of human groups.

Daniel M. Baxter, in referring to the social tendencies of Richard Allen, says that "in every avenue of race uplift he was in the front rank. He was a social service worker." He clearly recognized the vital social problems of the black man. Fugitive slaves found in him one who would aid them in their pursuit of freedom. Ministers who needed help discovered a friend. His church was a community resting

place, and his purse was always open to the needy.

During the time he was working for the independence of the African Church, Allen was engaged in every form of public service in which his people had a part. He asserted his social leadership by insisting on the social rights of the Negroes, who should have an opportunity to share the rights of citizens. To gain this end he took steps to abolish slavery and its social evils.

A. Richard Allen, Opponent to Slavery.

In 1816, Richard Allen assembled the Negroes in Philadelphia for a meeting or convention which would deal with the aspects of their life in relation to the white people, and to present "concerted action against the colonization movement." James Forton was another moving force in this organization. He supported the contention that his people should be relieved from their "deplorable state" and yet he was an opponent of colonization in Africa.

Richard Allen was a member of a committee of eleven persons who were to continue the work of the convention. After discussions, resolutions were adopted declaring that they protested against the assertions that the free Negroes

were undesirable members of the American communities and they said that they regarded this assertion as a stigma upon their race...A committee of correspondence with power to call a general meeting was appointed, and Allen was a member of this smaller circle. 4

Richard Allen and James Forton united to accomplish the program presented at the convention. These two men were favored with the support of such men as Robert Douglas, and the good hearted Absalom Jones. The church on this occasion was literally crammed. This meeting was to protest against American Colonization Society for the deportation of Negroes to Africa. This idea of colonization became more pronounced in the minds of the slaveholding class. It even grew in the minds of free Negroes, because, being a menace to slavery by inciting insurrections, they were driven out of the South by legislation and public opinion either immediately or within a specified time. This forced into the North such a large number of free Negroes that there arose a strong protest from various communities. The Negroes came to the North by the thousands, and, as a result, they could not be easily absorbed--thus there grew a great impulse to the movement to colonize Negroes aboard.

Richard Allen, as pastor of Bethel Church, gave the use of it for this meeting, and placed his congregation back of the movement. Many resolutions were adopted declaring that this country was their native land, because their ancestors were the first successful cultivators of its soil. They felt themselves entitled to participation in the blessing of the soil which their blood and sweat had moistened. These same views were supported by William Lloyd Garrison on property achievements. He says:

I am informed that twenty-five or thirty years ago, the colored inhabitants of Philadelphia scarcely owned a dollar's worth of real estate, whereas they now own enough to amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars. This fact speaks volumes in praise of their industry and economy; for, be it remembered, they have had to accumulate this property in small sums, by shaving the beards, cleaning boots and clothes, and being servants of their white contemporaries.6

Richard Allen relentlessly fought the colonization idea, and used his whole circuit of churches to defeat its purpose. This was accomplished by discrediting the statement that the Negro population constituted a dangerous element. Allen instructed the ministers under him to teach and preach a gospel of anti-colonization, and if Christ is the Father of all mankind, certainly social separation was non-Christian.

Richard Allen continued his attack on slavery in his address "To Those Who Keep Slaves and Approve the Practice." He described slavery as a state of servitude to which a merciful man would not doom a beast, and that a black man, although placed in a low state of human nature, is capable of reflecting and feeling injuries. There was, however, no rash attacking of the system of slavery. He endeavored to point out that the chains of bondage were the direct cause of the condition in which his race was found, and that their social importance would not be improved until they had accomplished "complete abolition of slavery."

Allen, moreover, asserted that the black children would be equal to the white children if exposed to the same social and cultural advantages.

Attention is called to the statement of Allen:

We believe if you would try the experiment of taking a few black children, and cultivate their minds with the same care and let them have the same prospect in view as to living in the world, as you would wish for your own children, you would find upon the trial they were not inferior in mental endowments.

A comparison was made between the condition of the Israelites and the condition of the Negro. He

claimed that when the Israelites were given their freedom it was difficult for them to "obtain to any degree of excellence," for as he added, "Their history shows how slavery had debased their spirit. Men must be wilfully blind and extremely partial, that cannot see the contrary effects of liberty and slavery upon the mind of man." He further stressed that if America is to have a good social order and a good Christian philosophy the love for all mankind must exist. Allen later made the prophetic statement to the slave owners that reads as follows:

If you love your children, if you love your country, if you love the God of love, clear your hands from slaves; burden not your children or your country with them. My heart has been sorry for that blood shed of the oppressors, as well as the oppressed; but appear guilty of each other's blood, in the sight of Him who hath said, "He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

Richard Allen attempted to destroy the idea that the Negroes were contented in slavery under oppression. He offers his own experience as a slave to give validity to his remarks. Though as a slave, he never lost hope for freedom, for he believed that with the help of God plus his own initiative that freedom would eventually come to him. But he was of the opinion that to achieve freedom much depended on the

12. Ibid., p. 49.
13. Ibid., p. 50.
Negroes, as they must keep working and avoid being branded as lazy and idle. He realized that the pro-slavery forces, would use this charge for keeping them in bondage.

Allen influenced the General Conference of 1820 to pass legislation which denied the fellowship of the church to slaveholders. This action perhaps speaks the true spirit of Richard Allen's fight for social freedom for his race. As far as the records show, no Negro organization had ever dared to take such bold action. Considering the sentiment of Allen's day, the action was not short of being heroic. In describing this anti-slavery impulse of the General Conference of African Methodism with Bishop Richard Allen presiding, Dr. Charles Wesley says:

An important action of the conference was the passing of legislation which denied the fellowship of the church of slaveholders. This was a bold step for an organization of free Negroes to take, especially when parts of the operations of this organization were in slave territory. Slaveholders were not all of the white race. There were Negroes who held men in bondage. It had been stated in the Discipline of 1817 that no person would be received into the church "as a member, who is a slaveholder, and any who are now members, that have slaves refuse to emancipate them notification being given by the preacher having charge, shall be excluded." The African Methodist Episcopal Church in its General Conference session of 1820 demonstrated its adherence to the belief in the freedom of man and its denial of the right of any man to hold another in bondage.

15. Ibid., p. 177, who quoted in part from C. M. Tanner, Reprint of the Discipline of 1817, p. 105.
B. The Fever Epidemic.

Richard Allen demonstrated his capacity for social usefulness not only in religious organization and racial problems, but also in the social problems of the community.

In 1793 an epidemic of yellow fever was experienced that resulted in the death of about one-tenth, or 5,000 of Philadelphia’s population. The white people left the city by the hundreds leaving their houses "to the care of Negroes, after their wives, children, friends, clerks, and servants had fled away." People were dying daily by the hundreds, whole families were being wiped out by the deadly disease.

Matthew Carey gives several cases that convey an excellent idea of how horrible the condition was. One incident is that of a man and his wife, who were found lying dead in bed, and between them was their child, merely an infant, who was sucking its mother’s breast. Just how long they had been dead was uncertain.

He gives another case which should be quoted directly. He says:

A woman, whose husband had just died of the fever, was seized with the pains of labour, and had nobody to assist her, as the women in the neighborhood were afraid to go into the house. She lay, for a considerable time, in a degree of anguish that will not bear description. At length, she struggled to reach the window, and cried out for assistance. Two men, passing by, went upstairs; but they came too late a state—she was striving with death—and actually in a few minutes, expired in their arms.18

Mr. Carey relates that in one room lay no less than five dead bodies. The entire family fell, victims to the fever. This sort of thing was generally common throughout the city, and Richard Allen and Absalom Jones seeing that people needed assistance, called their group together and decided that they would bear their share of the community's need.

On September 6, 1793 the Mayor of Philadelphia wrote "the African Society...has voluntarily undertaken to furnish nurses to attend the afflicted." Since hardly any white nurses could be procured, the Negroes immediately took up this task with Allen and Absalom Jones leading the group.

The death rate was so high that Richard Allen took charge of "burying the dead," and Absalom Jones

19. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
guided the duties of the nursing corps. These services were advertised in the public papers, and such assistance was offered without "fee or reward" until the task rendered their labor so arduous that they were not adequate to the service they had assumed.

When the sickness and mortality reached such a height, and most of the physicians died, Dr. Rush, a Philadelphia physician, called immediately on Allen and Jones and gave them directions how to bleed the patients and administer medicine to save "the lives of some hundreds of our suffering fellow mortals."

These two men were exposed to all sorts of situations, but because of the crying social necessity, they responded with a great spirit of service. Certainly he was serving in a greater social capacity than was expected of a social worker of his day. Allen later comments on his duties:

...when we were called, on the first appearance of the disorder, to bleed, the person frequently, on the opening of a vein, and before the operation was near over, felt a change for the better, and expressed a relief, in their chief complaints, and we made it a practice to take more blood from them than is usual in other cases. These, in a general way, recovered; those who omitted bleeding and for considerable time after being taken by the sickness, rarely expressed any change they felt in the operation. We feel a

great satisfaction in believing that we have been useful to the sick; and thus publicly thank Dr. Benjamin Rush for enabling us to be so. We have bled upwards of eight hundred people, and do declare we have not received to the value of a dollar and a half therefor.24

Though the Mayor of Philadelphia, Matthew Clarkson called upon several Negroes to aid the citizens, "it was upon Richard Allen that much of the burden fell." But this should cast no reflection on his friend and co-worker Absalom Jones, for he continued to cooperate with Allen in order that the condition of both the white race and Negro race might be improved. They did not permit their different religious affiliations to prevent their cooperation in social endeavors. It is true that Jones confined his efforts largely to Philadelphia, but even so, he made his leadership felt in many ways. Both of these men manifested their gratitude to the inhabitants of that city, which first planned their freedom, and who had later offered them so much protection. Allen and Jones were never unmindful of this kind consideration, which perhaps accounts for their diligent labors during the yellow fever epidemic. Matthew Gray, in expressing the spirit of appreciation in behalf of the

citizens of Philadelphia, claimed that "the services of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen have been very great, and demand public gratitude."

C. Education and its growth.

Once again one finds this same spirit of Allen for social leadership expressing itself in the field of education. His interest in this field started one of the greatest movements among Negro-Americans. He realized that if his race was to be emancipated, education would be one of the strongest instruments in bringing it about. To this end, Allen was in the front rank of those who were leading in the education of both children and adults. It is asserted that no individual of his group was more interested than he in the education of his people. It was not uncommon for him to send a letter of encouragement to any young Negro who made an effort to seek higher education, and in many cases, it was known that he sent financial aid. He felt the immediate need for trained Negro leadership, and, as a result, a school at his church was established in 1795 to accomplish this end.

Allen was not unaware that Negro education was the focus of conflicting theories and policies; as it was generally maintained by the defenders of the

institution of slavery, that Negroes were incapable of learning. Many states passed stringent laws forbidding their education. "Slavery made the teaching of Negroes to read and write a misdemeanor or a crime."

The punishment for instructing Negroes was a fine, or imprisonment, or both, and for the slave or free Negro illegally receiving any such instruction, a public whipping.

The history of the educational program of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is a story of a struggle against terrible odds, resulting from poverty, ignorance, and economic discrimination. This denomination, for the most part, has been compelled to finance its schools. This does not mean, however, that the white race did not prove of great assistance to Richard Allen's efforts to educate his people.

Bishop R. C. Ransom commenting upon this fact says:

So far as I am concerned, there is nothing more beautiful in the annals of history than the sacrifices, the consecration, and self-denial of the white men and women, who came into the South immediately following the Civil War to begin the work of educating the black masses there. Fine young white women, many of whom had never had contact with Negroes in any capacity whatever, came South and gave their lives to the education and training of these people....

The Southern States, which under slavery, denied the Negro the right to learn to read and write, have been very grudging under freedom, to yield him that which should be the common heritage of every American child—the fullest and freest opportunity for education. 28

During the early years of the organization no definite reference is made to the establishment of educational institutions in marked distinction to the educational activities of the parent body, the Methodist Episcopal Church, from which schools and churches were inseparable. But in 1833 the Ohio Conference passed the following resolutions:

Resolved, 1st. As the sense of this house, that common schools, Sunday schools and temperance societies are of the highest importance to all people, but more especially to our people.

Resolved, 2nd. That it shall be the duty of every member of this conference to do all in his power to promote and establish these useful institutions among our people. 31

These resolutions were manifested in the establishment of Union Seminary about fourteen miles from Columbus, Ohio. This institution did not succeed, as much time was spent collecting funds from the church constituency to buy one hundred and eighty acres of land, and to erect a small frame building upon it. This was to be used for a primary school, but it met

29. Payne, Daniel A.; History of the A.M.E. Church. Ch.IV.
with too much competition from the better schools in Columbus that were supported by state funds. Another reason for its failure was that Negro girls and boys were free to attend any of the public schools. Had it been placed in the South, almost any kind of school for Negroes would have been eagerly attended and considered successful in the absence of anything better.

The Cincinnati Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church established in 1856, Wilberforce University at Tawawa Springs, three miles from Xenia, Ohio. This school was named in honor of William Wilberforce, the English abolitionist and philanthropist. "From 1856 to 1862 the school had a fair student body, consisting of the mulatto children of southern slaveholders." The Civil War caused the institution to decline, and in 1863 it was offered to the African Methodist Episcopal Church for $10,000, a sum which covered its indebtedness. This offer was accepted by the church. They elected one of their own group as president in the person of Daniel A. Payne, who served for thirteen years. A summary of the founding and early history of Wilberforce University can best be told in Daniel Payne's own words:

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Fully to appreciate the results of our efforts, it is necessary to remember:

First, That the 10th of March, 1876, will be just thirteen years since we purchased the real estate of Wilberforce University at a cost of $10,000, and the end of July, 1876 will be thirteen years since the school opened.

Second, That we had not a dollar when we made the bid for the property.

Third, That we opened the school with but six pupils in primary English studies, having but one teacher, and that we were burnt out about two years after we made the purchase of the property. Our dormitories, recitation rooms, library and chapel were all consumed, and our school almost broken up. We had to begin anew. Now we have so far completed our new building that we shall be able to dedicate it this summer. The burnt edifice was made of wood, erected on a light brick foundation—it was beautiful, but a light, airy thing. Our present edifice is of heavy brick on a massive stone foundation. The cost, when completed and furnished, will be about $45,000.

Within thirteen years from the time we opened our primary English school we shall have graduated thirteen young ladies and sixteen young men—total, twenty-nine. All our graduates have been engaged in the honorable and useful employment of the pulpit and the school room. Three have been elected to full professorships in their alma mater, and one is principal of Lincoln Institute, a high and normal school in the State of Missouri for the secondary education of colored youth. In addition to these, scores of undergraduates have received partial education within the past twelve years, who are now employed, or have been, as teachers and preachers in the western and southern states, but chiefly in the latter.34

The founding of Wilberforce was the initial educational step of Richard Allen's spirit, entering

into a new field to get educational freedom for his race. Allen had won freedom of worship when he led his people out of St. George Methodist Episcopal Church, and now we find the spirit of this social prophet manifesting itself in over twenty-three colleges and high schools for the training of black youth in America.

The history of the other colleges under African Methodism was very similar to that of Wilberforce. All are the result of great sacrifice and struggle. The schools grew faster in the South since there were few "schools for the higher education" of Negroes, and as a result most of them were planted on southern soil. The essential need of Negro colleges during reconstruction, caused the connectional schools of the African Methodist Episcopal to "spread over the country like wild fire."

The following table gives a picture of the colleges under African Methodism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Years of College Found</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shorter College</td>
<td>North Little Rock, Ark.</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1886</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edward Waters College</td>
<td>Jacksonville, Florida</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1883</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morris University</td>
<td>Atlanta, Ga.</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1877</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western University</td>
<td>Kansas Kansas City, Church</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittrell College</td>
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<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilberforce University</td>
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<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1856</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allen University</td>
<td>Columbus, S. C.</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1870</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Quinn College</td>
<td>Waco, Texas</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell College</td>
<td>Jackson, Miss.</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Years of Control in College offered</td>
<td>Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lampton</td>
<td>Alexandria, La.</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payne</td>
<td>Selma, Ala.</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner</td>
<td>Shelbyville,</td>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
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Part V

Chapter VI

The Expansion of the Program of the Church

A. Growth of Allenism.

Richard Allen after establishing the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816, began to seek methods to expand it for religious and social purposes. He was not unmindful that there were thousands of free Negroes like himself above the Mason and Dixon's line. Before slavery was reduced from a patriarchal establishment to the mere business of exploiting men, a considerable number of Negroes had secured their freedom, and the fruits of the American Revolution, effective long thereafter in ameliorating their condition, gave great impetus to manumission. In some colonies Negroes were "indentured servants, and they were evidently as such servants usually were." It was in this way that many secured their freedom before slavery was considered an institution in American

colonies. The result was that there were in this country in 1790 as many as 59,311 free people of color. This number had increased by 1810 to 186,486, and in 1820 the number had increased to 233,634. About 1830 there were reported to the United States Bureau of the Census 3,777 Negro heads who owned slaves. The established Negroes often bought slaves to make their lot much easier. They were sometimes sold by sympathetic white persons to Negroes for a nominal sum on the condition that they be kindly treated.

The social situation among free Negroes was not favorable. Many had been dependent so long that they lost their initiative. This was especially true of the fugitive slaves. Their morals became loose, many followed corrupt paths, and some, facing these conditions, returned South and re-enslaved themselves rather than starve in the North.

There was also the problem of education. The Negroes were placed in separate schools that were unsanitary and inferior to the white schools. Such conditions existed in New England, Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania. Even though free schools were developing at public expense, colored children were not

admitted. Many of these states even passed laws excluding free Negroes from the public schools. These situations facing the free blacks, created an opportunity for African Methodism to extend its activities in the respective territories.

Bishop Richard Allen, realizing the task at hand, encouraged the expansion of his church to the various cities to answer the crying needs of his people. By spreading the church to the various cities he saw an opportunity to establish elementary schools, and in 1828, we find "schools in the African Church of Boston."

An African Methodist Episcopal Church was established in New York City in 1819. Bishop Allen appointed William Lambert in charge of that work. The church had somewhat of a nomadic beginning, being forced to move several times as a result of the movement of the Negro population to various segregated parts of the city. Here the African Methodists adopted the same social program as that followed in Philadelphia. The situations which free Negroes faced in most places forced them to adopt cooperative measures in their community life.

African Methodism spread to Brooklyn, New York, in 1820. A group that decided to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church, voted to join the African Methodist Episcopal Church during that same year. Rev. Henry Harden was appointed as its first pastor by Richard Allen. Mr. Harden was placed in charge of that locality, and a circuit known as that of White Plains was organized.

The next important development was the planting of a church in Georgetown by Daniel Smith. Mr. Smith later organized the church in Washington, D.C., in 1828; and crossed the Allegheny mountains westward to establish a church in Pittsburg. "There, in an old foundry, they set up the banner of the living God. Churches were also started at Brownsville, Uniontown, and Washington, Pennsylvania."

African Methodism was organized in the Southwest in 1817, but the influence of American slavery and its pernicious laws prevented this species of Negro Christianity spreading in Southern territory. It was not until the close of the Civil War that the South was made fertile soil for African Methodism.

Richard Allen, now an aged man, saw his church

5. Arnett, Benjamin, W.: The Budget, p. VI.
expand in Western New York, particularly in Utica, Buffalo, Rochester, Erie, Niagara, Gambia and Walden. Bishop Morris Brown, elected assistant to Allen in 1828, carried the pioneering spirit of Allen to Ohio in 1830. This work became such a flourishing section of the church in this middle western area that it seemed fitting to set off a western conference. The churches of Hillsboro, Ohio and Cincinnati served the great social function as "stations" on the Underground Railroad. It was the territory most adjacent to the line between slavery and freedom.

The pioneers were not contented to confine the spirit of the church of Richard Allen to the American continent, they had the courage to carry it abroad. Rev. Daniel Coker, one of the original sixteen founder fathers, "went as a missionary to West Africa with ninety others in the ship "Elizabeth"." This was the beginning of African Methodists planting churches, missions and schools on the dark continent. Today this denomination can claim one of the finest schools in South Africa in Wilberforce Institute.

The Baltimore Conference sent missionaries to Haiti in 1827, and in 1830 a church at Samana, Santo

Domingo sent accredited petitions to be recognized by the African Methodist Episcopal in America. It is not strange that the members of an independent Negro church should express an interest in Haiti. Just a decade before, the American Colonization Society was trying to establish an independent Negro government in Haiti. When Allen's group heard of this, missionaries were sent to fight such a social evil from the shores of Haiti.

Richard Allen, ever conscious of the need of his people for sound leadership, encouraged the expansion of his work into new territory. His life gave impetus to one of the greatest independent movements among a minority group in America. His great philosophy of independent organization and racial self-respect are carried forward by his posterity. The churches of Allen answered the religious needs of his people, but this was paralleled by conventions on political, economic and social matters.

The early history of the Negro in America clarifies to some extent the phenomenal growth of Allen's church. Three things made the church in all sections of the country of vital importance to his
race: first, the encouragement of independence; second, the fighting of proscriptions of slavery; and third, the offering of opportunity for self-expression.

There was an apparent falling off in the membership of many conferences after 1830, but this should not be looked upon as a backward step. Practically the whole memberships in southern states were by the public opinion, custom, and laws of the various states, cut off from the church. Great efforts, however, were made to put the church on a firm foundation. During the conferences of the thirties much attention was given to the preparation of the ministry through education, cleanliness in dress, high character, and loyalty to the church. The work suffered a loss when Bishop Allen, who had for fifteen years led this flock, passed away in 1831. Bishop Morris Brown became then the sole bishop and continued so until 1836 when Edward Waters was elected as his assistant.

Even after the death of Richard Allen, his work went on. Charles Wesley writing of this period says:

With the approach of the Civil War, missionaries of the church turned toward the South, 'seeking their Brethren,' and in 1866 churches were

organized in South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Texas and Alabama. By 1896, the African Methodist Episcopal Church had entered every southern state and had established missions in Siberia, Bermuda and South America, and by 1916 missions were planted in Jamaica, South Africa and Nova Scotia. Church conferences, church departments and church periodicals were established, including the 'Christian Recorder,' which is the oldest continuous Negro periodical in the United States, dating from the year 1852. Sunday schools and church auxiliaries have resulted from the work which Richard Allen started and thousands have been pointed towards a better way of life by the teaching of Allen's disciples. 9

Proceeding on a sound basis, the church could not help but succeed. The membership grew rapidly, as is evidenced by the fact that the African Methodist Episcopal Church has fifteen bishops today, and a total membership of 650,000. The following table gives us a general picture of the growth up to 1926:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Churches</th>
<th>Number of Bishops</th>
<th>Number of Ministers</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Value of Church Property</th>
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<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7,937</td>
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<tr>
<td>1836</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>16</td>
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The phenomenal growth of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was largely due to the continuation of American society to place restrictions upon the Negro in political, economic and social life. These things have tended to magnify the importance of Negro churches, because they alone offer him a large and unrestricted area for his powers.

B. The Church as a social institution.

During Richard Allen's day the church was the only institution which the Negro was permitted to maintain for his own peculiar needs. Offering the only avenue for the expressional activities of the race, the church answered many a social purpose which this institution among other groups, differently circumstanced, had never before been required to serve. It was a center to which friend looked forward to meeting friend, contact with whom was denied by the rigorous demands of slavery. It was then a place of enlightenment through the information disseminating from the better informed or by actual teaching in the Sunday school. It served often as an outlet for the expression of the Negro social mind. Here developed a renewed determination on their part to break the chains of bondage which "ostracised, segregated,
enslaved and crushed them."

After the Negro was emancipated, the church developed a social atmosphere which somewhat strengthened its hold on the people. Not only education was its primary aim, but fraternal associations developed as a result. The Negroes, more so than any other race, regularly attended church whether Christians or sinners. This might have been due to the fact that the colored race was most suppressed, and the church offered a gospel to relieve this situation and an opportunity for social contacts.

Negroes have not yet accumulated wealth adequate to the construction of clubhouses, amusement parks and parish houses. As a result, they must go to church to meet their friends, as they are barred from social centers open to whites in many states. The young Negro must go to church, to meet his sweetheart, to impress her with marriage intentions, the Negro business man to find out the developments in the business world, and the Negroes in general to discuss their social problems. R. C. Ransom says:

One of the chief influences that has kept the Negroes' Church alive is not religion. Through all the years of its existence, the Negro Church

has been and is now the chief center of social life. The Y. M. C. A., the Y. W. C. A., and similar organizations are not comparable to the influence exerted by the Negro Church upon every phase of the social life of its people. Here there are no high and low, no class distinctions, no rich and poor, but just one big family of brothers and sisters among whom every religious service, whether on Sunday or through the week, is also a family reunion. When the Negro is not trying to act like white people, his church is not formal, staid, decorous. It is noisy, but noisy with laughter and warmth of greeting and shouts of praise and moments of sympathy for sorrow, and sobbing with tears for suffering and distress. Many a Negro learned to read and write by the aid of the Sunday school. This was especially true before the Civil War in Richard Allen's day. When the day arrived that they could learn to read and write without fear of punishment, they "eagerly studied in the churches on Sunday, learned the alphabet, the spelling of words with one, two and three syllables, and finally read the Bible." In these Sunday schools, many Negroes made early preparation for a more liberal education in one of the religious schools. The thirst for education was so great among Negroes before and just after the Civil War that many received self-education by the aid of the church. This was due mostly to the fact that they generally were great Bible readers, and many committed to memory long passages of

the Scripture. It was not uncommon to find hundreds that could recite chapter after chapter. Under the continuous instruction of the preacher, the Negro heard the Bible portrayed so vividly and dramatically that a desire was created within to seek after the spiritual mysteries.

Various types of special age or sex group activity are usually encouraged in the Negro Church. Special men's groups and organizations for boys and girls were definitely social in character. These branches of activity were given greater opportunity for expression in the Negro Church than in the white Church, since the Negro has not been permitted to participate in youth-serving programs and extension service, such as 4-H Clubs and similar organizations. Activities of youth-serving programs and recreation for the white youth are conducted "in a non-church agency rather than in a church." Since many of the non-church agencies, such as the orphanage, the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A., the old people's home and those institutions offering public amusements, close their doors to black people, the Negro Church has assumed the responsibility of this role.

The old-fashioned social events of the Negro Church still make it a clearing house for the community. The Sunday school picnics, the oyster or chicken and waffle suppers and the strawberry festivals are events hoary with tradition and of social value in that they include whole families and bring together entire communities.

In all forms of activity and adventure, the Negro always turns first to his church. The Negro doctor, lawyer, dentist, insurance company and merchant, embarking upon careers or business, started first with the church to present themselves for inspection, approval, endorsement and support. Ever since the days of Richard Allen, business enterprises accepted the church as an ally, for the church has always taken a very definite stand for social rights and emancipation. This was the only vehicle to fight the conditions that Mr. Hornell Hart sums up as:

The right of Negroes to hold property, their access to certain occupations and professions their opportunities for education, their participation in government, and their right to rise in the world in proportion to their abilities, are still hampered arbitrarily on the basis of the out-group badge of skin color and racial features. 16

Perhaps one of the greatest developments in the

Negro Church is its service as a welfare agency. The churches, from their very beginning, undertook to become agencies of social ministry to especially handicapped slaves. The African Methodist Episcopal Churches scattered throughout the free states, served as the "Underground Railroad" until after the slaves were emancipated in 1863. The slaves were fed and clothed by the various churches on the trip north. After emancipation, however, the social welfare activities of the churches became intimately interrelated with non-church agencies. The church's concern with social welfare was expressed solely within its local congregation before the Civil War, but with the wide growth of specialized institutions and agencies after the war, the church modified its social welfare program by interpreting and teaching Christian social relationships. It has often undertaken to explore the ethical and religious implications of the system of society with which it has been associated, especially those which have imposed obscure and remote consequences of social conduct upon the Negro race and its individuals. Richard Allen fully realized that if the church was to build Christian character it must influence the forces in the community which prevent the attainment of such an end. If men are to be saved,
they must be saved for service, not merely for their refuge at the last hour. The church, then, must not let a man destroy himself and accept him when he is no longer useful because of the loss of physical and mental power through depravity, but it must, be preaching the gospel or prevention, save a man from himself, and make him a useful citizen in the community.

Richard Allen, by introducing his church as a social service agency, did not receive full cooperation from the conservative element. There was a group that frowned upon the participation of churches in certain types of social welfare work as giving attention to social conditions that did not concern the church. The more conservative idea was that man should be meditative and seclusive, that he should withdraw himself altogether from the pleasures of this world and pray to God to solve the problems of the Negro.

During the passing generations, the Negro Church has decidedly expanded in its attitude toward this work. The Negro Church became the "channel through which impulses to group sociability expressed themselves." The Negro Church, in many respects,

has become a social welfare agency itself. In many communities so much of this work has been done that it has not been necessary for the national agencies to invade the parishes with an intensive social institutional program. Dr. Carter G. Woodson verifies this fact when he says:

The form this social work of the church takes in our day varies from that of a mere church club or so with a precarious existence to that of an organization almost like that of the Young Men's Christian Association. The beginnings of this work appear first in such as the men's forum, the women's league, the girl's club, or the boy's athletic association. When these clubs tend to endure they finally work toward the natural end of constituting themselves branches of an organization directed by one trusted worker assisted by those in charge of the various activities.¹⁹

A church that assumes these duties takes the name of "institutional church." The program of this group caters to the needs of the community and an effort is made to show the people how to work out their social salvation. This sort of social welfare has proven more than necessary among the Negro people due to the migration during and after the Civil War. The Negroes from country cabins move to the shacks or tenements of the city, thence to a somewhat better type of rented house, and finally, in increasing

numbers, they purchase neat, comfortable and homelike houses. This latter tendency is often the result of proper social guidance on the part of the Negro Institutional church in impressing on its people the importance of home-ownership. No one can observe the persistent struggles of some Negro families dependent upon humble occupations for a livelihood and yet steadfast in their purpose to build and own real homes. The chief obstacles to progress in home ownership are from "exploitation and unsanitary surroundings, and the financial burdens imposed upon the small home buyers by real estate speculation." The Institutional church in Chicago under Dr. R. C. Ransom helped to blaze the trail in this new field of endeavor. He speaks the true spirit of the founder of African Methodism, Richard Allen, in this work. Dr. Ransom was later elected Bishop by this branch of Christianity, and is in active duty today. While at Chicago, he installed in his church such activities as the day nursery, gymnasium, employment bureau, kindergarten, a women's welfare league, and a night emphasizing the handicrafts and athletics. There have been many churches throughout the country that follow his leader--

ship in this field.21

In rural districts the social service of Negro Churches has been hampered, due to the lack of facilities for health and recreation, for education and play. This perhaps, has been due to the fact that churches have not shown so great an interest in social life of rural communities. But there is a movement on foot now to induce all classes in the village community to combine in an effort to bring about a revival of village life--having its artistic and intellectual as well as its practical economic and social interests. To accomplish this social end, mid-week recreational programs are to be installed in these rural communities.

In other words, recreation under Christian auspices will always be guided toward the realization of worthy ideals of comradeship and beauty, and not merely to relaxation and amusement.22

This would certainly be of great help in adding a moment of joy to the little Negro boy who has labored in cotton fields from sun up to sun down. Such a recreational program, even below the Mason and Dixon's line, might cause him to sing as he starts to church, "I've heard of a city called Heaven; I've started to make it my home."


There are in the South today white men who regret that they permitted the Negroes to establish their separate churches. They realize that these bodies are today being used to promote truths and foster movements which are prejudicial to the interest of the Southern restriction program for the Negro. The Negro is using his church to discuss his political, economic and social problems. Formerly the white master learned from Negro slaves exactly what the group was planning to do, but "the development of the Negro church has in our day provided a reticent Negro loath to disclose the forces operating in their churches." 

The Negro church in the South is the only institution of the race that receives any protection by law, and in most parts public opinion has not become so bold as to warrant action to the contrary. As a result, a great deal of freedom of speech has been exercised. Some fearless Negro ministers, however, "have been driven out of the South because of utterances which enraged the whites, who have considered the exercise of free speech among Negroes an attack on their social laws." The white man realizes that the Negro Church serves as a moral force, a power

acting as a restraint upon the bad and stimulating the good to further moral achievement. This is a remarkable service when one considers that the race is oppressed from all angles, and at heart rebellious, while the outspoken church is not in any way radical; for it has been the church that dissuaded and prevented any rash action.

The impetus toward racial uplift has largely come from the clergy. The other professional men of the Negro race are handicapped in many respects. The Negro teacher gains his support partly from the white race, thus he must proceed cautiously to protect his employment. Among other Negro professional men one cannot turn for leadership, because of the fear of social prescription. Consequently most of the social improvement must come from the Negro ministry of such examples as Dr. A. Clayton Powell, Dr. T. C. Jordon, and J. C. Austin, who have taken progressive steps for the social uplift of the Negro race as to "organize banks, housing corporations, insurance companies and even steamship projects," and place such projects under the jurisdiction of their respective churches.

The sociability and associativeness which are inherent in this race are fundamental assets for

organized social progress.

White ministers find themselves obliged to keep up an unremitting effort to popularize their churches, and those who succeed are regarded as having accomplished something remarkable. 27

The Negro preacher is usually free from this task, for the African is known to hold his church in high regard. The Negro people can best be served by one of their own as the minister, for the "negro preachers showed themselves to be both more zealous and more effective evangelists of their own people than the white missionaries had been." 28 This was perhaps due to the fact that the colored preacher must be the counselor of the unwise, the friend of the unfortunate, the interpreter of the signs of the times, or, in other words, he must be the social welfare organizer.

Whatever, then, may be said in other respects of the Negro Church, generally it is a social institution, and it has dealt effectively with whatever practices, prejudices, social inequalities and attitudes classified under the term religion as traits of the human groups. It has taught the Negro how to discriminate, how to think for himself, how to take care of himself in a critical situation, in short, how to be self-sufficient by solving social problems.

28. Niebuhr, H. R.: The Social Sources of Demina-
   tionalism, p. 257.
Surely the effectiveness of the church in these aspects of society must be attributed to the impetus of Richard Allen's pioneering work.
Chapter VII

A Comprehensive Digest of the Thesis.

The settlement of the Negro in the New World brought him face to face with new conditions of life to which he was compelled to make adjustment. His status as a slave exposed him to economic limitation and social proscription, which were destined to circumscribe him for centuries thereafter.

Slavery made it impossible for him to have any control over his life. He was considered less than human, and was often burned alive for felonies. His status in America was established as that of a beast of burden. He was considered incapable of mental discipline through formal training. He had to worship God under supervision and close scrutiny. Even the free Negro was often denied the rights of citizenship which enable one to own property and to participate in the affairs of the local government.

Into this situation, as this study has endeavored to show, came the great social prophet -- Richard Allen. His life set in motion new forces of Negro life. Allen realized that if these forces were to become effective, it must be done through the leadership offered from
their own ranks. It is discovered from this study that Richard Allen starts a program of social uplift, in education, business and public life.

To gain his objective, he fully realized that he needed a technique, and as a result Allen developed what might well be called a "religious" technique to fight the social evils facing his people. This was manifested in the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church which was used as the foundation and the institution for his fight for political freedom and social equality. One must be ever mindful that the status of Allen's Church is in part the result of the failure of American Christianity in the realm of race-relations.

At first the white denominations had seriously objected to the Christianization of the Negroes, feeling that they were an inferior people, and, when the Nordics had been convinced of this error, many of them were far from the position of conceding to the blacks' equality in their church organizations. During the American Revolution, however, religious freedom was extended to all races. Such freedom did not last for long, for men began to think not so much of natural rights, but concentrated their thoughts on centralized government. Most of the minority groups,
especially the Negroes, were ignored or forgotten even by the church. In this unfortunate atmosphere of superimposed social limitation, the Negro was awakened to the fact that no group would recognize him unless he had a voice in the management. Such self-assertion early culminated in the protest of Richard Allen.

In all appearance the Negro race was regarded as an oppressed group, and Allen realized that aggressive leadership was needed to achieve its freedom. It is reasonable to believe that he did not understand that the exploitation of Negroes was an economic phenomenon, and that it would be difficult to overcome without economic reorganization. Misguided as he was in this particular respect, he began his task for social freedom by establishing a church owned, managed and controlled by members of his own race. Even though he started a religious organization, he was ever mindful of the social aspect of his movement. Like most earlier Negro leaders he showed at times that he was somewhat superstitious and mystical, but in spite of these characteristics he was not a narrow religionist. He had the vision to see that the struggle and fight for human rights must be centered and guided from the group itself, and that subjugation of the black masses would cease when his group would refuse submitting to the Nordic forces.
The writer has made an effort to present Allen as he actually was, the first organizer of an independent Negro movement in America. He saw distinctly that in the "land of the free" the blacks were an exploited and oppressed people. This condition was not uncommon among Christian organizations. His philosophy and social implications are described as parallel movements of Allen's efforts.

This independent Negro Church furnished the one and only organized channel in which the Negro race's suppressed emotions could be released, and the only opportunity for it to develop its own leadership. This naturally made the African Church a highly socialized institution. The church was, and still is to a large extent, the institution that offered to Allen's people the greatest freedom. The proscription hampering of the Negro in respect to his social, economic and civic life was not removed when Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. It was in reaction against these crippling restrictions that the freedom allowed in the church assumed larger importance and accounted in good part for the continuous development of the Negro Church. The social freedom of Allen and his organization opened the way in later times toward freedom in other fields. Through the years, the Negro has received more en-
couragement from the ruling white majority in church organization and church building than he has received in other community or group enterprises.

While Allen was a Methodist, he stretched his leadership far beyond this particular religious denomination. He might very easily be compared with the social leaders of the past centuries such as John Wesley, Martin Luther, John Knox and John Calvin. Though his people were limited and suppressed in this land, Richard Allen planted a religious and social seed whose roots have spread all through the world to touch the souls of black men. In a country which denied Africans of black descent freedom, Richard Allen laid the basis for a social movement whose significance only a portion of his people could understand in his day.

He gave to Negro-America its first independent religious and social institution, and these institutions slowly worked their way into every field of Negro endeavor, until the Negro race began to believe that they could lead themselves as effectively as the nordic could lead them. Color, to Richard Allen, was no indication of superior leadership. This great social prophet firmly believed that the whites and blacks should strive for the co-operative ideal or America would unchristianize itself.
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