

# Black Churches and the civil war: theological and ecclesiastical significance of black methodist involvement, 1861-1865

## Citation metadata

Author: Sandy Dwayne Martin

Date: Apr. 1994

From: Methodist History(Vol. 32, Issue 3)

Publisher: United Methodist Church, General Commission on Archives & History

Document Type: Article

Length: 5,616 words

## Main content

Article Preview :

The advent, duration, and impact of the American Civil War marked an ecclesiastical and theological turning point for independent black Christianity. One might argue that the civil conflict occasioned a kind of rebirth for independent black denominations. Theologically, black Christians, especially as the war progressed, interpreted the event as an intervention of God in human history. Finally, God, acting through and in spite of the activities of mortals, had heard the cries of an enslaved people, and as God had done in the past, the Divine One was liberating them from a hard hearted Pharaoh. But the faithful must not remain simply quiescent and passive; they must join in partnership with God to carry out the divine work in the world. Hence, black church leaders urged their communities to respond by becoming soldiers in the physical battle and missionaries, chaplains, and teachers in the spiritual and educational struggle. During this period and because of it, the independent black Methodists and Baptists did more than drastically augment their memberships to the extent that the numerical bases of the churches shifted south. In addition, they rejected merger with white groups and reaffirmed their identity and sense of mission as black churches through whom God would act to uplift their race spiritually and temporally throughout the world. (1)

The purpose of this article is to examine in a limited manner the ecclesiastical and theological impact of the Civil War upon the black churches. I have selected for treatment three developments and activities relating to black churches and occasioned by the advent of the Civil War: 1) the role of the black churches in the recruitment of black soldiers, focusing on the Reverend Henry M. Turner and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME); 2) the missionary activities sponsored and supported by the churches during the conflict, concentrating on the efforts of the Reverend James Walker Hood and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ or Zion); and 3) the movement to form organic unions involving the AME and AMEZ.

Some background information concerning the principal players might be useful. The AME and AMEZ (2) are both independent black groups that began separating from the original multiracial, but white-controlled, Methodist Episcopal Church (ME) in the late 18th century. The AME was established as a separate denomination in 1816, the AMEZ or Zion, in 1821 or 1822. Though they both seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church, politics of personalities and leadership styles prevented a consolidation of their forces. Later in 1844, the ME under pressure of the black and white abolitionist minded members on one hand and the proslavery white members on the other, finally separated over the issue of slavery, roughly along geographical lines. The resulting Methodist Episcopal Church, South (ME, S) and the ME both retained significant numbers of black members.

Henry M. Turner was born in South Carolina in 1831. He was licensed to preach in the ME-South, and he affiliated with the AME in 1858. He was designated elder in 1862, and...

[Access from your library](#)

This is a preview. Get the full text through your school or public library.

## Source Citation

### Source Citation

Martin, Sandy Dwayne. "Black churches and the Civil War: Theological and ecclesiastical significance of Black Methodist involvement, 1861-1865." *Methodist History*, vol. 32, no. 3, 1994, p. 174+. Accessed 6 Nov. 2020.

**Gale Document Number:** GALE|A352751328

## Explore

This is a preview. Get the full text through your school or public library.



## Footer

- [About](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Terms of Use](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Accessibility](#)

Sources: The Anglo-African; The Christian Recorder; Sandy Dwayne Martin, "Black Churches and the Civil War: Theological and Ecclesiastical Significance of Black Methodist Involvement, 1861-1865"; Paul Finkelman, "Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895, From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass"; Iver Bernstein, "The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age. of the Civil War", Rhoda Golden Freeman, "The Free Negro in New York City in the Era Before the Civil War"; William Serralle, "New York's Black Regiments During t... American Civil War, four-year war (1861–65) fought between the United States and 11 Southern states that seceded to form the Confederate States of America. It arose out of disputes over slavery and states' rights. When antislavery candidate Abraham Lincoln was elected president (1860), the Southern states seceded. The cost and significance of the Civil War. Home World History Wars, Battles & Armed Conflicts. American Civil War. The war effectively ended in April 1865 when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his troops to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. The final surrender of Confederate troops on the western periphery came in Galveston, Texas, on June 2. How many people died during the Civil War? Some 186,000 Black Civil War soldiers would join the Union Army by the time the war ended in 1865, and 38,000 lost their lives. In the spring of 1863, Hooker's plans for a Union offensive were thwarted by a surprise attack by the bulk of Lee's forces on May 1, whereupon Hooker pulled his men back to Chancellorsville. Inventors and military men devised new types of weapons, such as the repeating rifle and the submarine, that forever changed the way that wars were fought. Even ...read more. Black Civil War Soldiers. On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation: "All persons held as slaves within any States...in rebellion against the United States," it declared, "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."