

A Letter from Lincoln's White House

Editor's Note: the March 1862 session of the Philadelphia Conference of the ME Church was the first to assemble after the outbreak of the Civil War the previous April. Delegates appointed a committee to draft a statement about the war, which was adopted and ordered to be printed in the annual minutes, and also sent to President Abraham Lincoln to make clear the loyalty and support of the ministers of the conference. The text of that resolution appears first, below:

Report of the Committee on the State of the Country¹

Whereas, A most unjust and wicked rebellion has arisen in the Southern States, against the government of these United States, with the avowed purpose of its overthrow and the establishment of a separate and independent confederacy on principles subversive of human liberty, and

Whereas, The Federal Government has been compelled to use force of arms, and is now engaged in a fearful war to suppress said rebellion and to maintain its supremacy, and

Whereas, It is the duty of the ministry and membership of the Church to employ every appropriate means for the maintenance and perpetuity of good government and to sustain the powers that be in this great struggle; therefore

Resolved, 1. – That, while we disclaim all connection with political parties, yet, as Loyal Ministers in Conference assembled, we do hereby express our utter abhorrence and opposition to the present rebellion, as being treason, and designed for the destruction of the best government in the world.

Resolved, 2. – That the Government, the Army and Navy, have our deepest sympathy and prayers; and that we pledge our influence to

¹Reprinted from the *Philadelphia Conference Minutes* (1862), 45–46.

encourage and assist them in their noble and righteous deeds to protect the honor of our flag, the integrity of the Constitution, and the maintenance of our glorious Union.

Resolved, 3. – That we will cheerfully bear our portion of any tax or taxes that may be required by the Government, to defray the expenses of the war.

Resolved, 4. – That while we confess our sins and humbly prostrate ourselves before the face of Almighty God, we thankfully receive the many victories which have crowned our arms, as tokens of his favor, and with gratitude and hope we lift our hearts to Him, “by whom kings reign and princes decree justice,” that victories may continue to bless us until our brethren, North and South, East and West, again united, may “learn war no more.”

Resolved, 5. – That we not only declare our loyalty to the Constitution and the Government of these United States in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, but that we declare our willingness to swear or affirm the same whenever it shall be required by those who have the rule over us.

Resolved, 6. – That a copy of the foregoing Preamble and Resolutions be transmitted to the President of the United States, signed by the Presiding Bishop, and countersigned by the Secretary of the Conference.

In response to the resolution, a letter was received from John Hay, one of President Lincoln's two personal secretaries (the other was John G. Nicolay). John Milton Hay (1838-1905) later became a noted journalist, political leader and diplomat, serving as US Ambassador to Britain and also as Secretary of State under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt. The letter, on stationary that reads "the Executive Mansion," is in Hay's hand and signed, and is in the collection at St. George's Church, Philadelphia. The 1863 Philadelphia Conference Minutes indicate that it was read aloud to that session, held in West Chester.

Executive Mansion
Washington, April 21, 1862

Rev. Rob[er]t H. Pattison

My Dear Sir:

I am directed by the President to acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed favor of the 8th of April conveying the Preamble and Resolutions adopted at the recent session of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The President directs me to express to you the gratification with which he received the expression of the zeal and loyalty of a body of men so distinguished for piety and intelligence, and also to convey to you his thanks for the courtesy and kindness of your communication.



I have the honor to be
Your Ob[edien]t Servant

John Hay

John M. Hay, President Lincoln's private secretary, who sent a letter to the Philadelphia Conference acknowledging the receipt of their resolution and their support.