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THE DIXWELL AVENUE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH 1829 to 1896

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If one had to choose the single subject in the history of black Americans which has received exhaustive study, his best choice would probably be the black church. Such noted scholars as Carter G. Woodson, E. Franklin Frazier, W.E.B. DuBois, and others have presented us with a plethora of material concerning, historically, the most important institution of Afro-Americans. The reasons for the great emphasis placed on the church are clear. First of all, as Frazier has pointed out, the experiences of the middle passage and the slavery system in this country resulted in the loss of the social cohesion which prevailed in the native communities in Africa and which was not allowed to be revived in America.¹ One of the great achievements of the black church was that it provided the basis for a new social cohesion by taking the lead in the development of a well organized societal sub-structure, separate from and not conflicting with white society. The church in the nineteenth century was also, except for a brief period following the Civil War, the only area in which blacks could participate in significant political activity. Selecting convention delegates, bishops, or trustees was just as important to blacks as any national election was to whites, for although their lives were circumscribed by the "peculiar system", blacks took tremendous pride in those institutions which

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were granted them. A third reason for stressing the role of black religious institutions was that for many years the church played a central educational role in the community. Whites in all areas of the country were reluctant to allow blacks to secure a decent education; therefore, the church had to assume the responsibility for the mental well being, as well as the spiritual needs of its constituents. Finally, the church served as a refuge from a hostile world. In times of great persecution the masses would turn to their church, which usually helped to ease the pain and suffering by providing blacks with the opiate of an other-world theology.

These are but a few of the factors which demonstrate the significance of the Negro church of the 19th century to the black population. However, as in other phases of Afro-American history, there existed much diversity in the form and the style of churches throughout the country. The greater portion of the black population was proselytized by the Methodists and the Baptists. Worship services carried on by these two denominations were not as formal and ritualistic as other faiths, and this had great appeal to the blacks who, for the most part, were poor and illiterate. Also, the ministers used by the Methodists and the Baptists were usually not as highly educated as those employed by the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, or the Congregationalists; therefore, their level of communication was more easily understood by the blacks. But the most significant factor in determining the form of religion which blacks would follow was the will of the whites in control. In the South, whites allowed the Negro church to develop along the lines which we have just described. However, in the North the issue of black religion became a more complicated problem. The history of the organization and development of the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church in New Haven is illustrative of the attempt of Northern whites to deal with black religion, and, probably more significant, the attempt of blacks in general to deal with Northern whites. Before directly discussing the founding of the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church, we must first review the important political and social events in New Haven and Connecticut which created the atmosphere conducive to the establishment of an all-black church.

By 1817 the Toleration party, a conglomeration of religious dissenters consisting of Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, and some liberal Congregationalists had consolidated their strength sufficiently to begin an attack on the special privileges enjoyed by the old established church, the Congregationalist.² Their struggle was waged in the state legislature, and in September, 1818 they achieved victory. At this time Connecticut adopted a new and more democratic constitution. The citizens of New Haven voted their approval of the new constitution by a plurality of two to one.³ With the abolition of the privileged status of the Congregational Church, there began a proliferation of religious groups in New Haven. The *New Haven Register* in taking inventory of the city's churches in 1829 listed nine churches under operation and one in the process of construction: "3 Congregational, 1 College Chapel (Congregational), 1 Episcopal Church, 1 Methodist Church, 1 Baptist, 1 African Church, and 1 Seamen's Bethel."⁴ The African Church which they listed was the Temple Street church, later to be known as the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church.

*Temple Street Congregational Church will be referred to simply as, Temple Street. This was the name most commonly used by the people in the community.

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The founding father and the guiding light of the Temple Street church was Simeon S. Jocelyn, a Congregationalist and a member of the Center Church. Jocelyn was an artisan by trade. He and his brother, Nathaniel, were partners in an engraving business, but Simeon had long concerned himself with the problems of others. Some time before 1820 Jocelyn began aiding the cause of black religion by holding private services with blacks in his home. In 1824, along with certain prominent black community leaders such as Prince Duplex, Scipio Augustus, William Lanson, and Bias Stanley, Simeon Jocelyn founded the African Ecclesiastical Society.⁵ In the same year he was able to purchase a building on Temple Street between George and Crown which became the permanent meeting place for the new society. From a small handful of men the society grew, and by the end of one year, there were 100 members in the congregation. When questioned about his reasons for engaging in such an endeavor, Jocelyn responded, "The colored population was then nearly Seven Hundred souls; many of them living in the neglect of public worship, and a large number were ignorant and vicious. There were, however, a goodly number who longed for the moral and religious improvement of their brethren."⁶ Jocelyn was ready and willing to work for the improvement of the status of the disadvantaged in this instance and throughout his life, for as Professor Gilbert Barnes has written, Jocelyn was "a lovable, young idealist" whose Christian benevolence knew no bounds.⁷

From 1824 to 1829 the African Ecclesiastical Society operated as a separate congregation without formal ties to an overarching structure, except for the fact that its pastor, Simeon Jocelyn, was a member of Center Congregational Church. During this time, however, Jocelyn had petitioned the state Congregational association to recognize the Temple Street congregation as an official member of that organization; Jocelyn was able to see the tremendous benefits which the small church could gain from being a part of a large and wealthy organization. On August 25, 1829, Jocelyn finally got his wish when the Western Association of New Haven County formally recognized the "United African Society" as a Congregational church.⁸ Reverend Amos Beman, a later pastor of Temple Street Church, said that at the church's founding the members "were poor in pecuniary senses, but they were rich in faith, rich in love and rich in activity."⁹ Once Jocelyn secured for them membership in the state Congregational association, the Temple Street Church gained a degree of "pecuniary" security which allowed them to energetically use the faith, love, and activity for which they were already plentifully endowed.

To aid him in the struggle to keep the church going in its first few years of existence, Jocelyn enlisted the help of two prominent members of the New Haven community, Reverend Leonard Bacon and Theodore Dwight Woolsey. These two men had founded the African Improvement Association in 1830 to aid the activities of citizens engaged in benevolent enterprises which benefited the black community. Woolsey became president of Yale in 1846 and served in that capacity until 1871.¹⁰ Even before achieving this honor, he was an influential person in New Haven society. Reverend Bacon was installed as the pastor of North Church in 1825, serving as the spiritual leader of that congregation for fifty-seven years. Bacon had long been associated with organizations espousing the cause of freedom for blacks. While still in seminary he wrote a very complimentary report for the Society of Inquiry for Missions entitled, "On the Black Population of the United States." Later he delivered a powerful speech in Boston called, "Plea for Africa" in which he reiterated his stand for the abolition of slavery.¹¹ Although he gave the Temple Street

Church much aid in order to ensure its survival, Bacon in later years became persona non grata in the black community because of his support of the American Colonization Society.

The aid which whites gave in establishing the Temple Street Church has been noted, yet had it not been for the perseverance and religious convictions of a small group of blacks, the project would never have achieved the success which it did. It is probable that a church for Afro-Americans would have been established eventually, but this would have had to wait until the majority of the whites found it to their interest to have separate congregations. The twenty-five who were the original members of Temple Street caused a radical change in the land of steady habits, and made a significant contribution to the history of the New Haven black community. The original membership consisted of four men and twenty-one women: Mr. Nicholas Cisco, Mr. Bias Stanley, Mr. John Williams, Mr. Robert M. Park, Mrs. Dorcas Lanson, Mrs. Adeline Cooper, Mrs. Margaret Johnson, Miss Clarinda Brown, Miss Lucy Griffin, Miss Louisa Phillips, Mrs. Theodocia Diggins, Miss Dianthy Whitmore, Miss Ellen Thompson, Miss Luzetta Lewis, Miss Catharine Freeman, Mrs. Catharine Wilson, Mrs. Sylva Dowry, Miss Charlotte Asher, Miss Flora Chatfield and Miss Eliza Freeman.¹²



Temple Street Congregational Church, c. 1860.

When Simeon Jocelyn said that he was establishing a church for those blacks who desired "moral and religious improvement", he did not delude himself by believing that his service would be in demand through the entire black community. Reverend Beman later noted that during the planning stages of the congregation, and even into the first few years of its organization, there was widespread indifference shown toward Temple Street by New Haven blacks. It must also be pointed out that, for the most part, the white community was disinterested in the project. Although these attitudes were prevalent, Reverend Beman was adamant in claiming that blacks in New Haven were much in need of their own church. The condition of the community

was such that it caused all right thinking men to call out for some aid. His main reason for believing in the necessity for a separate church in the 1830's was that moral discipline in the black community had reached an all-time low. He said that a major factor contributing to this state of affairs was that some blacks were recently liberated slaves while many others had lived by themselves in the country side; and neither of these two elements of the community had acquired a good education. Furthermore, he stated that among them "habits of personal sin were prevalent." Beman doubted whether any of them had known the responsibility of self-government because the usual practice of blacks of that time was to place all serious problems in the hands of masters or ministers.¹³ The Temple Street Church was sorely needed not only as an agency of spiritual rejuvenation but also as an instrument of social regeneration.

Most whites in New Haven were indifferent to the organization of the Temple Street Church. But there were a few men whose energies were unbounded concerning this project. These were men who were beginning to feel a part of the new spirit which gripped the country in the 1830's. William Ellery Channing wrote that every era was characterized by the predominant lesson which the men of the time learned or taught to succeeding generations. At the beginning of the 1830's he stated that "the lesson of this age is that of sympathy with the suffering, and of devotion to the progress of the whole human race."¹⁴ The Boston Unitarian clergyman pointed to three occurrences which seemed to be the best examples of this new spirit: the triumph of Jacksonian democracy; the extension of popular knowledge; the enlargement of economic opportunity. The benefits of these three tendencies accrued, for the most part, to the white population, but indirectly the free black population also gained something from this era.

The young men of the Northeast who were motivated to work for the improvement of the condition of blacks were to a great degree inspired by a major movement which began in the 1820's and has come to be known as the Great Revival. This religious movement began around 1824 at Oneida in western New York and was led by Charles G. Finney. Finney's goal was to reform and revitalize Calvinism. He attempted and succeeded in changing the emphasis of the religious experience for those who would lend credence to his teachings. Gilbert Barnes summarized the Finneyite thought by stating that "Calvanism had made salvation the end of all human desire and fear of hell the spur to belief; whereas Finney made salvation the beginning of religious experience instead of its end."¹⁵ The effect on Finney's gospel was to create a tremendous impulse for social reform which was embraced by many in New Haven as well as in many other parts of the country. In New Haven the Young Men's Temperance Society was founded. Also at this time various ladies groups ran charity schools for the poor children of both black and white families.¹⁶ Simeon Jocelyn was a most energetic disciple of Finney's gospel.

As the pastor of Temple Street, Simeon Jocelyn accomplished much. Between October 1, 1829, and October 1, 1834, he admitted 66 new members to his congregation.¹⁷ He also introduced Sunday schools into his church's program. Sunday schools were a relatively recent development. They had only been adopted by the larger New Haven churches between 1810 and 1820. Jocelyn was able to get many students from the Yale Theological Seminary to come and teach Bible classes. A day school was also begun with one of the members, Miss Duplex, as instructress.¹⁸ However, in 1834 Simeon Jocelyn's pastorate at Temple Street was ended. The reaction of whites to the attempt by Miss Prudence Crandall to educate blacks at her school in Canterbury,

Connecticut was as vicious and brutal as had been New Haven's attitude three years earlier concerning the plan for the all-black college. In 1834 public opinion in New Haven was so strong that Jocelyn felt it would be to the best interest of his church and his family if he resigned as minister of Temple Street. Threats against him continued even after his resignation; therefore, he left New Haven and moved with his family to New York where he became distinguished for his continued work in the cause of social reform.

With the resignation of Simeon Jocelyn the history of the Temple Street Church enters a new phase. Black pastors now assumed the leadership of this congregation. The type of leadership which they brought to the church differed greatly from Jocelyn's. During the 1830's an aggressive growth of race consciousness occurred in New Haven.¹⁹ On one hand blacks were encouraged by radical abolitionists and leaders of the African Improvement Society, while on the other hand they were opposed by a larger group of conservative whites. These two conflicting tendencies created a sense of race pride which had been lacking among New Haven's blacks before this time. As shown in the writings of Bias Stanley, there was emerging a new leadership in the black community which refused to sit idly by while injustice was perpetrated on their race. From this group came some of the men who would later become ministers of the Temple Street Church.

Pennington { The first black pastor of Temple Street was Reverend James W. C. Pennington. He assumed his duties at the church immediately following the departure of Jocelyn. Pennington worked his way up from being an impoverished ex-slave to becoming the minister of New Haven's first black church. There is not much that can be said of his four year pastorate because from 1834 to 1839 church records were not kept.²⁰ A probable explanation for this is that the church was not Pennington's primary consideration during the four years in which he served as its minister. During this period he was auditing courses at the Yale Theological Seminary to prepare himself to take the test to receive his license to preach. Yale refused to allow Pennington to enroll in the seminary and even prohibited him from withdrawing books from the library. They did, however, accede to his desire to audit courses, and for four years Reverend Pennington worked with these handicaps to attain the educational requirements for licensing as a Congregational minister. During his four year pastorate at Temple Street, the church, for all intents and purposes, ran itself. It appears that the church marked time between 1834 and 1838 waiting for a leader to give it orders to move forward. As soon as Reverend Pennington received his license, he left for Hartford.²¹

Beman { Although no significant progress had been made at Temple Street since Jocelyn's departure, church attendance had not decreased and the congregation remained united in its attempts at social reform in the black community. A new era began for the church in 1841 when Amos Gerry Beman became its pastor, where he served for nearly twenty years. In his tenure of office he made tremendous gains for his church and for the entire community, but it must be noted that when he assumed leadership of Temple Street it had already established itself as the center of social development for New Haven's black population.²² The Temple Street African Congregational Church was following in the pattern which E. Franklin Frazier said, typified the organized churches of free blacks in America: "Their church organizations had come into existence as a result of the proselyting activities on the part of whites but had become important as a result of the efforts of the free Negroes themselves."²³

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Amos Beman was born in Colchester, Connecticut in 1812, the son of Jehiel C. Beman, a man who later became pastor of the African Church of Middletown, Connecticut. As a youngster, Amos Beman received his primary education from a lady tutor named Huldah Morgan.²⁴ He seemingly was a very bright student and an inquisitive scholar, for during a period when secondary schools and colleges refused admission to blacks, Beman attempted to gain higher education. A few students at Wesleyan offered their time to tutor black people and Beman was quick to take advantage of this opportunity. His tutor was a young man named L.P. Dole. The two appeared to work well together and Beman was making rapid progress in his studies when, suddenly, after only six months, Beman was forced to leave Middletown. Many people in the town had heard about the lessons which Dole was giving, and they were incensed by his activities. Beman began to receive notes threatening his life; therefore, his only alternative was to leave.



Reverend James W. C. Pennington first black pastor of the Temple Street Church, 1834-1839.

From Middletown Beman went to Hartford, where he became a certified teacher in the public schools. After a couple of years at this post he realized that his education was far from complete, and he decided to pursue further studies. Therefore, in 1836 Beman enrolled in the Oneida Institute, a school founded by abolitionists. The subjects which he studied in his sophomore year reflected the wide range of interests which he had developed. His course load consisted of geometry, trigonometry, mensuration of heights and distances, surveying and navigation, Greek Testament, Graeca Minora, Hebrew Pentateuch, and Butler's analogy.²⁵ While at Oneida he distinguished himself as an excellent student and after graduation he received a special letter praising his accomplishments from a professor in the Mathematics department. Beman used Professor Reiws' document as a letter of recommendation for some of his future jobs.

In 1838 Beman began running a private school for blacks, but he was quickly dissatisfied with this work. He decided that he could make the greatest contribution to his oppressed race if he entered the ministry. Acting on this decision, he applied to the Congregational Association of Hartford County for licensing as a preacher. He was able to submit many letters of recommendation to the association. F. H. Gallaudet wrote a letter praising him as a teacher of black youth and as an exceptionally fine Christian gentleman. Horace Bushnell and John Hemstead also wrote letters concurring with Gallaudet's opinion. A final letter was written by Henry Foster and James Muny. In it they summarized Beman's high qualities by saying, "Mr. Beman's talents are respectable, his disposition mild, and his moral and Christian character fair and unimpeached."²⁶ On June 5, 1838, the North Association of Hartford County announced that "Amos G. Beman hereby is licensed and recommended as a candidate for the gospel ministry."²⁷

Two years later Amos Beman was installed as the pastor of Temple Street Church. To give the members a view of what he expected to accomplish with them, he said that his views on the role of the Congregational Church were in accord with those expounded by Reverend Thomas Brainerd at the Second African Society meeting. Reverend Brainerd said that historically the church had provided four major functions for the community:

It brought the practical learning of schools to the people, by providing educated ministers; (2) it stimulated friendships among the best in society; (3) it tended to raise the rude and degraded to neatness and good order by well regulated meetings; (4) it endeavored to advance industry, economy, moderation and temperance.²⁸

These precepts perfectly suited a man such as Beman, for it had been obvious from the beginning of his ministry that "he had less interest in Paradise than in the dejected souls, the unimproved minds, and the impoverished persons of his congregation and people."²⁹ Beman, therefore, would attempt to raise the material as well as the spiritual status of his people.

Beman's first step toward enriching the lives of his congregation was to get them actively involved in the temperance crusade which had gained popularity among the black population throughout the state. The city of New Haven in general had been caught up in the fervor of the temperance campaign as early as 1823.³⁰ A Young Men's Temperance Society had been formed as the vanguard of the movement, but even with the organization of this society, the faithful temperance crusaders remained a minority of the New Haven community. The temperance movement was no novelty to the members of Temple Street. In 1830 during the pastorate of Simeon Jocelyn, the Temperance Society of New Haven was formed at the Temple Street Church. A state temperance society for blacks had also been established in the same year, and at its convention of 1840, Temple Street members had gained some leadership posts, the most prominent being A. C. Luca who served as the Society's Vice-President that year.³¹

Reverend Beman himself had long been active in this movement. Both his father and his brother were workers in the state society, and he followed in their footsteps. He became quite a controversial figure in the temperance campaign in the state by continually injecting a high spirit of religiosity into the movement. As the last point of business acted upon at the September 2, 1840 session of the Temperance and Moral Reform Society, Beman urged the delegates to place this resolution in its records: "Resolved, That we here express our feelings of gratitude to Almighty God for the blessing which has hitherto attended our efforts; and we do pledge ourselves anew to each oth-

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er, to be faithful in the great work of Moral Reform"³² The resolution was unanimously adopted.

Although Reverend Beman worked very hard for the temperance movement, this was not his only concern during the early years of his ministry at Temple Street. In 1841 he was writing three separate series of articles for the major black newspapers. He discussed every aspect of life in his articles from politics to religion. In one series entitled, "Thoughts", he was quick to show his ministerial bias in dealing with problems of moral reform. Many times he stated that the great instrument of reforming the community was the Bible.³³

Another project which Reverend Beman offered his talents to was the attempt to convene a national convention of Afro-American leaders. He wrote several letters to papers pleading for a meeting at which blacks from all over the country could discuss common grievances and formulate methods of attacking the problem of slavery. He also felt that they should debate the black man's role in the American Anti-Slavery Society. Beman recognized the great contributions which this society had made, but he said that it was no longer desirable for blacks to play a passive role in the struggle for equal rights and to acquiesce to the policies of the white controlled organization. In one of his letters, Beman wrote: "I am one of those who believes that colored men best know their wants and grievances, and are best capable of stating them. Let our white friends, if they wish to help us, give us their countenance and money, and *follow*, rather than lead us."³⁴ The similarity between this statement and the views held by black leaders one hundred and twenty years later is obvious. Beman, we see, was a perspicacious analyst of the American racial dilemma. We will find, however, that his radicalism diminished somewhat in the later years of his ministry.

Reverend Beman, though entangling himself in battles over state and national issues, was always conscious of the problems in New Haven. With the help of several members of Temple Street, he began publishing a newspaper, *Zion's Wesleyan*, which dealt specifically with community affairs.³⁵ Education was a favorite topic of his editorials, and in most editions he would condemn the city for shirking its responsibilities concerning the education of black children. *Zion's Wesleyan* began operating in 1842 and ended after one year because of financial difficulties.

The newspaper failure may have disappointed Beman, but encouraging events also occurred in 1842. The temperance associations of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey merged to form the States Delavan Union Temperance Society of Coloured People.³⁶ The Society's purpose was to make a large scale united attack on the sale and consumption of liquor.³⁷ These societies had been active in their respective states for over ten years and they felt that they were sophisticated enough to attempt united action. As a means of perpetuating this unity, the society did not affiliate itself with one particular religious denomination. They called on men of all faiths to join with them in the battle against intemperance. Ministers, however, Pennington and Beman among them, did assume the majority of leadership posts in the Delavan Society.

Beman saw that the temperance movement was contributing significantly to the advancement of unity and organization of purpose among Afro-Americans. At the meetings of the Delavan Society many subjects other than the use of alcohol were discussed. During their discussions of the ills of society they debated issues such as slavery, education, employment offices for blacks, the importance of the mechanical arts and agriculture to blacks, and the desirability of calling a national convention of black leaders. All of these, especially the last, were of great interest to Reverend Beman. He believed for many

years that black organizations should be discussing such topics and developing new methods of dealing with the problems. He offered the Society the use of Temple Street Church at any time. He also asked the Society to help him in his attempt to convene a national convention. In 1843 his great wish was realized.

During the middle months of 1843 a National Convention of Colored Citizens met in Buffalo, New York. This was a relatively small meeting, attended by only sixty delegates, but each of them felt that they were the beginning of a movement which had the promise of blossoming into a much grander operation in the future. Their first order of business was to elect Reverend Amos G. Beman president of the convention.³⁸ The minutes of the convention show that he had a firm grasp of the rules of procedure, and he guided each session with expert authority. Things went along very smoothly until the last day of the convention. During the discussion over the position paper which the convention would issue, an angry debate erupted between Beman and Henry Highland Garnet, the famed abolitionist. Garnet had written a speech which included strong denunciations of slavery, and he demanded that it be placed in the records of the convention. He rallied a fair number of delegates to his support, and it appeared that the delegates would adopt the statement until Beman spoke out against it. He made a lengthy speech urging the delegates to take a more moderate stance on the slavery issue and asked that Garnet's motion be defeated. Whether it resulted from his long tirade or from some political maneuvering on the side, Beman blocked Garnet's attempt to radicalize this convention. Beman had made his position clear on the major issues facing blacks in America to a group of influential black leaders. He declared himself a reformer and a moderate.³⁹

Reverend Beman, although enjoying success as a prominent political figure, was burdened with a severe financial problem. Temple Street was finding it very difficult to pay the \$400 per year salary which they had promised to him. Operating expenses of the church had increased without a substantial increase in membership. Because the building was very old, the repairs on it came with greater frequency than in past years. Finally, the church had embarked on many new programs for social reform, and since they were not receiving large outside contributions, they had to fund the projects themselves. Somewhere along the way the problem of the minister's salary was shoved aside.

In 1843 Beman's second child was born, and he had to demand that his salary be paid promptly in order for him to offer a decent standard of living to his large family.⁴⁰ He said that he had followed the phrase "Silent grief my glory" as a guide for his life's work, but he said that he could not force his family to suffer at close to poverty level. He revealed his plight to the congregation and to a controlling board of trustees which had been established to oversee the church's financial matters. The board consisted of some of New Haven's most prominent ministers. They had not watched Temple Street's monetary situation as closely as was needed, for they were completely surprised when Reverend Beman requested that they accept his resignation because of "pecuniary circumstances."⁴¹ He sent letters to the church and the board on January 5, 1843 and stated that if his financial difficulties were not alleviated by April 1, 1843, he would leave the church.

His problems were not solved by the deadline which he set, for his scrapbook contains copies of a letter to the congregation urging them to call a council meeting for the purpose of dismissing him. This bleak picture soon brightened, however. The controlling board donated some money, thus helping Temple Street raise enough for all of the money owed to Reverend Beman.

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The board also placed sufficient funds in the church's treasury to help balance the budget and elevate the church from its financial quagmire. The church council assured Beman that in the future he would be guaranteed \$200 annually. This was a large cut in salary, but because he wished to stay with this congregation, he accepted the offer.⁴²

During the 1840's and 50's five other black churches were organized in New Haven. They were, Immanuel Baptist, Varick A.M.E., Bethel A.M.E., Union Methodist and St. Luke's Episcopal.⁴³ Temple Street, however, remained the largest and wealthiest institution in the black community until Reconstruction. Reverend Beman was making great strides toward fulfilling all of the pledges which he had made at his inauguration. The church, though, continued to suffer from one major problem, its inadequate meeting house. By 1844 the condition of the building was horrible. A visitor to the city might have taken it for a deserted shack instead of a church. It had reached a point at which no amount of repair work could ensure the security of the worshippers. Therefore, on May 13, 1844, the church council sent a note to Reverend Beman authorizing him to begin collecting funds for a new building. He immediately turned to the controlling board to aid him in his endeavor to solicit funds for the new church.

Collectively the board issued a long letter to prominent businessmen and civic leaders. A portion of the letter read as follows:

The Christian order and sobriety of their assemblies and the high stand on the subject of temperance, taken by the leading members, are exerting a most salutary influence on that portion of our population and the interests of all classes are advanced by their elevation and improvement.⁴⁴

The statement of these leading citizens shows that the Temple Street Church was held in high esteem by members of all racial groups within New Haven.

Individually certain members of the board made personal contributions to the new building project. In an attempt to keep construction costs to a minimum, Reverend Samuel Merwin wrote a letter to a friend of his who happened to be a contractor and asked him to take this job. His correspondence abounded with laudatory comments concerning Beman's character and ministerial ability. He knew Reverend Beman to be a man of integrity; therefore, he was willing to make a special effort on behalf of a project beneficial to Temple Street Church and its pastor.⁴⁵

After many months of struggle in what developed into an inter-denominational and inter-racial campaign, Amos Beman's congregation finally moved into a new building located on Temple Street. The new building cost \$2,500, but once the church was erected no one seemed to worry about price tags. Everyone was engrossed in that ecstatic euphoria which most people feel when wonderful events happen in their lives. The consequences of their spending, however, would later come back to haunt them.

With his financial affairs in good order and his new church erected, Reverend Beman again began to actively participate in the social reform movements within the state. At the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Connecticut State Temperance and Moral Reform Society he was elected president. His parishioners were also again important participants in these movements. At this Reform Society meeting, Mr. A.C. Luca of Temple Street was selected as the Chief delegate for New Haven. His report to this organization revealed a few interesting facts about the church in 1845. Luca said that the society's New Haven Chapter had 190 people as pledged members. Seven meetings had

already been held by September of that year, and another one was planned to organize another society connected with the Methodist church. Concerning Temple Street Church he said that a temperance choir had been formed and that the church now required all prospective members to sign a pledge of total abstinence before being admitted into the congregation. Finally, he disclosed the fact that the youngsters of the church were being taught the virtues of temperance in their Sunday school classes.⁴⁶

In November, 1846, Reverend Beman decided to review the church's history to see how much progress it had made in its first 17 years. He first noted that the membership was 130 people, but he stated that between 1829 and 1846, 180 people had been associated with Temple Street. Some had left of their own accord while others had been excommunicated. The prime causes for being ejected from membership were intemperance, licentiousness, and gambling. The church had done its best to touch its people in every aspect of life. Beman said that it succeeded to a great extent in this endeavor. To prove his point he wrote that the church had done six major things for its communicants: it "(1) increased property; (2) increased intelligence; (3) increased moral principle; (4) increased respectability and comforts; (5) increased public spirit; (6) increased piety."⁴⁷ He ended by saying that these were only portents of great events to follow.

For the next three years, things seemed to run smoothly for Temple Street Church. A few newsworthy occurrences did happen here during that period. The first of these was a rally which was held in the church in an attempt to persuade the Connecticut Legislature to enfranchise blacks. Although this was a tremendous event in the community, it fell on deaf ears in the State Assembly. The second event to put Temple Street in the headlines was when Henry Bibb, a famous fugitive slave, spoke there. Finally, in 1848 Reverend Beman began conducting monthly prayer meetings devoted entirely to prayer for those still in slavery.⁴⁸

However, halcyon days were abruptly ended late in 1849 when the church once again found itself in serious financial difficulties. The Council of Congregational Churches of New Haven decided to look into the affairs of its various members, and they found Temple Street burdened with a heavy mortgage, and about to be foreclosed because of a debt of \$1,200. Again it was discovered that the church had fallen behind in paying Reverend Beman's salary. Once again a group of concerned men led by Reverend Leonard Bacon and Mr. John G. North came to the rescue of the Temple Street Church. These events of 1849 clearly demonstrated that though the congregation of Temple Street displayed a facade of independence, the church essentially remained a benevolent project of whites.⁴⁹

As the church entered a new decade its future looked very bright. They had been alleviated of their major debts, and the minister had recently re-emphasized his desire to remain with them by refusing a handsome offer of the pastorate of the First African Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. Later records would show that it was sickness in his family more than a desire to stay at Temple Street which kept Reverend Beman in New Haven.⁵⁰

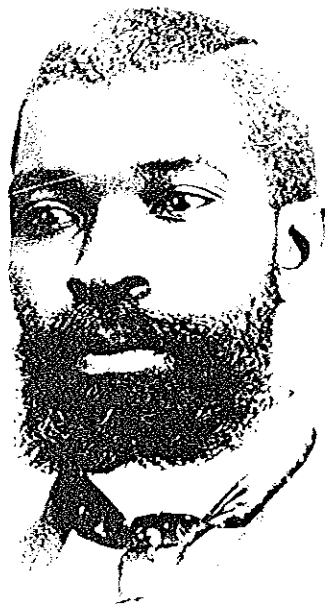
In 1855 the black suffrage amendment to the State constitution was again proposed. The bill was defeated and leading the opposition was the representative from Killingworth, Joseph Maddox. In his speech denouncing the bill Maddox stated that blacks were inherently inferior to whites, therefore, no attempt should be made to grant equal opportunities to black people.⁵¹

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When Amos Beman heard of this incident he was infuriated and quickly dispatched a letter to Mr. Maddox, and sent copies to all of the newspapers, challenging the legislator to debate the bill and the questions of race on the floor of the State House. Half in seriousness and half in jest, the other legislators volunteered to act as judges and to give the men as much time as they desired to present their arguments. One editorial had this to say about the proposed debate:

Without wishing to prejudice the case of the Democratic champion (Maddox), we venture to express the opinion that the Reverend gentleman is the smartest man of the two, and will come out of the contest *vir nullo donandus lauro*.⁵²

As was to be expected, Maddox refused to debate and the entire matter was dropped. Reverend Beman had to settle for denouncing the racist legislator from his pulpit at Temple Street.



Reverend Francis L. Cardozo, Pastor of Temple Street Church, 1865-1868.

After this incident Beman and Temple Street entered another relatively calm period which lasted for approximately two years. Then, in 1857, the peaceful bubble burst. A few years earlier Reverend Beman's wife and two of his children had died of typhoid fever. He attempted to function effectively as pastor of his church and father of his two remaining children, but he found that he was not meeting with great success in this endeavor. He also desired the companionship of a wife, for he was beginning to feel very lonely. In 1857 he married a woman by the name of Eliza R. Kennedy. This wedding in itself was no major event, but the trauma which convulsed the church came when they discovered that Miss Kennedy was white.

There was no overt criticism (at least none recorded) of Beman's act, but

it is certain that tremendous pressures were mounting in the church, for by January 3, 1858, Reverend Beman's resignation had been submitted to the congregation. The tone of this letter is curiously different from his previous ones. No mention is made of his marriage, but he does state that he is certain that his resignation will be "unanimously" accepted this time.⁵³ As he expected, Temple Street and the Council of Churches of New Haven accepted his resignation after no debate during a meeting on January 11th. Everyone tried to conceal the true reason for Beman's dismissal. Thirty years passed before someone issued a blunt statement about the truth of the matter. In a short history of the church written for the New Haven *Palladium* of May 15, 1888, Reverend Miller said that Amos Beman was a respected pastor of their church, "but unfortunately married a white woman and the congregation immediately gave him up."⁵⁴ Beman's forced departure from Temple Street revealed that in the 19th century, hypocrisy knew no color line.

Beman was gone. He accepted the post as pastor of the Abyssinian Church of Portland, Maine, a far less attractive job than the one at Temple Street. Never again would he achieve the notoriety which was his while he was in New Haven, but he left behind a legacy of accomplishments which proved him to be one of the great men of his time. When his resignation was announced to the public, the *Palladium* published a brief list of his church related accomplishments:

Reverend Beman has preached over 3000 times, has baptized 189 children and 69 adults, has married 86 couples, has attended 203 funerals, of which 35 were members of his church. There has been added to this church by profession 135 and 29 by letter, since his connection with it.⁵⁵

In addition to these things, he founded many improvement societies throughout the city. He was also the organizer of the temperance societies, the library club, and the Beman Benevolent Association, an organization which concentrated primarily on the care of the aged. Although Reverend Beman had gone to Maine, he continued to have great influence on the lives of many in the black community of New Haven.

Soon after Reverend Beman resigned, Temple Street, like the entire nation, entered one of the most chaotic periods in its history. The well run church which he had directed was completely disrupted by the Civil War. Church records were erratically kept, therefore very little is known about the year to year activities of the congregation during the war. When Governor Buckingham finally authorized the formation of a black regiment in 1863, black ladies from Bridgeport, New Haven, and Hartford organized soldiers' aid societies for these men.⁵⁶ Although there are no church records to prove it, it seems probable that given the history of social reform activity at Temple Street, many of its members were participants in these societies. The church's major problem at that time was the lack of leadership, and this puzzle had to be solved before the members could make united contributions to the war cause.

It was not until the final year of the war that Temple Street was able to obtain a new minister. The new pastor, Francis L. Cardozo, was freeborn of black, Jewish, and Indian descent. He was a cosmopolitan gentleman, having travelled in Europe and having been educated at the University of Glasgow.⁵⁷ Although his background varied much from Beman's, Reverend Cardozo was just as dedicated to his congregation and to his race as his predecessor was. One of his first acts as pastor was to get his members interested in a newly formed organization called the Connecticut Equal Rights League. He had

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been selected as a delegate to the Connecticut State Convention of Colored Men in 1865 at which the League had been organized as a branch of the national equal rights league. The goals of this organization were enumerated in the preamble of its constitution:

. . . The objects of this League are to encourage sound morality, education, temperance, frugality, industry, and to promote everything that pertains to a well ordered and dignified life; to obtain, by appeals to the minds and consciences of the American people, or by legal process when possible, a recognition of our rights as American citizens. . . .⁵⁸

For the members of Temple Street this was basically a reiteration of the goals which had been set for them by Reverend Beman over twenty years before. They were quick to endorse and participate in the activities of the Equal Rights Society under the new leadership of Reverend Cardozo.

The church soon experienced another period of disorder when Reverend Cardozo abruptly left to head an educational institute for blacks in South Carolina. The Civil War had opened a few doors to opportunity for educated black men from the North and many were quick to venture southward. From 1868 to 1872, Reverend Cardozo served as Secretary of State for the state of South Carolina, and from 1872 to 1876 he was state treasurer.⁵⁹

After Cardozo's departure the church found it extremely difficult to attract a new pastor. No one seemed available. Therefore, between 1866 and 1880 the church did not have a permanent minister and was required to hire a series of students from the Yale Divinity school to preach the Sunday services.⁶⁰ If this situation were not bad enough, the problems of the church were compounded by the arrival of a large number of blacks fleeing Southern oppression.

One of the major effects of the Civil War was that it caused tremendous dislocation among the black population of the South. To aid them in their transition from slavery to freedom, many benevolent societies were established. Their desire was to educate the blacks who were, to a great extent, illiterate and unskilled. Reconstruction governments seemed to offer blacks equal participation in the social and political life of their respective states. Blacks felt that the true spirit of democracy had finally arrived in America. The compromise deciding the Hayes-Tilden election in 1876 ended this illusion. Life for blacks in the South once again became oppressive and terrifying. The result was a great migration by Southern blacks to the North. Many moved to the western areas where there was hope of securing land and again participating in political activities. Others, however, began to drift into the cities of the Northeast, beginning a tradition of migration which continues to the present day.

A large number of the migrants arrived in New Haven in the post-Reconstruction era. Frazier noted that, "The most important crisis in the life of the Negro migrant was produced by the absence of the church which had been the center of his social life and a refuge from a hostile white world."⁶¹ Ministers of various black churches must have perceived this fact, for they were quick to come to the aid of the recent arrivals. Pastors came offering material, as well as spiritual assistance to these uprooted people. The black migrants repaid their generosity by becoming members of the New Haven churches.

During the post-Civil War years Temple Street Church lacked a permanent minister; therefore, Congregationalism had no advocate attempting to pro-

selytize the black migrants. This was one reason why Temple Street did not increase its membership to the extent that other churches did in this period. Another reason was that the migrants tended to remain members of their traditional denominations, Methodist and Baptist. There was a third, and more important reason why the four smaller black churches in New Haven gained most from this exodus. This was the radically different view of the church which blacks had developed after the Civil War. The simplest way of explaining this new attitude would be to say that white participation in black institutions came to be viewed as anathema by the majority, not the minority, of the black community. The establishment of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church signaled this attitudinal change by the majority of Afro-Americans. This change of opinion significantly affected the fortunes of the Temple Street Church. Blacks refused to join the church because it continued to receive support from a white missionary society and the Sunday school was white controlled. The Temple Street Church began to lose its preeminent position among New Haven's black churches.



Reverend Albert P. Miller, Pastor of the Temple Street and Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church, 1885-1896.

For many years Temple Street attracted the "best" families of the black community into its congregation. A large number of the heads of these families were barbers or waiters at Yale, and a few were shoemakers.⁶² These men increased their status in society by joining Temple Street, for Congregationalism had prestige in New Haven. As in other Congregationalist churches, a visible sign of election was required of a prospective member. This was not common practice in the other churches. Among the group of black migrants to New Haven, there were a few skilled and semi-skilled in-

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dividuals who had occupied prominent positions in their communities in the South. Many of these people became members of Temple Street, or if they themselves did not wish to convert, they at least sent their children to this church. Temple Street had been the church of the black upper-class before the Civil War, and the great migration did not bring an end to that tradition. However, the migration did alter one fact. After this social upheaval, Immanuel Baptist, not Temple Street, emerged as the largest church in the black community.⁶³

Two occurrences helped to rescue Temple Street from its lowered status in the black community. First of all, after Reconstruction white ministers and philanthropists began to turn from the problems of blacks and concerned themselves with new social conundrums such as slums, the plight of foreign immigrants, government reform, and religious missionary activity. All of this meant that white participation in the affairs of Temple Street began a slow but steady decline. The second major factor which helped change the fortunes of the church was the installation of Reverend Albert P. Miller as permanent minister on June 18, 1885.

In the tradition of Temple Street's previous long term ministers, Reverend Miller was a hard working energetic man. He was keenly attuned to the changing moods of the community. While he was pastor of Temple Street he attempted to publish a newspaper, the *Connecticut Banner*. His plans for this paper were similar to those developed by Beman for his *Zion's Wesleyan*. And like Reverend Beman, Reverend Miller was not able to make the newspaper a successful venture.

Miller's success, however, came not as a journalist but as a pastor. His first major achievement was moving the church to Dixwell Avenue. A congregation of Russian Jews purchased the old Temple Street building in 1885.⁶⁴ Besides relocating the church, Reverend Miller also succeeded in paying the sizable debt owed by the church. His next achievement was to free the church from the participation of whites. By the middle of the 1890's, he had freed the church of missionary support and had gained control of the Sunday school. In his 15 year pastorate, he completely changed the character of one of the oldest institutions in the New Haven black community. The Temple Street Church had become the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church.

Reverend Miller's main ambition was to see the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church achieve the preeminent position which it had previously enjoyed among the churches of the black community. He made vigorous attempts to attract members to the church and to the Sunday school. He participated in community affairs as a concerned citizen and as the representative of the Dixwell Church. His activities appear to have had tremendous results, for by the end of his pastorate in 1896, his church equaled in wealth and size the Baptist congregation.⁶⁵ Although Reverend Miller departed from his church in 1896, it was his religious philosophy which guided the policies of the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church during the early years of the twentieth century.

Albert Miller's accomplishments stand out as a bright spot in one of the most dismal periods of Afro-American history. The end of the 19th century was not a progressive era as far as blacks were concerned. It was during these years that the Jim Crow laws were enacted throughout the country, emphasizing the fact to blacks that although a great war had been won, a new form of slavery had been instituted.

The racial attitudes of the majority of New Haveners during this period are not easily determined. In writing about the people of the state during the

Civil War, John Niven stated that "Though a majority of Connecticut citizens supported emancipation with enthusiasm, they had not altered their belief in white supremacy."⁶⁶ Whether most of the people of New Haven believed in the concept of white supremacy during the nineteenth century is a question which is beyond the scope of this paper. Throughout the city's history its citizens have displayed tergiversation concerning racial problems. Osterweis noted this equivocation on the part of New Haveners in his history of the city: "Sympathetic to the plight of the Negro, they had condemned the extension of slavery permitted by the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Yet they had vigorously opposed the establishment of a Negro college at New Haven in 1831."⁶⁷ In 1839 the community came to the aid of blacks in the Amistad Slave Affair, but in 1865 New Haven voted with the majority throughout the state in defeating the voting rights for blacks amendment to the Connecticut constitution. Thus the city's history offered no sense of security to blacks as they pondered their future status in New Haven at the turn of the century.

Reverend Miller's activities as pastor demonstrated his desire to prevent the fortunes of the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church from being strongly influenced by the changing moods of the greater New Haven community. Self-control of the institution was his goal and he achieved it. Therefore, it may be said that his greatest achievement was that he brought independence to one of the most important institutions in the black community during a period of history in which true independence was only a dream for most Afro-Americans.

With the advent of the twentieth century many new problems confronted the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church. Besides the increase in social problems which accompanied the rapid urbanization of New Haven, the church was also faced with perplexities arising from World War I. Another black exodus from the South occurred in the post-war years, and New Haven, like most other northern cities was affected by this movement. The Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church became one of the leading institutions which strove to solve the social dilemmas of the community. Its tradition of religious, social, and civic concern, dating back to 1829, well prepared the church to meet the challenges of the twentieth century.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Sources-

The most important source used to construct the history of the Temple Street Church from the years 1829 to 1859 was a collection of scrapbooks and pamphlets left by Reverend Amos G. Beman. These scrapbooks have been referred to in the footnotes as the *Beman Collection*. During the periods in which official church activities were not recorded, news of them often appeared in these scrapbooks. The greatest help which this collection provided was in giving insights into Beman's personal views of the major issues of the time, for many pages from his diary also are placed in his scrapbooks. Unfortunately, this was the only primary source used for this paper.