
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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THE Discipline of our Church makes it the duty of Presiding Elders, in conducting the business of their respective Quarterly Conferences, to inquire, among other things, "Are the Church Records properly kept?" And, as an index of what should be contained in those records, it requires the Stewards "to record the Marriages and Baptisms," and the Preacher in Charge of a Circuit or Station "to take a regular catalogue of the Societies in towns and cities as they occur in the streets, and to leave his successor a particular account of the Circuit or Station" which he has been serving.

The importance of keeping these records correctly and neatly cannot be overestimated; and any Pastor who, through carelessness, fails to do so is highly culpable, and deserves the censure of his Conference.

From a somewhat extended examination of the matter we find that this duty has in some instances been neglected, while in others it has been performed in an exceedingly indifferent manner—the records of some Churches, even in our largest cities, often embracing nothing more than a simple list of the names of the members of the several classes, without any indication as to what is their state in life, their position in the Church, or their place of residence.

This delinquency has doubtless resulted in part from the fact that, until within a few years, no regular Church Record was published for the use of our Societies. and every Pastor was left to keep his record in his own way, and in such books as he could command at the time. As might be expected, this gave the Church a few records of respectable dimensions, kept in every variety of form; but it more generally produced nothing but small, unsightly, unsubstantial books, which were used for a season, and then thrown aside as useless. And thus much of the early history of our Churches has been irrecoverably lost.

To supply this great want of the Church, and give regularity and uniformity to our records, the Book Concern, some years since, published a Church Record which has been in use, to a greater or less extent, from that time till the present. But experience, and the progress of the Church, have shown that this is defective, both as to its contents and arrangement. Other departments are required, and provision for additional items are needed. Moreover, the different departments of the book are disproportioned in size, one often being entirely filled up before another of equal dimensions is scarcely commenced.

Having ascertained that these defects were injuring the sale of the book, and causing a variety of badly arranged Records to be substituted for it, and receiving, in the mean while, from brethren in different parts of our work, communications expressing a desire for an improved Record, accompanied by brief drafts of such as would suit their views, the publishers had determined to prepare a Record of their own, combining the excellencies of all the plans submitted, and such other items as their own experience and observation might suggest.

INTRODUCTION.

But before completing their plans they learned that the Philadelphia Conference, at its late session, had appointed Revs. J. B. McCullough, A. Rittenhouse, and J. B. Dennison a committee, to prepare specimens of an improved Record, to be submitted to the Conference at its next session, and, if approved by it, forwarded to the General Conference for adoption.

On inspecting the specimens prepared by this committee, the publishers found that they were more complete than any other that had been submitted, and contained several important items not in their own draft. But on the whole they were thought to be too elaborate for ordinary use, requiring more entries than most ministers would be willing to make, and withal making the work too expensive for most Churches.

To harmonize all views we invited the chairman of the above-named committee to meet us at our office, to which he kindly assented. The whole field was carefully surveyed, the different points of interest thoroughly canvassed, and the plans for the present volume drawn out.

The Record thus prepared, as will be seen by examination, contains *nine* departments which are arranged in the following order, namely:

- I. HISTORICAL RECORD.
- II. PROBATIONERS' RECORD.
- III. CLASS RECORDS.
- IV. ALPHABETICAL RECORD OF MEMBERS IN FULL CONNECTION.
- V. CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF OFFICIAL MEMBERS.
- VI. PASTORAL AND STATISTICAL RECORD.
- VII. RECORD OF BAPTISMS.
- VIII. RECORD OF MARRIAGES.
- IX. APPENDIX.

The manner of using these different departments will be fully explained on the title-page of each respectively.

The Record will be bound up in two or three different sizes, so as to meet the wants of Churches of every grade, from a membership of one hundred to a thousand. Each book, however, will embrace all the departments, and retain the relative proportion of the several parts.

By the use of this book we shall have uniformity in our Records throughout our entire work, so that a minister having learned the manner of keeping them in one charge will be prepared to keep them properly in any other charge to which he may be sent.

Hoping that this effort may give general satisfaction and lead to a better system of Church book-keeping, we commend this volume to the favorable consideration of those for whose use it has been provided.

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