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Dennis C Dickerson  
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#### THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

In this book, Dennis C. Dickerson examines the long history of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and its intersection with major social movements over more than two centuries. Beginning as a religious movement in the late eighteenth century, the AME Church developed as a freedom advocate for blacks in the Atlantic World. Governance of a proud black ecclesia often clashed with its commitment to and resources for fighting slavery, segregation, and colonialism, thus limiting the full realization of the church's emancipationist ethos. Dickerson recounts how this black institution nonetheless weathered the inexorable demands produced by the Civil War, two world wars, the civil rights movement, African decolonization, and women's empowerment, resulting in its global prominence in the contemporary world. His book also integrates the history of African Methodism within the broader historical landscape of American and African American history.

Dennis C. Dickerson is James M. Lawson, Jr. Professor of History at Vanderbilt University. A scholar of American labor history, the American civil rights movement, and African-American religious history, he has received grants and fellowships from the American Academy in Berlin, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Council of Learned Societies, among others. He is the author of *Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875–1980*, *African American Preachers and Politics: The Careys of Chicago*, and *Militant Mediator: Whitney M. Young, Jr.*, which was awarded the 1999 Distinguished Book from the National Conference of Black Political Scientists.

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The African Methodist Episcopal Church  
*A History*

DENNIS C. DICKERSON  
Vanderbilt University



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To my grandchildren

Melanie Maria Rose Dickerson  
Morgan Nicole Kinnard  
Yordany William Cordero  
Steven Anthony Cousin III  
Dennis C. Dickerson III  
Samuel Philip Allen Cousin  
Yocelin Mariela Cordero  
Devyn Kinnard  
Tavian Kinnard  
Yoandra Cordero  
and those Unborn

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## Preface

This book is the product of a lifelong exploration of the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and a steady decades-long accumulation of primary materials collected from generous donors, including deceased family members, who encouraged my scholarly zeal to write the history of this historic religious body. Additionally, with financial assistance from Vanderbilt University through my endowed chair fund, I purchased a significant part of the large Charles S. Butcher Collection. In this collection belonging to a late AME minister and bibliophile was a copious aggregation of general and annual conference minutes consisting of several booklets from the antebellum and Civil War eras and several from the twentieth century. After the completion of this project, these many materials, some of them rare, will be donated to an appropriate and accessible repository for other scholars and students to explore. Without fellowships or grants, this manuscript was completed in response to a solicitation from the Cambridge University Press to submit a proposal for this present volume.

Several colleagues have read and critiqued individual chapters that immeasurably strengthened the manuscript, as did suggestions from the anonymous reviewers. They include Kenneth M. Hamilton of Southern Methodist University; John H. Wigger of the University of Missouri, Columbia; Reginald F. Hildebrand of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Bernard E. Powers, Jr. of the College of Charleston; Christina Dickerson Cousin of Quinnipiac University; and Richard J. M. Blackett of Vanderbilt University. Professor Blackett, a fellow member of our institution's Department of History, shared several documents pertaining to African Methodism from his own research in antebellum United States history and Caribbean history.

My wife, Mary A. E. Dickerson, and my children, Nicole Dickerson Kinnard, Valerie Dickerson Cordero, Christiana Dickerson Cousin, and Dennis C. Dickerson, Jr., have been ongoing reservoirs of support and endorsement. My grandchildren, to whom this volume is dedicated, are heirs to the liberationist tradition, however imperfectly pursued, outlined in this book. Whatever inadequacies that remain in narrating this history belong only to me.