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Protestants, Politics, and Power:

Race, Gender, and Religion in the Post-Emancipation Mississippi River Valley, 1863-1900

A dissertation presented

by

Elizabeth Jemison

to

The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment for the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

Study of Religion

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Protestants, Politics, and Power: Race, Gender, and Religion in the Post-Emancipation Mississippi River Valley, 1863-1900

ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that Protestant Christianity provided the language through which individuals and communities created the political, social, and cultural future of the post-emancipation South. Christian arguments and organizations gave newly emancipated African Americans strong strategies for claiming political and civil rights as citizens and for denouncing racialized violence. Yet simultaneously, white southerners' Christian claims, based in proslavery theology, created justifications for white supremacist political power and eventually for segregation.

This project presents a new history of the creation of segregation from the hopes and uncertainties of emancipation through a close analysis of the Mississippi River Valley region of Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and West Tennessee. Religious arguments furnished foundations for the work of building a new South, whether in newly formed African American churches and schools, local political debates, or white supremacist organizing. Studying both African American and white Christians during the years when churches quickly became racially separated allows this work to explain how groups across lines of race and denomination responded to each other's religious, cultural, and political strategies. This dissertation centers these communities' theological ideas and religious narratives within a critical analysis of race, gender, and political power. Analyzing theology as the intellectual domain of non-elites as well as those in power allows me to demonstrate the ways that religious ideas helped to construct categories of race and gender and to determine who

was worthy of civil and political rights. This work draws upon a wide range of archival sources, including previously unexamined material.

This dissertation advances several scholarly conversations. It offers the first sustained examination of the life of proslavery theology after emancipation. Rather than presuming that white southern Christians abandoned such arguments after emancipation, this project shows that white Christians reconfigured these claims to create religious justifications for segregation. Within these renegotiated religious claims about social order, African American and white Christians made religious arguments about racial violence, ranging from justifying the violence to arguing that it was antithetical to Christian identity. During the same years, African Americans argued that they deserved civil and political rights both because they were citizens and because they were Christians. This linking of identities as citizens and as Christians provided a vital political strategy in the midst of post-emancipation violence and the uncertain future of African Americans' rights. Through its five chronologically-structured chapters, this project demonstrates Protestant Christianity's central role in African American and white southerners' political lives from the Civil War to the turn of the twentieth century.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation argues that Protestant Christianity provided the language through which individuals and communities created the political, social, and cultural future of the post-emancipation South. Christian arguments and organizations gave newly emancipated African Americans strong strategies for claiming political and civil rights as citizens and for denouncing racialized violence. Yet simultaneously, white southerners' Christian claims, based in proslavery theology, created justifications for white supremacist political power and eventually for Jim Crow segregation. For communities across lines of race, class, and denomination, Christian theology and the Bible undergirded individuals' self-understanding and personal discipline as well as collective goals for churches, communities, and political groups. Biblical stories offered flexible models that many southern Christians could adapt to apply to their current situations. Sacred narratives of biblical and Christian pasts created long historical trajectories in which southerners could locate their tumultuous present in a divinely ordained past. When African American and white women and men read the Bible or heard its stories, they found models for their nineteenth-century lives.

In this work, I present a new history of the creation of segregation from the hopes and uncertainties of emancipation through a close analysis of the Mississippi River Valley region of Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and West Tennessee. Religious arguments furnished foundations for the work of building a new South, whether in newly formed African American churches and schools, local political debates, or white supremacist organizing. Studying both African American and white Christians during the years when churches quickly became racially separated allows my work to explain how groups across lines of race and denomination responded to each other's religious, cultural, and political strategies. I center these communities' theological ideas and religious

narratives within a critical analysis of race, gender, and political power. Analyzing theology as the intellectual domain of non-elites as well as those in power allows me to demonstrate the ways that religious ideas helped to construct categories of race and gender and to determine who was worthy of civil and political rights. During Reconstruction, emphasizing their shared identity as fellow Christians with southern whites allowed African Americans to claim greater political and civil rights as citizens. African Americans made these arguments so successfully that white southerners had to attack African Americans as impious and undisciplined Christians in their efforts to disfranchise African American men. In doing so, white southern Christians adapted proslavery theological ideas to justify the creation of segregation.

The African American and white Protestants whom this project examines include a wide range of different denominations. In keeping with the language that these groups used to describe themselves, I refer to these Protestants collectively as "Christians," a group from which Roman Catholics were prominently excluded.[1] Methodist and Baptist groups were the largest and fastest growing Christian groups in the region during this period. They included the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; the Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the

[1] Roman Catholics constituted a significant religious group, particularly in southern Louisiana, but they lacked political influence across the region and had a distinct history of theology and slavery. Together these factors place them outside the bounds of this project. As John McGreevy has noted, American Catholics in the antebellum period had inherited a long history of Catholic engagement with slave societies that meant that Catholics adopted neither the religiously motivated anti-slavery sentiment of many northern Protestant reformers nor the southern Protestant defenses of slavery as a positive good. John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003). This different history of religious engagement with slavery, together with Catholics' marginalized position throughout much of the South, meant that Catholics largely did not engage in the conversations and debates that this dissertation examines. However, the history of Catholicism in the American South is an important growing area of scholarly work. Andrew Stern, *Southern Cross, Southern Crucifix: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012).; James M. Woods, *A History of the Catholic Church in the American South, 1513-1900* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010). As discussed later in the dissertation, shared anti-Catholic sentiment sometimes created a way for African American Christians to align themselves with their white Protestant counterparts.

Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America; the Southern Baptist Convention; the American (or Missionary) Baptist Churches; and the National Baptist Convention. Additionally, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians played significant parts in this story.[2]

These groups shared a Protestant Christian identity, yet they had numerous theological, organizational, and other differences. Their heated arguments about what true Christianity demanded of individuals and communities profoundly shaped the post-emancipation South. They often disagreed sharply about the relative importance of personal religious discipline and collective social engagement and about the proper focus of these inward and outward efforts. These differences did not necessarily hew to denominational labels. Members of various African American Methodist denominations, for example, demonstrated divergent strategies in their social and political engagement, their willingness or hesitance to form alliance with white Christians, their criticism of racial injustice, and their emphasis on personal moral discipline. White Christians from competing denominations could disagree sharply about predestination and free will and about the proper manner of baptism and communion, and yet still unite around a religiously-justified white supremacist political platform. At the same time, members of a particular denomination, such as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, frequently found that their strongest opposition came from fellow members of this white Southern Methodist denomination, particularly on issues like funding

[2] Among Presbyterians, I primarily study the Presbyterian Church in the United States (known commonly as the Southern Presbyterians), the main southern Presbyterian denomination that was initially formed in 1861 as the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. A few individuals who belonged to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church or the Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church appear in some chapters, and I have indicated these affiliations and their significance where relevant. While Baptists formed a very large group of southern Christians, their de-centralized congregational organization and often less educated ministers and members mean that there are far fewer archival sources available about Baptists than about other denominations. Additionally, the National Baptist Convention, the largest African American Baptist denomination, was not organized until 1896, so most African American Baptist churches in these years operated independently and did not have central record keeping systems. Other Methodist denominations, including the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church or the Methodist Protestant Church, did not have a significant influence in this region during this period.

schools for African Americans. Amid the important theological differences between denominations and the internecine struggles within them, this project demonstrates that southern Christians' shared approaches and conflicting goals pointed toward their different political and social strategies.

This project studies a wide range of Protestants in the Mississippi River Valley region, including Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and West Tennessee, from 1863 to 1900. I have selected this region because of the rapid political changes that it underwent and because of its strongly evangelical, populist religious landscape. Examining multiple states allows comparisons across different political histories and recognizes that religious discourse and organizations crossed state lines. The overlapping boundaries of denominational conferences, districts, presbyteries, and dioceses and the circulation of religious periodicals created regional networks of interlocutors among these states. This dissertation opens in 1863 when Union army victories across the Mississippi Valley brought emancipation to this area, and it concludes in 1900, when the legalized structures of segregation had taken hold across the region.

During these years, the Mississippi River Valley region saw some of the most tumultuous upheaval of any part of the South. Post-emancipation violence and discriminatory laws in this region motivated Congressional Republicans' push for a comprehensive policy of Reconstruction. Mississippi's Black Code Laws, passed in late 1865, severely restricted freed peoples' civil rights. Mob violence against African Americans in Memphis, Tennessee, in May 1866, and in New Orleans, Louisiana, in July 1866, prompted Congressional inquiries and calls for stronger federal involvement. Under Congressional Reconstruction, this region had some of the highest levels of African American political activity, including voter majorities in Mississippi and a significant number of African American senators and representatives in Congress. Yet the bloodiest day of Reconstruction was the Colfax Massacre in Colfax, Louisiana, on Easter Sunday, 1873, when dozens of African Americans were killed by a white mob. Arkansas's nearly bloodless 1874 Brooks-Baxter War and

Mississippi's violent elections in 1875 hastened Democratic political ascendancy and the end of Reconstruction before the policy officially ended when President Rutherford B. Hayes took office in 1877. In 1890, Mississippi created a new state constitution that disfranchised African Americans through literacy tests and poll taxes, providing a model for legislating segregation across the South.[3]

This dissertation draws upon a range of sources from extensive archival research. Denominational meeting notes, both published and unpublished, detail the collective negotiations of clergy and laity at regional and denominational levels. Published and manuscript sermons supply insights into the ways that ministers across the region responded to local current events and grounded them in biblical narratives. Denominational newspapers offer a much wider range of perspectives, including those of women, and have been vital source materials for this project. While edited for the readership of a particular denomination, these papers give broader coverage of disputes over questions of religion, race, gender, and politics. Their editorial coverage of local events, such as political changes or lynchings, alongside religious fare illumined different denominations' approach to social and political issues. Diaries and personal letters give private perspectives from

[3] The end of Reconstruction and the creation of segregation unfolded more gradually in other parts of the South. In her Woodwardian study of Virginia's Readjuster party, Jane Dailey has argued that segregation began in 1902 in Virginia. Glenda Gilmore has shown that African American women and men were active in public life in North Carolina even after the late 1890s, when white supremacist policies began to take hold in the state. A few African American women succeeded in registering to vote in 1920 after the Nineteenth Amendment prohibited states from limiting access to the vote on account of sex. Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 14.; Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Somewhat similar to the Mississippi Valley region, South Carolina had a history of an African American voter majority, of the violent overthrow of Reconstruction and of the relatively early (1895) creation of laws designed to disfranchise African Americans. It, however, had a significantly different religious landscape from the region I study. Particularly in the low country regions, South Carolina had a deep history of Anglican and Episcopal establishment and ongoing influence that contrasted with the dominance of populist evangelicals in the Mississippi River Valley, a region that had not had the eighteenth-century religious or political history of the Atlantic states. Stephen David Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).; Charles H. Lippy, Ed., *Religion in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

women and men. Organizational meeting notes, Reconstruction-era federal documents, autobiographies, devotional literature, published pamphlets, books, and legislative proceedings together allow a multifaceted approach to this history.

Working to find African American voices in the archives expanded my archival investigation, leading me to small or unofficial archives. The archive at the denominational headquarters of the Christian (formerly, Colored) Methodist Episcopal Church in Memphis, Tennessee, is officially closed, but I gained access to their materials, which included a manuscript ledger book that recorded the General Conference meetings of this denomination beginning with its 1870 founding. That text has given me access to internal debates of an African American denomination formed by former slaves that maintained close ties to white Southern Methodists throughout the late nineteenth century. Additionally, reading sources against the grain has allowed me to use sources written by white people, such as letters from northern missionary teachers in contraband camps, to understand better African American experiences from the first years after emancipation when African American archival records are particularly slim. Accordingly, this project illumines previously hidden voices that shaped the post-emancipation South.

Christianity, Slavery, and Race

This project is the first major examination of the life of proslavery religious arguments after emancipation. While many scholars have assumed that theological defenses of slavery disappeared when slavery ended, I demonstrate that proslavery claims persisted in only slightly adapted form to justify racial hierarchy and to help to create Jim Crow segregation. This transformation was possible because proslavery texts situated slavery as a natural relationship of dependence within a household – similar to marriage or to the relationship between parents and children. Proslavery religious arguments claimed that slavery was legitimate because, like marriage, it allowed a white man to

oversee those whom God had put under his benevolent care, namely his wife, his children, and his slaves. With the end of slavery, these parallel relationships of hierarchical control remained, and they helped to preserve proslavery theological ideas.[4]

Defending slavery as a divinely ordained, positive good began in the early nineteenth century in response to antislavery arguments. As white southern Christians advanced proslavery claims in the decades before the Civil War, they insisted that they were following the Bible more faithfully than northern critics of slavery. Antislavery Christians, they accused, had abandoned the authority of the Bible for the fashionable ideas of individual rights and liberal political philosophy. Southern Christians noted that the Hebrew Bible and New Testament acknowledged the existence of slavery without clear critique of the institution and that all four New Testament instructions for slaves to obey their masters appeared alongside instructions for wives to obey their husbands. God, as southern white Christians argued, had clearly ordained household hierarchy including slavery. The two largest American Protestant denominations, Methodists and Baptists, split in the 1840s over the issue of slavery, and the aftermath of these schisms produced stronger claims in defense of slavery from their newly independent southern branches.[5]

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[4] This is not to say that the material realities of slavery and of women's experience in nineteenth-century marriage were similar. They certainly were not. However, it is important that the defense of slavery argued that marriage and slavery were parallel institutions, in order to claim the legitimacy of marriage for slavery. See Chapter 1 for a more thorough discussion of the contours of proslavery theological arguments.

[5] Those New Testament passages were Ephesians 5:22, 6:5; Colossians 3:18, 22; Titus 2:3-5, 9-10; I Peter 2:18, 31. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, split from the national Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 over the issue of whether a Methodist bishop could own slaves. The Southern Baptist Convention was created by a 1846 schism. See: Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 386-438.; Richard Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). When southern Christians accused their northern counterparts of taking the Bible less seriously and introducing new ideas into their religious arguments, they were right to a certain extent. Molly Oshatz has shown how antislavery arguments, particularly the claim that slavery as an institution was sinful, gave rise to new liberal ideas among northern Protestants. Molly Oshatz,

Historians of American religion and of the United States South have demonstrated the importance of proslavery theological claims for white southerners' self-understanding and the creation of the Confederacy. Mark Noll has analyzed the growing theological divides over slavery to show that the Civil War can be seen as a theological crisis. Stephanie McCurry has shown that ministers wrote the majority of all proslavery tracts and that these works relied strongly on gender hierarchy as a corollary to slavery.[6] However, neither these nor other scholars have considered the fate of these theological arguments after the Civil War, except to presume their demise with the end of slavery.[7]

I show that southern white Christians and their churches did not abandon their conviction that slavery had had the blessing of God and the support of the Bible. This project demonstrates

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Slavery and Sin: The Fight Against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[6] Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small World: Yeomen Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).; Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). E. Brooks Holifield offered one of the first analyses of the intellectual world of southern Protestant ministers, including their reliance on Scottish Common Sense philosophy. E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978). Drew Faust has charted the importance of proslavery religious arguments in the creation of Confederate ideology. Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

[7] McCurry's excellent book, on the creation of the Confederacy and its internal collapse because of the activism of slaves and of white women, has not considered religion in the internal inconsistencies that drove the Confederate state to collapse. Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Noll has concluded that "the Civil War was won and slavery was abolished not by theological orthodoxy but by military might." The crisis of the Civil War "effectively handed the business of the theologians over to the generals to decide by ordeal what the Bible meant. As things worked out, military coercion determined that, at least for the purposes of American public policy, the Bible did not support slavery." Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 160. Other works have presumed that, while Confederate belief in the righteousness of the proslavery cause likely prolonged the war, such ideas disappeared with Confederate defeat. George Rable, *God's Almost Chosen People: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010).; Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006).

that white southern Christians held onto proslavery theological convictions after emancipation, in only slightly adapted form. They refused to see destruction and defeat in the Civil War as a judgment on slavery. As early as the first months after Appomattox, white Christians began to reconcile proslavery theology with a post-emancipation society. From their deep reading in the Hebrew Bible, they deployed categories like affliction and purification to support this interpretation. They identified with characters like Job in order to argue that God could allow terrible things to happen for purposes other than punishing sin. Through Reconstruction, white Christians continued to portray themselves as a modern day representation of the persecuted Israelites, who faced the unjust rule of African American and white Republicans just as the Hebrew people had been conquered and exiled. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, they praised God for the overthrow of Republican power and federal intervention in the mid-1870s when white southerners violently "redeemed" southern politics from those interlopers. Thus, for years after the Civil War, white southern Christians lamented their reversal of fortunes through war, emancipation, and Reconstruction, but by positioning these difficulties as purifying tests rather than punishment for sin, they avoided concluding that slavery had been unjust or sinful.

After white southerners regained political power across the region, they fully embraced their slaveholding past as a righteous religious and historical legacy. In the early 1880s, white southern Christians rejoiced in their opportunity to renew their practices of benevolent paternalism from the antebellum period. They repurposed proslavery theological arguments from their pasts as slaveholders or the children of slaveholders to argue for white control of African Americans' social, educational, and political life as they worked to craft nascent segregation policies. These efforts relied upon the antebellum household intimacies that white southerners sought to erase, yet they transformed religious defenses of slavery into arguments for white supremacy and segregation without significantly revising these antebellum beliefs. Through this argument, this dissertation

shows that white Protestants justified segregation, like slavery, through their insistence on their responsibility to care for and control those whom God had put under their righteous care, namely their African American fellow citizens.

In addition to discovering the long life of proslavery theology after emancipation, I join recent works in expanding scholarship on the history of Christianity's role in the development of racial categories and of slavery and freedom. From the seventeenth century, Protestant slave societies faced vexing questions about who had access to being a Christian and what that religious identity meant for ideas of freedom, belonging, or racial identity.[8] Following a conversation begun in the 1960s by Winthrop Jordan, scholars including Colin Kidd, Rebecca Goetz, and Katharine Gerbner have demonstrated the interconnected development of race, slavery, and Christianity. Kidd has examined the role of biblical interpretation and theology in shaping racial categories across several centuries. Goetz has found that unsuccessful efforts to convert native people to Christianity in early Virginia led European colonists to conclude that native peoples shared a "hereditary heathenism," a label with both religious and racial elements, that explained their reluctance to accept the colonists' Christianity. Gerbner has revealed the central role that missionaries played in reconciling Protestant Christianity with race-based slavery. Missionaries assured plantation owners that they could own slaves who were fellow Christians. Because of this move, the category of "whiteness" came to replace the earlier marker of "Christian" to identify slaveholders of European descent. Together, these works have shown that religious and racial identity developed with one

[8] The history of Catholic slave societies, especially Spanish and Portuguese colonies, differed from that of Protestant ones. Slaves were generally baptized upon arrival in the colony, but received very limited catechesis or religious education. By contrast, in Protestant slave societies, some form of catechesis and individual evidence of conversion were necessary before a slave could be baptized. R. Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770*, Revised Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 187-198.; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 97-128.

another, and that both types of identity purported to identify a quasi-hereditary moral character and capacity to operate as a free individual.[9]

I argue that emancipation reintroduced many vexing questions that early modern Protestants had faced about the political and social implications of shared Christian identity across racial lines, albeit in a dramatically changed context. Although racial categories were never so flexible as they had been in the early modern period, after the end of slavery in the United States there was great uncertainty about the status of formerly enslaved people. Most white Americans who considered themselves sympathetic to freed people advanced a romantic racialism that viewed African Americans as childish or in need of white benevolence.[10] Most Christian arguments against slavery had primarily targeted slavery's physical and sexual violence and its destruction of the affective bonds between of family members. Few activists had criticized the racial prejudice that supplied the foundation for race-based slavery, and even among northern Republicans, African American enfranchisement was a deeply divisive issue. In other words, white Christians' criticism of slavery presumed that racial categories denoted heritable religious, moral, and intellectual capacities, following patterns that had been created in the early modern period. Yet with the end of slavery came the greatest opportunity in centuries to challenge these assumptions.

After emancipation, African American Christians seized their shared religious identity with white Americans as a vital tool to articulate their claims of full citizenship with civil and political

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[9] Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).; Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).; Rebecca Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).; Katharine Reid Gerbner, "Christian Slavery: Protestant Missions and Slave Conversion in the Atlantic World, 1660-1760" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2013).

[10] On romantic racialism, see Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 17-104. The phrase "romantic racialism" was coined by George Fredrickson. George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 97-129.

rights. Christian identity offered a path forward for formerly enslaved African Americans to dispute whites' assumptions of African American racial inferiority. By arguing that as fellow Christians they had the same religious, moral, and intellectual capacity as white Christians, African Americans sought to situate their arguments for inclusion in the reunited United States on mutable religious markers instead of the seemingly immutable markers of race. In doing so, they used religious arguments to challenge racial categories and to reveal their constructed nature. Rather than relying simply on the dictates of Reconstruction policies and the uncertain support of federal officials, African Americans deployed their religious identity to attempt to gain support from white southern Christians, the same people who had yet to abandon their proslavery theology. By insisting on literacy as necessary to learn to read the Bible, a cornerstone of Protestant piety for centuries, African Americans argued that white southerners needed to support schools for African Americans. In the chaotic environment of the post-emancipation South, Christian identity proved a central strategy for African Americans to deploy white southerners' own Christian identity, one that had defended slavery as a divinely ordained institution, to argue for more resources and increased participation in civic and political life.

As African Americans and white southerners debated these questions, Christian identity and racial identity merged in unlikely ways, revealing the arbitrary, constructed nature of race. After emancipation, white southerners labored to preserve a stark distinction between white and African American categories as distinct races. With the distinction of slave versus free status erased, southern white religious and political leaders wanted race to do more work than it had under slavery to construct social hierarchies. White supremacy demanded that whiteness be a clearly defined category. But the long history of white men's sexual power over enslaved women made such distinctions difficult. The simultaneous effort to draw a more definitive color line and the recognition of many former slaves as the children of white fathers presented a unique opportunity to

some African American Christians. For a small group of ministers, presenting themselves as religious leaders who had white fathers but who were content to remain on the African American side of an increasingly rigid color line enabled them to claim a certain degree of respect from white Christians. For these interstitial figures, their white parentage contributed a certain hereditary moral discipline and respect for order that they deployed to negotiate with white Christians on behalf of their fellow African Americans.

These conflations of racial identity with religious character emerged first in contraband camps, but became more effective after white supremacist political takeovers ended Reconstruction. When northern white missionaries found themselves short staffed as they preached to and taught former slaves living in contraband camps, they selected a "nearly white" former slave to join their ranks and praised the man's intelligence and abilities as a preacher as connected to his racial status.[11] Southern whites made similar associations between racial identity and religious fitness beginning in the late 1870s, after white southern Democrats controlled most state offices. When Bishop Isaac Lane of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America preached a message of personal moral responsibility rather than political activism to his African American congregation, a white observer praised Lane's message which matched his body, which was "tall, erect, and showing in his general appearance a preponderance of the Anglo-Saxon blood." Because Lane did not urge African American political activism, but instead personal religious piety, his physical body simultaneously testified to the sexual power of white men and reaffirmed an increasingly rigid color line.[12]

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[11] Early in the Civil War, slaves who escaped to Union army lines were considered contraband of war, much as other property taken from Confederates would have been termed. Contraband camps, essentially refugee camps of escaped slaves, developed in Union controlled territory throughout the South. Missionary teachers and ministers from the American Missionary Association, a northern anti-slavery voluntary society, began to set up schools and churches in contraband camps in 1863. See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of religion in contraband camps.

[12] Rev. Samuel G. Wright, to Rev. George Whipple, Natchez, MS, March 9, 1864. American Missionary Association Archives, Document 71610, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans,

Writing at the end of the century, another CME Church Bishop, Lucius Holsey, wrote in his autobiography that he was born the son and the slave of a white man and that he considered slavery to have been a providential blessing for African Americans' Christianization and civilization. He deployed his experience with his father and owner and his enslavement as the personal servant to two other men after his father's death to show the ways that he cultivated high standards of personal morality even as a slave. He committed himself never to lie to his master, and he sought a religiously sanctioned marriage, even though as a slave he could not legally marry. Holsey used his racial identity to signal to white southerners, including the minister who heartily endorsed his book, that he shared many personal moral, religious, and intellectual concerns with white Christians while also recognizing that as a former slave, he belonged among African Americans in a segregated South. As these ministers utilized their own interstitial racial identity as a strategy to identify with whites' efforts to link religious character to white racial markers, they demonstrated the ways that religious character was linked to racial identity after emancipation. The constructed nature of racial identity meant that it continued to shape religious identity and questions of religious and moral fitness throughout the post-emancipation period. While this project, in keeping with the sources, describes African American and white communities as distinct groups with fixed boundaries, it is important to note that these racial categories continued to be constructed in this period. The ultimate legal definitions of race, codified in segregation law, that defined as African American anyone with a small, fixed percentage of "negro blood," revealed with their quasi-scientific classifications that racial boundaries were constructed, arbitrary labels.[13]

Louisiana.; J.W. McNeil, "The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of America," N*ew Orleans Christian Advocate*, December 6, 1877.

[13] Lucius Holsey, *Autobiography, Sermons, Addresses and Essays of Bishop L.H. Holsey* (Atlanta, GA: Franklin Printing and Publishing, 1898). http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/holsey/holsey.html

Religion, Politics, and Citizenship

This project argues that Protestant Christianity profoundly shaped politics and the evolving concept of citizenship in the years after the Civil War. Religious arguments and the organizational power of churches exerted enormous influence on local, regional, and national debates about the role that both formerly enslaved people and Confederate supporters would play in a reunited Union. African Americans deployed their identity as Christians to argue for equal civil and political rights with white fellow Christians and fellow citizens. Because citizenship was an ambiguous category with shifting meanings in these years, African Americans' claims effectively positioned them as belonging to the South and the nation.

In the nineteenth century, citizenship held varied and evolving meanings at the state and national levels, and African Americans did not have clear access to equal political and civil rights, even at the height of Reconstruction's federal reach. States could create their own regulations for citizenship, and for what civil and political rights certain citizens could exercise. African Americans, whether free or enslaved, had been declared not to be citizens of the United States by the Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857). In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution affirmed the national citizenship of all persons born in the United States. The amendment forbade states from abridging the rights of citizens, and the Fifteenth Amendment explicitly forbade denying the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Nevertheless, the ambiguities in the category of citizenship meant that that African Americans' access to political and civil rights remained uncertain. Citizenship often connoted a sense of belonging to a community and of being a member of the body politic, and African Americans' religious claims insisted that they belonged alongside white citizens through the shared Christian commitments.

These findings demand a reconsideration of social and political histories of the post-emancipation South that have ignored religion or considered it a marginal factor. Most histories of

this period have considered religion only to note that African Americans built many churches. But in neglecting religious arguments about citizenship, these histories have neglected a central strategy that African Americans themselves advanced to claim that they belonged as citizens in a nation that had marginalized and brutalized them in countless ways. Christian identity and biblical narratives provided powerful tools for arguing what the post-emancipation South should become. Newly freed African Americans prayed to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Abraham Lincoln. African American voters invited Republican politicians to speak in their churches, and the politicians in turn praised African Americans for being like the early, persecuted Christians in the Roman Empire. African American Christians denounced racism as sin and cited biblical narratives to bolster these arguments. Throughout the rapid expansion and the violent contraction of African Americans' civil and political rights, they argued for their deserving of these rights and their belonging as citizens of states that had enslaved them through their use of Christian language and biblical appeals.[14]

In reconsidering the relationship of religion, politics, and citizenship, this project examines different Christian communities' claims about how they should engage political questions. Debates raged over how much questions of the public good and political action should occupy Christians' attention, versus questions of individual morality and religious discipline. What made a good Christian, and what were Christians' duties to the broader world? Through their contrasting answers in the debates, African American and white Christians charted a variety of paths forward for their

[14] In his important history of Reconstruction, Eric Foner has noted that African American churches built during Reconstruction were one of the few Reconstruction legacies that persisted after 1877, but he doesn't consider religion a significant factor in African American political efforts. Steven Hahn more closely considers the organizational and ideological power of African Americans' religious life, especially in the first of three parts of his Pulitzer Prize winning history of African American politics. He emphasizes religion as a powerful pre-political force for slave life and the immediate aftermath of emancipation, but this analysis of religion fades as his moves into Congressional Reconstruction and later periods. Eric Foner. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 43-51, 73-83, 111-127, 230-234, 448-449.

religious communities and for the South. White southern Christians advanced contradictory arguments about the boundaries of religious and non-religious spheres in order to claim both moral and political influence as they worked to restore their political power, which emancipation, federal intervention, and African American franchise had threatened. They argued that their antebellum concern for the religious well-being of their slaves demonstrated their capacity to control southern politics for African Americans' best interests but without their political participation. Simultaneously, they prided themselves on refusing to mix religion and politics in contrast to their northern counterparts' activism against slavery and their support of Reconstruction policies. White southern Christians claimed that their pure, spiritual Christianity, free of the meddling influences that northern churches had mistakenly embraced, hewed more closely to the core truths of Christianity and the faithful interpretation of the Bible.[15]

Examining both African American and white Christians' engagement with questions of religion and politics shows how different groups responded to each others' strategies, even in years when churches quickly divided along racial lines. Most existing literature focuses on either African American or white southerners' religious experience, and relatively little work has been done on the religious history of the Reconstruction South, compared to extensive work on the antebellum period or the late nineteenth century. By studying the strategies that African American and white Christians developed from emancipation to segregation, I show how both groups adapted to each other's

[15] The fact that the three largest white Protestant groups, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, remained divided into distinct northern and southern branches through the end of the nineteenth century meant that they each had a northern counterpart to accuse of infidelity, impiety, and hypocrisy. Having northern foils against which to define themselves exacerbated southern white Christians' insistence that only they approached questions of religion and politics in the proper way. Episcopalians, a much smaller group in the Mississippi Valley region, reunited shortly after the close of the Civil War, so while regional tensions remained, they still met in denominational gatherings with Episcopalians from across the United States. For a study of Methodists and Baptists in border states, see April Holm's dissertation, which argues that these intense divisions helped to create an argument for the "spirituality" of Christianity, apart from politics. April Holm, "A Kingdom Divided: Border Evangelicals in the Civil War Era." PhD diss., Columbia University, 2010.

tactics. For instance, after African Americans linked their Christian identity to their identity as citizens, white southerners began to criticize African American churches and especially their ministers for impiety and lack of personal religious discipline, as a strategy to bolster whites' suppression of African American civil and political rights. These criticisms insisted that African American churches were not adequately Christian but instead were simply Republican political recruiting grounds. Whites frequently alleged that African American ministers lacked sexual discipline or stole from their communities. In other words, African American Christians so successfully linked their religious and political identities that white Christians had to disparage African Americans' Christian practice as well as their political fitness in order to work to exclude African Americans from political life.[16]

African American Christians often diverged over questions of private religious discipline versus public religious and political activism. Some ministers denounced racial discrimination as sin

[16] Paul Harvey's book on Baptists in the post-Civil War South examines both white and African Americans, but each chapter deal with either white or African Americans without discussing interactions, conflicts, or cooperation between the two groups. Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). In the first book on the religious history of Reconstruction, Daniel Stowell highlighted the lives of six figures amid a significant focus on the institutional history of their Protestant denominations. Daniel Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Edward Blum and Scott Pool have edited a collection of essays focused on aspects of Reconstruction's religious history in North and South. Edward J. Blum and W. Scott Poole, *Vale of Tears: New Essays on Religion and Reconstruction* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005). Several works have analyzed the African American churches in the South after the Civil War. William Montgomery published one of the first analyses of southern African American churches. William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993). Katharine Dvorak described the rapid departure of freed people from white-run churches in the first years after emancipation. Katharine L. Dvorak, *An African-American Exodus: The Segregation of the Southern Churches* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1991). Reginald Hildebrand has explored the approaches that different Methodist denominations offered African Americans in the post-emancipation South. Reginald F. Hildebrand, *The Times Were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995). John Giggie examines African American religious and consumer cultures in the Mississippi Delta region after Reconstruction. John Giggie, *After Redemption: Jim Crow and the Transformation of African American Religion in the Delta, 1875-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

and prescribed a religious conversion away from racism for southern whites. Many churches hosted Republican political rallies, and denominational newspapers encouraged church members to vote for Republicans. At the same time, other African Americans insisted that true Christianity demanded neutrality on political questions, yet their ostensibly non-political actions fought against ideas of African Americans' inferiority and demanded certain civil rights as well as access to education. Demonstrating their deep personal piety, including sexual morality and temperance, gave African American Christians greater opportunities to stress their similarity to their white Christian counterparts, giving these seemingly conservative strategies a more politically charged potential. Especially with the creation of segregation, African Americans often based their arguments against discriminatory laws or extralegal violence, such as lynching, in religious rather than political terms. Christian theological views could support a range of actions, and African American denominations often adopted different attitudes towards political questions. The particular political, economic, and social situations that African American communities faced often yielded different strategies of bringing their religious commitments to bear on political issues and policies of racial discrimination.

In analyzing a wide range of African American Christian strategies of religious and political engagement, this project contributes to recent scholarly conversations about the diversity of African American religious life. As Curtis J. Evans has shown, the concept of monolithic "black religion" stemmed from the romantic racialism of antebellum Protestants. No monolithic entity with a unified political agenda known as "the black church" ever existed. Barbara D. Savage has emphasized the often conservative political goals of African American churches in the decades before the Civil Rights Movement. I move this conversation forward by showing the diverse strategies that African American Christians employed in the years after emancipation, even when they shared a label such as "Methodist." Beyond simply noting politically conservative or activist actions by different African American Christian communities, this project takes a multifaceted approach to African Americans'

religious activism in these years. Emphasizing the strategic potential of seemingly conservative appeals to personal piety or self-discipline over political action, this project avoids reducing African American Christian activism to linear poles of liberal and conservative political potential.[17]

I use the term "strategy" here deliberately, as an alternative to discussing the personal and collective agency of the actors in this project. Historians of slavery have debated slaves' agentive capacity, and the extent to which religion strengthened or mitigated this agency and slaves' related capacity for resistance. Eugene Genovese's 1974 *Roll, Jordan, Roll* offered a Marxist critique of slavery that emphasized hegemonic power of Christianity in reinforcing southern paternalism. Albert J. Raboteau's *Slave Religion* (1978) argued that despite Christianity's tendency to support the existing social order, slave religion was not simply otherworldly but helped many slaves retain their personhood amid the dehumanizing powers of slavery. More recently, Walter Johnson has advocated jettisoning the quest to analyze slave agency because, as important as the search for agency was to the growth of social history, it has presumed a liberal notion of autonomous selfhood, which has little place in scholarship on slavery. Steven Hahn's work on African American politics has eschewed the term, while Stephanie McCurry's work on the undoing of the Confederacy has named only a more limited political agency that slaves exhibited during the Civil War.[18]

Scholars of religion have likewise debated the agentive capacity of religious actors. Does religion empower people by increasing their understanding of themselves as subjects of their own lives, or does religion encourage self-abnegation, particularly for those already marginalized by gender, race, or class? Increasingly, religious studies scholars, like historians of slavery, have

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[17] Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*; Barbara Dianne Savage, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

[18] Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1974).; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*.; Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History,* 37:1 (2003): 113-124.; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*.; McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*.

suggested that the question itself is deeply flawed.[19] My discussion of strategy, rather than agency, builds on these conversations. Like recent scholars, I am less concerned with individuals' internal, subjective religious experiences or their meaning-making work, as a process distinct from strategic negotiations of political power or social control. Rather, I focus on the external limits on these process and the outcomes of these experiences: how African American or white Christians acted, thought, or organized around issues such as political rights or violence in the post-emancipation South. In doing so I avoid a binary opposition of religion's role as a force for empowerment or for subordination through attention to the intersections of gender, racial, and class-based power and to the limits imposed by religious traditions.

When I analyze the private religious reflections of an individual, I do so, not to celebrate the agentive potential in her processes of meaning making, but to illumine the ways that, out of the limited options available to her, she charted a way forward through the particular circumstances she faced. For instance, in 1863, Kate Foster, a white young woman from a slaveholding family

[19] Talal Asad, through an analysis of individuals' encounters with pain and bodily limitations, has argued that the presumption of an autonomous individual who has a universal "agency" derives from a misunderstanding of the human subject. Talal Asad, "Thinking About Pain and Agency" in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 67-99. Building on Asad's work, Saba Mahmood has redefined agency as an individual subject's capacity for self-formation, in order to move scholarly conversations away from a binary view of resistance and subordination. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). Within work on American religion, scholars of "lived religion" have been particularly invested in questions of agency. Robert A. Orsi has stressed the ways that Catholic women's devotion to St. Jude, the patron saint of lost causes, could circumscribe their personal agency and reinscribe oppressive gendered power dynamics that women faced in the mid-twentieth century. Robert A. Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Lost Causes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996). R. Marie Griffith's ethnography of charismatic, evangelical women has insisted that women created agentive capacity through their understandings of prayer and their relationships with other women, even amid their embrace of submission to male authority. R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Marla Frederick's ethnography of African American women emphasizes her subjects' spiritual agency amid the challenges of their working class experiences in rural North Carolina. Marla F. Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

struggled in the pages of her diary to reconcile Union occupation and emancipation with her belief in the righteousness of slavery and the Confederate cause. She appealed to her belief in the sovereignty of God and the certain promise, as she saw it, that God would eventually ensure Confederate victory, after its defenders had passed through difficult trials. My analysis of Foster's efforts to restore her belief in Confederate victory focuses on the constricting forces motivating her, namely her fear for the safely of her brothers who fought for the Confederacy, her increased domestic responsibilities after her family's slaves' had left for a nearby contraband camp, and her theological commitment to God's sovereignty over human affairs. I further note the effects of her meaning making processes: a reaffirmed belief in slavery as a positive good, even as the reality of emancipation dramatically changed her daily life. Thus, my analysis centers on the strategic intellectual work that Foster's religious writings did to protect her belief in the sacred cause of the Confederacy's defense of slavery, despite ongoing Confederate losses and emancipation.[20]

Religion and Racial Violence

The post-emancipation South was a violent, chaotic place, and I show that Christianity played a vital role both in justifying and in mitigating the violence that raged especially along lines of race and gender. African Americans quickly discovered that emancipation brought not a biblical promised land of milk and honey, but a dangerous, impoverished fight for survival amid hostile white southerners and unreliable federal supporters.[21] African American churches offered respites from the violence, yet they were also contested sites where performing religious identity carried

[20] For more on Kate Foster and her diary, see Chapter 1. Catherine (Kate) Olivia Foster Papers, MS Z0869, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

[21] Jim Downs has shown that African Americans' emancipation and transition to freedom, particularly in contraband camps and in the early years of Reconstruction, was marked by illness, lack of medical care, and high mortality rates. Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

significant responsibilities for defending African Americans' family structures, sexual discipline, and gendered order. When they insisted that they deserved civil and political rights and freedom from violence, African Americans had to counter arguments that whites made that African American church members and their ministers lacked sexual discipline and frequently transgressed the strictures of marital monogamy without censure from their churches. Historians have shown that African American women faced physical and especially sexual violence from white men in these years, and my work shows that when African American women and men sought to defend against this violence, they drew on religious arguments about African American women's Christian virtue to insist that African American women deserved protection.[22]

As extralegal violence grew into an epidemic of lynching by the end of the century, African Americans relied on Christian arguments against lynching and promises that God would punish the members of lynch mobs and other whites who condoned their terror. This often repeated promise of divine judgment signaled the absence of other, more immediate ways to punish members of mobs whose terroristic violence the legal system ignored. Yet, these claims demand analysis as more than simply the final weapon of a community falling into the nadir of segregation's legal and extralegal oppressions. They also provided the prophetic religious roots for the collective responses that African Americans would continue to mount against racial injustice through the twentieth century.[23]

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[22] On sexual violence as a tool to oppose African Americans' citizenship rights in the post-emancipation South, see Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). On the importance of the household, and especially of marriage, to African American claims for political participation, see Laura Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).; Noralee Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).; Nancy Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms*: *Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861-1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

[23] In making these claims, my work adds an earlier chapter to David Chappell's book on the intellectual roots of the Civil Right Movement in this prophetic religious tradition, rooted in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Chappell has argued that the optimistic liberal tradition,

After the Civil War, white southern Christians sought to restore the orderly society of benevolent hierarchy that had reigned before emancipation. They reimagined that antebellum history through the lens of proslavery religious claims, ignoring the actual conflict and violence of slavery and appealing to the fictionalized household harmony that theological defenses of slavery had presumed. Recreating that orderly vision of African Americans' willing subservience to whites' demands was impossible after emancipation, not least because it had never existed. Nevertheless, white southerners' efforts to overthrow Reconstruction policies, to deny African Americans' civil and political rights, and to establish a legalized pattern of segregation proved successful largely because of organized violence. White Christians' arguments defended the results that the violence achieved, particularly in the white supremacist political takeovers in the 1870s that white activists called Redemption. When ministers preached sermons calling their congregations to give thanks to God for the sweeping Democratic victory in Mississippi's 1875 election or comparing Arkansas's ousted Republican leaders to the biblical villain Haman from the Book of Esther, they were endorsing political changes through the violent actions of white mobs as the work of God. Sacred stories such as that of Haman and Esther linked Republicans to biblical figures who were executed as part of God's intervention in political affairs, suggesting that God supported violent political changes like those of the mid-1870s. In these years, white Christians tended to support the outcome of the violent transitions without explicitly endorsing the violence; still, believing that God was on the side of the "redeemers" of southern Democratic politics put the moral and intellectual weight of white Christianity behind this white supremacist violence.

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represented by Gunnar Myrdal and those who embraced his work, failed to grapple adequately with the power of evil and suffering and could not effect the necessary change. It was African Americans' prophetic religious faith that had an ability to name and address the evils of white supremacy. David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Beginning in the 1880s, white Christians had the political power and freedom from federal interference to begin to shape a very different post-emancipation South than that of Reconstruction where African Americans' civil and political rights, while contested, had had numerous protections. White southerners were free to work to implement the plan of Christian benevolence that they had adapted only slightly from its proslavery form. Yet in these same years, the public lynchings of African Americans became an increasingly common occurrence. White southern Christians in the 1880s and 1890s continued to celebrate their generous care for African Americans' best interests, just as their slaveholding parents had cared for their slaves, without discussing the ways that the growing terror of lynching aided their increasing power. Like their praise of the outcome of political violence in the 1870s, whites' silence about lynching, during the years when they were crafted social and legal strategies to ensure stable white supremacist power, allowed them to benefit from the effects of lynching's terror without publicly endorsing it. Infrequent notes of concern criticized lynching not for its racial terror and spectacular violence but for its affront to the dignity of law and order, a force that worked increasingly to the advantage of white supremacist goals. Only around 1900, when the legalized structures of white supremacy were firmly in place across the Mississippi River Valley, did some ministers speak out publicly against lynching for its assault on African Americans' rights to equal protection under the law, but even then most kept silent about a terror that would rage through the 1930s.[24]

Chapter Structure

This dissertation is structured chronologically with five chapters that span from emancipation to the end of the nineteenth century. The first chapter, "Christian Readings of

[24] These historical narratives suggested that the vast majority of white southerners' parents had owned slaves, which was another part of this fictional recreation of the antebellum South. Only a minority of antebellum white southerners were slaveholders.

Emancipation and Confederate Defeat, 1863-1867," opens amid 1863 Union victories in the Mississippi River Valley. It argues that, in the face of emancipation and Confederate surrender, white Protestants skillfully renegotiated their proslavery convictions to admit emancipation without abandoning their claims of slavery's legitimacy. For formerly enslaved African Americans, emancipation represented the fulfillment of their religious hopes, even in the privations of contraband camps and Union-occupied towns.

Congressional Reconstruction brought greater recognition of African Americans' rights and stronger efforts by whites to challenge these rights. The second chapter, "Christians and Citizens?: Religion, Civil Rights, and Reconstruction, 1867-1874," argues that, when asserting their rights as citizens could incite violence, African Americans used their identity as Christians to demand political and civil rights. Because white Protestants often admitted African Americans as fellow Christians, this approach allowed African Americans to engage strategically with white leaders. At the same time, white Christians refashioned their proslavery views into Confederate nostalgia.

White supremacist political power rose sharply in the midst of the 1870s. The third chapter, "White Supremacist "Redemption," Resistance, and Yellow Fever, 1874-1882," argues that because of the ways that African Americans had linked their identity as Christians and citizens, white supremacists disparaged both African American religion and politics to justify their suppression of African American civil and political rights. White southerners' persistent faith in the conservative, organic hierarchies that had legitimized slavery reemerged in justification for white supremacist redemption. A devastating yellow fever epidemic accelerated the political changes that bolstered white southern Protestants' power, even as it opened temporary opportunities to African Americans.

The fourth chapter, "Churches and the 'Negro Problem' Under a New Regime, 1882-1890," argues that white southern Christians crafted new historical narratives that claimed that antebellum benevolence toward their slaves supplied a model for their ongoing benevolent oversight of African

Americans' best interests, including creating schools for African Americans. African Americans deployed religious defenses of their civil and political rights and countered whites' accounts of continuity between the antebellum period and the 1880s with contrasting historical narratives. The rise of lynching drew fierce arguments from African Americans that as Christians and as citizens, they deserved protection from this deadly scourge, yet white Christians largely ignored these claims.

The final chapter, "Churches, Race, and Politics under Jim Crow, 1890-1900," begins with the 1890 Mississippi State Constitutional Convention where white ministers blessed the Convention's work of disfranchising African Americans. With the loss of most of their civil and political rights, African American Christians turned inward and focused on internal issues, such as education, over which they had greater control. Yet lynching remained a crisis that demanded outward efforts, and they argued that white Christians must end lynching or risk divine judgment for their white supremacist hypocrisy.

From emancipation to segregation, African American and white southerners in the Mississippi River Valley argued about the future of their region through the language of Protestant Christianity. Their claims about the rights and duties of citizens and Christians created new frameworks for understanding cultural and political belonging in the post-emancipation South. Whether in the peaceful antebellum past that white Christians imagined or in the biblical narratives within which both African American and white Christians rooted their actions, these different communities grounded their present and future goals in a sacred past that was both shared and contested. By the end of the nineteenth century, African American and white Christians had established new terms for cultural and political debate that would shape twentieth-century contests from the creation of fundamentalism to the long Civil Rights Movement. The newly freed people and defeated Confederates with whom this story begins did not foresee how their religious and political strivings would transform their lives and their region. But as these groups found liberating

and conservative power within Christianity, they were already working to create a New South from their hopes and disappointments in the final years of the Civil War.

CHAPTER ONE

Christian Readings of Emancipation and Confederate Defeat, 1863-1867

Amidst the chaos of the Civil War, white and African American Christians in the Mississippi River Valley and throughout the South turned to the Bible and to the resources of Christian theology in an attempt to make sense of emancipation, the war's devastation, and the rapid changes all around them. They held fast their conviction that their current trials and victories could be situated in a long sacred history, reaching back all the way to the times of the Hebrew Bible. In the pages of the King James Bible, southerners from all backgrounds read about themselves. White southern Confederates took solace from the many biblical stories where God's people had faced military defeat, economic devastation, or exile. From these stories, they concluded that even in these times of trial or affliction, God had remained with the Israelites, just as God could remain with defeated Confederates. For thousands of African American slaves across the region, Union military occupation of the region in 1863 and eventual Confederate defeat appeared the answer to their prayers. Former slaves flooded into Union-occupied towns and hastily organized contraband camps where they brought their own understanding of the broader theological significance of emancipation and war that sharply opposed those advanced by their former slave owners.

During the antebellum period, defenses of slavery based on the Bible abounded. Indeed, as several historians have noted, southern ministers penned the majority of antebellum defenses of slavery. While many historians have assumed that emancipation and Confederate defeat rendered these arguments null, this chapter argues that important threads of continuity ran through the religious understanding of white southern clergy and lay people across this period. White

southerners' ongoing racism motivated these efforts to preserve proslavery ideology, and the centrality of gender hierarchies in the defense of slavery provided the necessary theological material with which to adapt their proslavery theology to a post-emancipation setting. Because slavery's defenders had rooted their arguments in household and marital hierarchies, emancipation did not destroy these ideological positions. By relying on religious terms such as affliction, chastisement, and providence, many white southerners, both laypeople and their ministers, managed to come to terms with Confederate defeat and emancipation without having to understand their earlier proslavery biblical interpretations as wrong. These theological reflections helped them fight against despair at their tremendous losses in the war. As a result, former Confederates were able to read the events around them as part of a divinely ordained plan that united the antebellum past with an uncertain present, and ultimately with the continued sanctification of white supremacy through the Lost Cause.[1]

This chapter argues that theological ideas and Bible reading practices preserved much of antebellum proslavery theology for the post-emancipation South. Theology, as considered here, is not simply a systematic scheme developed by intellectual elites, but instead the intellectual and narrative tools that laypeople and their ministers wielded to make sense of their lived experience.[2] By relating their experiences to the stories of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, individuals and communities acknowledged suffering or misfortune, grappled with uncertainty, and articulated hope for better times. White southern Christians recreated imagined worlds in which both quotidian

[1] Stephanie McCurry has shown the centrality of marital hierarchy to these defenses of slavery. Mark Noll and Richard Carwardine have analyzed evangelical divides over slavery and its theological justification. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.; Noll, *America's God*. Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*.; Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*.

[2] Laurie Maffly-Kipp's analysis of African American Christians' sacred narratives in the long nineteenth century offers a very useful model of this type of work in a somewhat different setting. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

experiences and profound tragedies and triumphs could find meaning in a broader sacred narrative. By the time that horrific mob violence against African Americans in Memphis and New Orleans drew national attention and strengthened calls for stronger Reconstruction policies, white southern Christians had strongly asserted their theological and moral superiority over their opponents, both freed people demanding citizenship rights and northern leaders seeking greater federal oversight of the former Confederate states.

In making these claims, I am departing from scholarship that places the rise of claims of Confederate moral superiority and the related ideology of the "Lost Cause" later in the postwar period. Instead of seeing white southerners' self-justifying religious arguments as reactions to Congressional Reconstruction or as the product of efforts to memorialize the Confederate war dead, I argue that these claims represented strong continuities with antebellum theological defenses of slavery. While recognizing that the institutional instantiation of these ideas came later, in voluntary organizations like Confederate veterans' groups or the ladies' memorial associations that became the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the 1890s, I argue that the crucial ideological and theological arguments preceded the creation of these groups.[3]

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the antebellum theological defense of slavery in order to demonstrate that marriage and gender hierarchy were central to the religious justification of slavery. Next, the chapter analyzes how white southern Christians in the Mississippi River Valley preserved their belief in slavery's justification after Union occupation of the region in 1863. Through the letters of American Missionary Association teachers and ministers who worked in contraband

[3] Many historians have described the rise of Confederate memorial projects in the 1880s and 1890s. Among others, see: Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003). Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, rev. ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

camps and Union-occupied towns, the following section considers African Americans' religious interpretations of emancipation and Confederate defeat and their impact on antislavery white Christians. The chapter then turns to white southerners' proslavery Christianity in the wake of Confederate defeat to show the ways that whites reconciled ongoing proslavery views with the reality of emancipation, and concludes by analyzing the racial violence that spurred efforts to create Congressional Reconstruction policies.

Antebellum Proslavery Theology and Family Order

In the decades before the Civil War, the rise of antislavery and abolitionist advocacy led antebellum southerners to defend slavery as a positive good. Earlier generations had accepted slavery as a necessary evil or as an economic reality, but with substantial opposition from the growing antislavery movement, white southerners needed to defend slavery more actively. Southern Christians led the way, with the majority of all proslavery texts in these years authored by ministers.[4] Slavery, they argued, had the blessing of God and the sanction of the Old and New Testaments. While the so-called curse of Ham featured in these arguments, proslavery theology rooted its defense more in slavery as an abstract institution, than in the particularities of American slavery of people of African descent. Defending a specifically race-based slavery system with the Bible proved a more tenuous argument than defending slavery as an abstract institution, and this broader defense of slavery rooted the institution with the structures of domestic order.[5] Just like the other divinely

[4] Stephanie McCurry was the first to note that ministers wrote the majority of all proslavery writings, and I draw significantly on her analysis of gender and marital hierarchies in defenses of slavery. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

[5] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese argued that defenders of slavery situated their defense in an organic, hierarchical view of society that offered a critique of rights-based, individualistic arguments. See among their other works: Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Eugene D. Genovese, "Divine Sanction of Social Order Religious Foundations of the Southern Slaveholders' World View," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55:2 (1987): 211-233. Mark Noll has noted

ordained hierarchical structures of family order – the relationships of husbands to wives and of parents to children – the relationship of master to slave, so the argument went, was designed for the benevolent, paternalistic oversight of the dependent members of the household.

In formulating these new proslavery religious arguments in the antebellum South, white Christians argued that they followed the Bible more faithfully than northern anti-slavery critics. The Bible nowhere condemned slavery as an institution, so antislavery Christians' arguments that slavery was sinful ignored the biblical record. These arguments drew strongly on New Testament references to slavery, where each of the four epistolary injunctions for slaves to obey their masters could be found alongside instructions to wives to obey their husbands. If New Testament instructions for household order linked marriage and slavery, then white Christians' proslavery arguments, they insisted, represented ongoing fealty to the sacred text over newer ideas of individual rights.[6]

Frederick A. Ross, a Presbyterian minister, illustrated this type of argument in his 1857 *Slavery Ordained of God*, a text that historian Mark Noll has identified as an example of "the conventional biblical defense of slavery."[7] Ross rooted the legitimate authority of slave masters over

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that few critics of proslavery theology argued that New Testament discussions of slavery did not refer to race-based enslavement of people of African descent because doing so would be an indictment on their racial prejudice. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*.; Mark A. Noll, *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 39-42.

[6] See Ephesians 5:22, 6:5; Colossians 3:18, 22; Titus 2:3-5, 9-10; 1 Peter 2:18, 31 (King James Version). As Molly Oshatz has demonstrated, Christians' arguments that slavery as an institution was sinful marked a crucial moment in the intellectual history through which liberal Protestantism emerged. Viewing the institution of slavery as sinful – rather than the actions of an individual slaveholder – paved the way for important developments in liberal Protestant thought. Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin* (2012).

[7] Noll, *The Civil War As a Theological Crisis*. 88. Noll has neglected gender in his analysis of this text and of proslavery theology. As I argue in this chapter, it is crucial that the theological defense of slavery emerged within a framework of family order, where slavery found its legitimacy by comparison to the hierarchies of marriage and parent-child relationships and where rights-based reform efforts appeared to lack biblical warrant. Because the theological framework of proslavery southerners hinged more strongly on order and hierarchy than simply on slavery, emancipation did

slaves in the authority of husbands over wives which he traced back to Adam and Eve, the first humans described in Genesis. After Eve led Adam to sin by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, God said to her, "*Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*" Ross explained, "*There* is the beginning of the rule of the superior over the inferior, bound to obey." From the divinely given authority of "Adam … to rule over his wife and his children" came "*all the authority* afterwards expanded in the patriarch and the king. This … solves the problem, whence and how has man right to rule over man." A husband's authority in marriage provided the foundation for all governing power in households and in nations.[8]

Lest his reader think that slavery and marriage were distinguishable because of the physical brutality of the former, Ross provocatively dared his readers to consider the ways that women faced parallel vulnerability to physical violence in marriage as slaves did from slave owners. He insisted "that for every sigh, every groan, every tear, every agony of stripe or death, which has gone up to God from the relation of master and slave, there have been more sighs, more groans, more tears, and more agony in the rule of the husband over the wife." Speaking directly to the antislavery sentiment inspired by Harriet Beecher's best selling novel, he conceded that "every fact in Uncle Tom's Cabin has occurred in the South. But," such violence extended to the free North, and Ross maintained that "he who will make the horrid examination will discover in New York City in any number of years past, more cruelty from husband to wife, parent to child, *than in all the South from*

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not force white southerners to abandon these assumptions as they reckoned with the theological implications of Confederate defeat.

[8] Frederick Augustus Ross, *Slavery Ordained of God* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1857), 47. Emphasis original. In the first quote above, Ross quoted Genesis 3:16 (King James Version). This work is an expansion of Ross' arguments from a Presbyterian General Assembly, the annual meeting of the national Presbyterian denomination, where Ross argued with his fellow Presbyterians from northern states that their antislavery views were hypocritical. Baptists and Methodists had divided into separate northern and southern denominations over the issue of slavery before this time, and Presbyterians would divide in 1861, so this opportunity for intra-denominational debate about slavery was rare in the late 1850s.

master to slave in the same time. I dare the investigation." Only northern hypocrites, Ross insisted, would decry the violence of slavery without attending to the household violence in their own region. Marriage, parenting, and slavery could all permit violence, from those in authority, but the possibility of abuse did not mean that the divinely ordained relationships were fundamentally flawed.[9]

Marriage, then, often demonstrated every evil and violence that abolitionists accorded to slavery. Indeed, antebellum advocates for woman's rights made much the same point, arguing that marriage needed reform because it resembled slavery. However, for slavery's defenders like Ross, neither marriage nor slavery could be reformed dramatically without the danger of violating the divine order of both institutions. Only misguided self-righteousness prompted northern critics of slavery to claim moral superiority to slave owners; as husbands and fathers they exercised much the same power as slaveholders.

Such arguments also emanated from outside of the South, from figures such as Princeton Theological Seminary's Charles Hodge. Hodge, the revered Old School Presbyterian theologian, defended slavery from a similar position in his "Bible Argument on Slavery." He took as a starting place the claim that "we believe that the general good requires us to deprive the whole female sex of the right of self-government." Women, Hodge maintained, "have no voice in the formation of the laws which dispose of their persons and property…. When married, we despoil them almost entirely of a legal existence, and deny them some of the most essential rights of property." Hodge conflated women's and children's positions, explaining that "it is because females and minors are judged …incompetent to the proper discharge of the duties of citizenship that they are deprived of the right of suffrage."[10] From the self-evident principle that the deprivation of rights and freedoms in women

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[9] *Ibid.*, 53.

[10] Charles Hodge, "Bible Argument on Slavery," in *Cotton is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments: Comprising the Writings of Hammond, Harper, Christy, Stringfellow, Hodge, Bledsoe, and Cartwright, on This Important Subject,* ed. E. N. Elliott (Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860): 841-877. 863, 865.

and children was crucial to a biblically sound social order, Hodge insisted that slavery likewise represented a divinely ordained institution for the benevolent oversight of those who needed the direction of a (white) man more capable than themselves.

It is crucial to emphasize how deeply embedded gender inequality was in these antebellum defenses of slavery. As they defended slavery, southern ministers relied on antebellum Americans' acceptance of marriage and family hierarchies. Slavery, they contended, served the best interests of both slaves and slaveholders, just as marriage allowed husbands to properly care for their wives. Proslavery advocates accurately recognized that very few northern critics of slavery would have contested the unequal legal powers and privileges given to men in marriage. Accordingly, many defenses of slavery argued that it was for the good of everyone that white men could be masters of their own large or small worlds, governing their wives, their children, and their slaves.[11] Because the Bible never explicitly condemned slavery as an institution and instead offered guidelines for its regulation, white southern Christians argued that they were taking the biblical high ground by following the teachings of the Bible over the modern ideas of individual rights advocated by fanatical reformers. Because they tied the biblical defense of slavery to the inequalities of marriage and to the hierarchical order of the household, the theological arguments that underlay the defense of slavery did not necessarily expire with the end of slavery.

Bible Reading and Confederate Hopes

[11] Stephanie McCurry has argued compellingly that the non-slaveholding majority of white men in the South Carolina low country supported slavery because of the promise that they could be masters of their small household worlds. This vision of men's mastery of their households was deeply rooted in religious arguments. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds.*

As Abraham Lincoln would acknowledge in his second inaugural address, many people North and South believed that God was on their side in the Civil War.[12] Indeed, given their confidence in the biblical sanction for slavery, white southern Christians relished the many ways in which they thought that Confederate actions fulfilled biblical narratives. In the April 1863 issue of the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, a leading southern theological journal, the authors pointed to an obscure verse from Hebrew Bible, Obadiah 1:7, in which the term confederacy appeared: "All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee." Biblical texts like this verse, the article maintained, showed that: "God seemed thus to command His people in these Southern States" to secede because "He had… imposed upon them a solemn trust of an organized system of slave labor, for the benefit of the world and as a blessing to themselves, while imparting civil, social, and religious blessings to their slaves." In the face of God's clear direction, "Abraham Lincoln neither heard nor heeded this voice that spake so audibly from heaven, in the otherwise inexplicable events that were occurring around him. He hardened his heart, and stiffened his neck, and would not let the people go." That the Hebrew Bible story of the Exodus – where divine intervention allowed Moses to lead the Israelite people from slavery in Egypt – could be marshaled in support of secession, rather than the much more common application of the story to support emancipation, demonstrated the malleability of biblical texts in the hands of different communities. Lincoln, who often appeared as Moses in such narratives, became the evil Pharaoh in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* article. Such defiant arguments amounted to wartime propaganda to be sure, but as improbable as they might

[12] Several historians have noted the ways that strong beliefs in the righteousness of their cause motivated both sides in the Civil War. Among others: Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*.; Rable, *God's Almost Chosen People*.; Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*.; Steven E. Woodworth, *While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

appear after Confederate defeat, they also represented a conceivable expansion of the antebellum defenses of slavery.[13]

For many Confederate supporters, the belief that God would vindicate their cause enabled them to retain faith that the Confederacy would be victorious despite the mounting evidence to the contrary by 1863 and 1864. Most white southern Christians' attempts to make sense of the Civil War by using biblical examples or theological categories took for granted the validity of the biblical justifications of slavery. They affirmed the fact that slavery was undoubtedly the crucial issue in the Civil War. They also stressed a belief in divine sovereignty, such that the will of God in supporting one side held far more weight than merely human questions of number of soldiers, firepower, or industrial infrastructure. Finally, these accounts often analogized the Confederacy to people of Israel from the Hebrew Bible. As southern white Christians looked in their Old Testament scriptures, they saw numerous accounts of battles won and lost by God's chosen people within a broader narrative of God's faithfulness across many generations.

Nevertheless, not all white southerners on the home front shared a strident faith in the righteousness of the Confederate cause. John Griffing Jones was a slaveholder and a prominent Methodist minister who had preached across Mississippi since the 1820s. While he expressed confidence that slavery had the support of both the Bible and the U.S. Constitution, he thought that secession had been misguided. He prayed constantly that his sons and nephews fighting for the Confederacy would return home safely, but he explained that he never felt comfortable praying for the success of the Confederacy, even as he encouraged others to do so.[14] Jones recorded outlines for

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[13] "The War of the South Vindicated," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 15:4 (April 1863): 479-514, 483.

[14] This commentary on his inability to pray for the Confederacy's triumph came in a later autobiographical manuscript written for his children, probably in the mid-1880s. While retrospective accounts of individuals' attitudes during the Civil War are notoriously dubious, I think this particular claim fits well with Jones' sermon notes extant from the Civil War, which are discussed below. "A Brief Autobiography of John G. Jones, written for his children," Box 2, MS. 10, John Griffing Jones

hundreds of his sermons, included those preached on Confederate days of fasting and prayer declared by Jefferson Davis.[15] In these sermons, Jones reaffirmed the legitimacy of slavery, appealed to divine sovereignty over the outcome of the war, and connected the Confederacy's war effort to Old Testament examples. However, he stopped short of claiming that the Confederacy would definitely win the war. Jones linked the Civil War to the wars recorded in the Old Testament. In describing "the present war," Jones explained that the war had come about as the result of two major violations of the U.S. Constitution. First, the North had tried to abolish slavery, and second, the South had seceded from the Union. No matter how misguided secession had been, Jones advised his congregants that their "duty as Christians [was] to obey the powers that be." Whatever their view of the war, they should "leave all events with God." Jones promised: "If we are faithful as Christians, [God] will overrule all for the good of our country and posterity in the end." Here, Jones refrained from explicitly endorsing the Confederate war effort. Instead, he connected Confederates on this fast day to many fasting figures in the Bible reaching back to Moses.

Ministers were not the only ones to try to use the Bible to make sense of the events around them. Laypeople, too, worked to situate the ongoing Civil War in the context of biblical narratives and theological ideas. Indeed, as women and men sought to understand their lives on the home front, religious arguments proved indispensable to making sense of the particularities of individual lives. Kate Foster, a wealthy young woman from Natchez, began keeping a wartime diary in the summer of 1863. Her first entry presented the diary as a work that she hoped "in after years may be

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Autobiography and Sermons, 1830-1888, J.B. Cain Archives of Mississippi Methodism, Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi. This manuscript collection is cited hereafter as "[Item and Box], John G. Jones Papers, Millsaps College."

[15] Jones would record a one or two page outline and then preach from it for fifty to fifty-five minutes, according to his autobiographical manuscript. The first of these fast day sermons is not dated; the second was preached on November 16, 1864. Plausible dates for the first sermon include: June 13, 1861; November 15, 1861; February 20, 1862; March 27, 1863; and (less likely) August 21, 1863. Boxes 1-2, John G. Jones Papers, Millsaps College.

read … for two or even three generations" as an account of "the war of Independence commencing in 1861." That summer, Union troops occupied Natchez and the surrounding area, yet Foster remained confident in Confederate victory. When Vicksburg fell to Union troops, she wrote: "God has let it fall to show us our cause does not rest upon the mere fall or holding of any one city." Much more troublesome to her than the news of battles were the departures of her family's many slaves over the summer of 1863. Yet she refused to see the slaves' departures as emancipation or as a judgment on slavery; rather they were temporary interruptions that showed that slaves lacked the trustworthy moral character that should make them continue in bonded servitude.[16]

On a hot Sunday morning in late July, the church service that Kate Foster attended came to an abrupt halt when, as she recorded, an African American "man in … Sunday clothes came up the middle aisle to the pulpit, [and] stopped a little while there." When a white man in the congregation "got up & [asked] what he wanted," the African American man "said [that] he had come to church and wanted a seat." According to Foster's account, "the congregation looked astounded as did [the minister]." The black man was forced into the church's balcony while Foster sat in her pew fuming at the whole event. This episode demonstrated that some churches, as well as plantations, served as

[16] June 25, 1863 and July 13, 1863 entries. MS Z0869, Catherine (Kate) Olivia Foster Diary, 1863-1872, Mississippi State Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi. The MDAH holds a typescript of the diary; the original is housed at Rubenstein Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. All future references to the diary are noted as "[date] entry, Catherine (Kate) Foster Diary, MDAH." As historians have noted, women's diary keeping often gave a record for their children. Foster, who was unmarried, mentioned her nieces and nephews as possible future readers of her diary. Diaries also created spaces in which women (and men) sought to reconcile their religious beliefs and their lived experience. For these reasons, diaries should not be read as wholly private, personal spaces, but as sites for ongoing individual formation within the confines of religious doctrine and as texts written for the edification of future generations. Catherine A. Brekus, "Writing as a Protestant Practice: Devotional Diaries in Early New England," in *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630-1965,* Edited by Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, Leigh E. Schmidt, and Mark Valeri (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2006): 19-34.; Catherine A. Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).; Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

sites where slaves and freed people demanded freedom and equal rights in the midst of the Civil War. Foster's efforts to make sense of the interruption also illustrate how she relied on her faith that the Confederacy would prevail with God's help to help her make sense of such bewildering incidents.[17]

At a time when Union troops occupied Natchez, when war news such as the fall of Vicksburg seemed dismal, and when her family's slaves were in the midst of leaving the plantation for contraband camps, Kate Foster drew upon her conviction of God's support of the Confederate cause. As she sat with her journal, she reframed the incident in her church as part of a divinely ordained plan. These events were a furnace that would purify Confederates "for the good work & fight that god has given us to do. For to the people of this Confederacy is given the sublime mission of maintaining the supremacy of our Father in Heaven."[18] Foster drew on the language of a purifying furnace, an image from the Hebrew prophets that had deep resonances in American Protestant culture. By doing so, she was able to reframe the growing signs of Confederate defeat as divine purification, trials that southerners needed to endure for their own good. Rather than judgments on slavery or secession, these challenges further demonstrated that Confederates were God's chosen people whom God wanted to refine for their own good. In this framing, Foster could see the African American man who demanded a seat in the church sanctuary as part of God's purifying the Confederacy for its "sublime mission."

Religion in Contraband Camps and Occupied Towns

The slaves that left Kate Foster's family's plantation in greater numbers each week joined thousands of other slaves who fled slavery for Union-occupied towns and the rapidly growing

[17] July 28, 1863 entry, Catherine (Kate) Foster Diary, MDAH.

[18] Ibid.

contraband camps that dotted the region. While slaveholders tended to view these departures as temporary, slaves recognized that they were claiming their freedom. In these camps, escaping slaves met missionary teachers and ministers from northern antislavery societies like the American Missionary Association (AMA), on whom Union army officials relied to help manage these large camps. Through these missionaries' correspondence, glimpses of religious life among newly freed slaves in these contraband camps emerged.[19]

Many AMA missionaries came from New England or from Oberlin eager to join in what they definitively believed to be the divinely sanctioned work of ending slavery. While he noted that "the government is using all its power to bring in the colored people and enlist the able-bodied men into the US Army," Rev. George Carruthers imbued such pragmatic military actions with liberatory religious implications as he described "a cavalry raid sent out this morning which will break the chains of the captives and bring him into our lines a *freeman*."[20] Carruthers described to the New York secretary of the AMA, Simeon Jocelyn, that he felt as "I have thought I should have felt had I been with Moses when he was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt."[21] The missionaries framed their many discomforts, from eating the same meager contraband rations that were given former slaves, to enduring the summer's heat and humidity and an unusually bitter winter in 1863-1864 as small price to pay for the ability to participate in this work. A.O. Howell wrote: "I can truly

[19] The American Missionary Association was an evangelical antislavery voluntary society formed in the wake of the Amistad slave ship incident. It affiliated mostly with Congregationalists, and it had strong ties to the evangelical, antislavery Oberlin College. Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008)

[20] Carruthers' language here parallels biblical passages. See Psalm 107:44, Psalm 116:16, and especially Isaiah 58:6 (King James Version).

[21] Rev. George N. Carruthers to Simeon S. Jocelyn, Corinth, Mississippi, June 12, 1863. Documents 71552/71553. American Missionary Association Archives, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. [hereafter cited as: Author to Recipient, Place of Writing, Date, AMA Document #]. Emphasis original.

say that amid all the *deep sorrows and privations* of war, it a *great privalige* [sic] to live in this our day, and to be *identified with the Almighty God* in *his* great work. For it is indeed the Lords work & it is marvelous in our eyes."[22] Although they identified God's will on the opposite side of the conflict, AMA missionaries, like the southern whites near whom they now lived, situated themselves inside a theological dichotomy between those who, with God's help, would be victorious, and those who stood in the way of a divinely sanctioned military, social, and religious agenda.

The former slaves who made their way into contraband camps often carried with them their own religious understandings of emancipation and education. While AMA preachers and teachers considered themselves the crucial instruments of God's work in the process, the recorded voices of slaves supply alternative perspectives. When Mrs. L. Eberhart reported on her work supplying food, clothing, and blankets to the freed people around Vicksburg, Mississippi, she recorded that "[t]he grateful smile and the hearty 'God bless you missus.' cheers me on in my arduous work." In particular, Eberhart felt encouraged by her exchange with an older woman who was living "in a *very poor* tent" with seven family members:

> the old lady called to me and said "God bless you misses. God bless you. I know 'de' Lord sent you here 'cos' I's prayed dese many days for him to send me a friend and 'jist' last night I struggled and prayed all 'de' night 'wid' 'de' Lord to send me help and now it's come. O bless 'de' Lord and you too misses." Thus she kept on till I felt more than ever that God was with me and directing my steps.[23]

Eberhart explained this conversation, which she chose to record in dialect, as confirmation that she was doing God's work; however, attempting to read the conversation from the older woman's perspective suggests another explanation of this encounter. If Eberhart considered herself an agent of God's will, the older woman's fervent prayers and Jacob-like struggle with God throughout the

[22] A.O. Howell, Natchez, Mississippi, January 19, 1864, AMA 71594. The final sentence of this quote references Psalm 118. Emphasis original.

[23] L.A. Eberhart to Rev. C.H. Fowler, Vicksburg, Mississippi, February 1, 1864, AMA 71588.

preceding night asserted a causal relationship to this divine aid. She had already labored to free herself and family members from slavery, and her family of eight created new lives for themselves in Vicksburg, albeit while living in a tent. Through the language of prayer and struggle with God, this formerly enslaved woman articulated a particular spiritual authority that allowed her to be more than simply a passive recipient of Eberhart's charity.

In addition to private conversations like the one Eberhart recorded, African American groups and church communities sometimes offered collective prayers and statements of the ways that the schools opened by AMA teachers were answers to prayers. Rev. Samuel Wright recorded his experience at a weekly prayer meeting held in "the Colored Baptist Church" in Natchez, Mississippi. "These meetings give promise of great good," he recounted to Oberlin professor, Rev. Henry Cowles, and they led Wright to reflect, "My Brother, I think sometimes that I have never begun to sympathize with this people." In particular, Wright had been moved by the previous evening's prayer meeting where initially one woman, and then others present, prayed for God's blessings on the AMA teachers and preachers who had come as an answer to their prayers:

> O *such prayers such thanksgivings* said a very intelligent woman lately from bondage in her prayer at our meeting last evening "O Lord, thou hast said if we would *believe* we should see the glory of God; for long years we have prayed for this hour to come we have mingled our earnest prayers in the deep secret of the closet with our *blessed & precious friends*… that our eyes might see the blessed things we now see; we prayed and agonized that *these teachers & preachers* might come to teach us and our children[. G]lory to God, they have *come*. Our eyes *see them* our ears hear the sweet words which fall from their lips. Our children are taught by them. We are happy – we are blessed. Lord bless these *precious* friends. *O bless them*" and their response to that prayer! It was enough to melt all hearts. Every one who prayed asked for great blessings upon the "*blessed teachers.*"[24]

[24] Rev. Samuel. G. Wright to Rev. Henry Cowles, Natchez, Mississippi. March 15, 1864, AMA 71614. The opening line of the woman's prayer references words spoken to Martha of Bethany before Jesus raised her brother Lazarus from the dead: "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest *see the glory of God*?" John 11:40 (King James Version). For a similar argument about the ways that freed people and AMA workers may have understood encounters differently, particularly around prayers like this one, see Randy J. Sparks. "'The White People's Arms Are Longer Than Ours': Blacks, Education, and the American Missionary Association in

Eberhart's and Wright's accounts of the fervent prayers and faith of freed women helped to establish the women as models of female piety. Eberhart used the term "lady" to describe the older freed woman she encountered, suggesting that despite her use of dialect when recording the conversation, Eberhart recognized some significant measure of respectability in this woman.[25] Wright recorded the prayer of "a very intelligent woman lately from bondage" after he had described the prayer meeting he attended as "too intelligent & too solemn to give way to that noise & confusion so common among this people." This prayer meeting was "attended by the most intelligent of the exslaves[,] many of whom can read."[26] These accounts of the piety and gratitude echoed many AMA reports of former slaves. Assertions that "[m]ost of them are a praying people" or that former slaves' "confidence in God is unbounded and their simple faith in his providence refreshing," served multiple purposes as northern white missionaries sought to present freed people as recognizably Christian individuals ready to participate in national life and to represent their work among freed people as centrally religious work.[27] Insisting upon the Christian piety of former slaves allowed AMA missionaries to render freed people a recognizable group with whom northern whites could sympathize, but such representations stopped short of insisting upon former slaves' political or social equality.[28]

Reconstruction Mississippi." *Journal of Mississippi History* 54:1 (1992): 1-28.

[25] On the significance of the term "lady," see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17:2 (1992): 251-274.

[26] Rev. S. G. Wright to Rev. Henry Cowles, Natchez, Mississippi, March 15, 1864, AMA 71614.

[27] A.O. Howell, Natchez, Mississippi, January 19, 1864, AMA 71594.; Rev. G. N. Carruthers to S.S. Jocelyn, Corinth, Mississippi, June 12, 1863, AMA 71552/71553.

[28] Curtis Evans has analyzed the romantic racialism of northern white Christians and the ways that teaching former slaves challenged these views, often leading whites to adopt more hardened views of racial inferiority. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*, 65-104.

Former slaves appeared in AMA correspondence as Christians deserving sympathy but not necessarily citizens demanding rights. Indeed, the very simplicity of former slaves, particularly slave preachers without any formal education, made them useful instructors in piety to their white teachers. "We find examples of talent, faith and zeal among some of their preachers that would edify any christian pulpit," Rev. Carruthers explained. He gave as an example "Uncle Rufus [who] would command respect of any audience in the land." Although illiterate, "he has read the Book of observation, made his own reflections, and guided by his new found sense and the Spirit, he raises my admiration when ever I hear him speak."[29] This simplicity and humility could appear in nearly miraculous accounts of the speed at which former slaves could learn to read. In one case, the "old pious man Samson Finley came one morning not knowing all his letters & by 3 o'clock in the afternoon he was reading in Noah Webster's spelling book." As AMA teachers spent more time among freed people, their occasionally romanticized views of African Americans' supposed simplicity generally faded. Many of them would work to prod the AMA leadership toward stronger demands for freed people's rights, especially after the financial and institutional support of African Americans proved critical for northern missionary activity. Over time, their work in the South invited shifts in the romantic racialism of white teachers and ministers.[30]

Natchez, Mississippi, a wealthy port city on the Mississippi River, had one of the region's only sizeable free black communities in the antebellum period. It provided a particularly striking example of partnerships between African American communities and AMA missionaries, where African Americans supported the AMA work, rather than being the objects of AMA benevolence. A school taught by two African American teachers predated the arrival of northern white teachers.

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[29] Rev. G. N. Carruthers to Simeon S. Jocelyn, Corinth, Mississippi, June 12, 1863, AMA 71552/71553.

[30] Rev. Phineas Mixer to Rev. Simeon S. Jocelyn, Natchez, Mississippi, February 29, 1864, AMA 70601.

When a fire destroyed the first AMA school in a fire engine house, "the Lord directed and the colored people most freely offered their church, bought with their own money." Recognizing the damage that the fire could have caused their educational efforts, Rev. Phineas Mixer explained that the free use of the African American Baptist Church demonstrated the grace of God and the generosity of Natchez's African American community; "[t]hus the devil and the Secesh [Confederates] had turned us out of our little room, but the Lord, the colored brethren, and Union officers have outwitted them & got for us 2 large fine rooms in the place of the little one lost."[31] The African American community in Natchez also gave monetary donations to support the AMA work. Rev. Mixer reported that "[o]ne night in the Methodist Church… the hat was passed and $23 came in from this colored congregation and some white soldiers." Reliant on sometimes infrequent funds from their northern headquarters, AMA workers needed and appreciated such gifts.

While AMA missionaries often described the hospitality they received from Union troops or others with gratitude, the hospitality shown by affluent African Americans created opportunities to defend African Americans to skeptical white audiences. Particularly impressive had been the dinner to which "Brother Fitzhugh invited us the other night. He has some eight children and got his freedom when his oldest was a baby. He is now well and lives in two-story fine brick house beautifully furnished." During the evening, his oldest daughter played the piano and sang patriotic songs, much to the delight of the visitors who enjoyed "a rich supper turkey, beef tongue, oyster sardine, [and] fruit cake," delicacies unknown to most in the midst of the Civil War. The dinner party convinced the assembled missionary guests of "what fools they are who continually say 'they can't take care of themselves'!!!"[32]

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[31] It is unclear how Mixer blamed "the Secesh" in the schoolhouse fire since he noted elsewhere that the fire was an accident.

[32] Rev. Phineas Mixer to Rev. Simeon S. Jocelyn, Natchez, Mississippi, February 29, 1864, AMA 70601.

While uncompromising in their criticisms of those who challenged their efforts to educate freed people and to work to end slavery, AMA missionaries and teachers carried with them various understandings of race and racial difference that their time in the post-emancipation South would reinscribe or revise. Rev. Samuel Wright, facing a shortage of missionaries in Mississippi and Louisiana, suggested that Eustis Beady, a former slave, join the work among freed people. In his recommendation to AMA officials, Wright wrote, "Brother Beady is *nearly white*, is far more intelligent than the most of them… and he has been a slave all his days, but has had the privilege of exercising his gifts as a preacher." Wright insisted, "We cannot get *men* in these times to do the work which he can do. I think… that it is well to ordain and set apart a few of the good men of color can we find here, until we can do better." Wright's assumptions about the ability of a "nearly white" former slave suggested that Beady's racial identity enabled him to match Wright's expectations for an educated, manly minister ready for the responsibilities of the urgent religious battles being waged at the same time as the military conflicts of the war. These views also demonstrated Wright's commitment to an educated clergy along with most Congregationalists and others in the AMA. Within a few years after the war's end, AMA colleges would begin to devote themselves to the training of African American men as ministers.[33]

When Rev. Wright recommended the ordination and hiring of the "nearly white" Eustis Beady, if only "until we can do better," he framed his letter to reiterate the assumptions about racial identity and whiteness that his antislavery supporters likely held. However, Elsie Spees, an Oberlin-educated teacher who led the school that met in the Natchez African American Baptist Church, pushed back against the AMA's assumptions about racial difference. When she completed a standardized AMA school report, Spees gave one-word answers until the report's final question:

[33] Rev. Samuel G. Wright, to Rev. George Whipple, Natchez, Mississippi, March 9, 1864, AMA 71610. Emphasis original.

"Do the mulattos show any more capacity than the blacks?" Here Spees responded, "They do. *Reason*, they have always had better advantages," a response that suggested she resisted reinforcing the racial assumptions about intellectual ability that the question implied. If the AMA's New York officials had assumed that Spees would corroborate their assumptions about racial difference, they would have been disappointed. In later reports, she simply answered this question, "They do not." When the monthly report added the question: "Do the colored students show equal capacity with the whites?" Spees responded affirmatively. Shortly after the Civil War, the AMA removed such questions from their printed reports, but their inclusion during the initial years of emancipation demonstrated the centrality of concerns about racial difference among prominent antislavery activists.[34]

African American Christians' experiences in the final years of the Civil War, as refracted through AMA correspondence, suggested that many freed people came to the contraband camps and Union occupied towns with a strong sense that God was answering prayers they had prayed for many years. They saw themselves as figures in a divine narrative, albeit one far different from the type in which their former owners situated themselves. Former slaves could struggle with God as Jacob had done, or if they believed faithfully, they might see truly miraculous sights. Rather than the emphasis on order and divine sovereignty that guided so many white southern Christians throughout the war, freed people related to a God who overturned an oppressive status quo. Among African Americans who had built lives as free people of color in a slave society, their church buildings, homes, prayer meetings, and financial support challenged assumptions that African Americans

[34] School Report Form, Natchez, Mississippi, February 1864, AMA 71604. Emphasis original. The AMA forms indicated that the comparison between "colored students" and "whites" meant "as compared with whites in Northern schools." The last form with this question that I have found was from December 1865, but a new version of that form, omitting both questions (about mulatto v. black students, and colored v. white students) appears to have been circulated at least beginning in November 1865.

always constituted the recipients of white aid; indeed, in some situations by the end of the Civil War, the opposite appeared true.

Confederate Defeat & Emancipation

By the end of 1864, even strident defenders of the righteousness of the Confederate cause began to recognize that, short of divine intervention in the military contests, the prospects of victory appeared fleeting. Slaveholding Methodist minister, Rev. John G. Jones, who had initially questioned secession while firmly defending slavery, preached again on a Confederate fast day in November 1864. He continued the parallel between Confederates and the ancient Israelites that he had begun in his fast day sermon earlier in the war. Jones preached on the story of Israelite King Jehoshaphat who, when confronted with an enormous enemy army, gathered his people to pray to God for supernatural deliverance. After Jehoshaphat's prayer, God caused Israel's enemies to fight amongst themselves so that they were vanquished without Israel's army having to enter the battle. Jones noted that the Confederate military situation by late 1864 looked grim, but he suggested that Confederates could see themselves as present-day Israelites. By this point in the war, Jones indicated, only through supernatural intervention like that recorded in the Hebrew Bible could Confederates hope for victory. For Jones, the Old Testament was replete with stories to which he and his congregants could relate. By the final months of the Civil War, Confederates had very few justifications for hope. But believing that they could join a long sacred history of God's chosen people into whose earthly affairs God could intervene could be a powerful reason to kindle the embers of hope in the Confederate cause.[35]

[35] Box 2, John G. Jones Papers, Millsaps College. See 2 Chronicles 20 for the story of Jehoshaphat's prayer and its miraculous results.

Like Jones, Mississippi planter and Presbyterian minister Rev. Samuel Agnew drew on his persistent belief in the potential for divine intervention in the end of the war, even as he steeled himself for defeat with his Calvinist belief in providence. On April 17, 1865, still unaware of Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9 or Lincoln's assassination five days later, Agnew recorded in his diary, "Calamities seem to befall the Confederacy in every direction," yet, he reminded himself, "God reigns." On April 19, he recorded the first news of Appomattox: "This is the severest blow the Confederacy has received yet. … Humanly speaking – the Confederacy is dead." While he seemed to suggest that divine intervention might yet transform the outcome, Agnew began to reconcile himself with the war's end. He noted on April 22 that "the people at Church" discounted reports of Confederate defeat, even as they believed reports of Lincoln's assassination. "It is wonderful" Agnew reflected, "the multitude of lies which are circulated to disapate [*sic*] the depression caused by the fall of Lee and his army."[36]

The most pressing question for Agnew and those like him was "what will be done with the negroes…. The negroes themselves evidently think they are free, but they may be too hasty." He concluded by May 1865 that, "general opinion now is that slavery is dead but some still are incredulous because they do not want to believe it. Just like Lee's surrender it is an unpalatable truth, but in my opinion a few weeks will render it so certain that none will doubt it." Still, Agnew seemed to go about his business of preaching and planting as usual, and he complained that when he tried to make them plant tobacco, "the negroes… got so 'high' that they would not obey my orders," after

[36] Samuel Agnew was a minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, a small denomination closely related to Old School Presbyterianism. April 17, 1865 entry. April 19, 1865 entry. April 22, 1865 entry. Samuel Agnew Diary. Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi. The University of Mississippi hold photocopies of Agnew's diary. The original diary is held by the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Scanned and transcribed portions of the diary are available at http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/a/Agnew,Samuel_A.html
http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/agnew/menu.html. Subsequent references to the diary are noted as: [Date] entry, Samuel Agnew Diary, SHC.

which he concluded: "when 'freedom' comes they will find it very different from what they suppose," suggesting that six weeks after the end of the war, "freedom" as Agnew understood it had still not come. In the months after the war's end, Agnew recorded much news as well as rumor about what it would mean to begin to hire former slaves. At the same time, his church services appeared to shift in the wake of Confederate defeat. No longer did he or a fellow minister preach a separate sermon for slave congregants, perhaps because the services were now integrated, or more likely because fewer African American were present. While his congregations appeared to have few freed people in attendance, Agnew noted in September that "[t]his morning Diana Stitt (Colored) joined the Church." This entry marked the first time an African American church member appeared with both a first and last name, indicating that even as Agnew resisted allowing emancipation to transform labor arrangement on his plantation, he did recognize a transformation in church membership.[37]

As 1865 drew to a close, Agnew noted appreciatively the new laws passed by the Mississippi state legislature to restrict many of the liberties that freed people sought to claim. Mississippi's restrictive black codes, passed in the final months of 1865, were among the severest laws anywhere in the former Confederate states. They prohibited freed people from being allowed to rent, lease, or purchase land. They also forbade "any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto… [from] exercising the function of a minister of the Gospel without a license from some regularly organized church," suggesting that independent exhorters and preachers appeared a potential threat to whites' control.[38]

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[37] May 8, 1865 entry (first quote), May 16, 1865 entry (second quote), May 25, 1865 entry (third and fourth quotes), September 10, 1865 entry (fifth quote), Samuel Agnew Diary, SHC. Diana Stitt's last name was likely that of her former owner; a J. N. Stitt appeared in the September 15, 1865 entry. Previously, slaves who were baptized or admitted to church membership were identified by first name and by their master's name.

[38] *Laws of the State of Mississippi: Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature: Held in the City of Jackson, October, November and December 1865*, (Jackson, MS: J.J. Shannon, State Printer, 1866), 165. I have found no evidence of this restriction on preaching without a license being enforced. The 1868 Mississippi Constitution, which was passed under Congressional Reconstruction and guaranteed African American men's voting rights, promised full religious freedom.

Agnew's and his father's efforts to come to an agreement to hire their former slaves to work their land continued to fail, largely because freed people wanted to rent land and farm it rather than agree to the harsh contracts the Agnews offered. However, Agnew took comfort that "[t]he law of the State does not allow them to rent or lease land and they will find if they have not already discovered it that hiring is all they can do…. Our negroes have a fall, a tall fall, ahead of them in my humble opinion. They will learn that freedom and independence are different things."[39] Still, none of the Agnews' many former slaves proved willing to agree to the terms of their labor contracts. Unable to expect much income from his farm, Agnew worked as a schoolteacher for several years beginning in the spring of 1866.

Reconciling Confederate Defeat with Slavery's Biblical Sanction

With Confederate surrender and emancipation, strong challenges emerged to the theological defenses of slavery as a crucial part of biblical household order and the efforts to understand Confederate war effort as a latter-day struggle of God's people. Samuel Agnew's accounts of frustrated negotiations with his former slaves indicated that whatever sense of paternalistic obligation he might once have felt for his slaves had vanished. Methodist minister John G. Jones prided himself on having dissuaded his slaves from leaving his plantation during the war. He had warned them that the conditions in contraband camps would leave them more vulnerable to disease or hunger than they were as slaves. Jones took satisfaction that his success in this effort had saved

[39] December 15, 1865 entry, Samuel Agnew Diary, SHC. The latter two sentences of this statement are quoted in Eric Foner's *Reconstruction,* where Agnew is mentioned simply as a planter rather than a minister as well. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 134.

the lives of many who might have starved or died of illness had they left his protection for the promise of freedom.[40]

Still, even as former slaveholders sought to negotiate new relationships with their former slaves, many pressing theological questions remained for white southern Christians in the aftermath of Confederate collapse. How could they understand Confederate defeat given their belief that God was on the side of the Confederacy and their long defense of slavery as the labor system ordained by God? This was no easy question, and for bereaved and impoverished Confederates like Kate Foster, both of whose brothers had died in the war, the immediacy of grief and loss made such questions more urgent. Foster lamented her brothers' death and reiterated her hatred of Union troops, yet at the same time, she sought consolation in religious belief and in an elusive Christian resignation as she struggled to accept the finality of Confederate defeat. She wrote in July 1865 that she was trying to "teach my rebellious heart to be still and know it is God. I shall pray to be more like Christ to forgive as I wish to be forgiven. When my disappointment at our ill success is less fresh I may learn to say I am content that it is so and know God would not do it except for our own good." Even if Christian resignation eluded her in the moment, she drew on a language of biblical lament and the Lord's Prayer as she mourned the deaths of her brothers and the dissolution of the world she had known.[41]

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[40] Box 1, Vol. 1, John G. Jones Papers, Millsaps College. For more on disease in contraband camps, see Jim Downs, *Sick From Freedom*, 18-41.

[41] July 18, 1865 entry, Catherine (Kate) Foster Diary, MDAH. Foster paraphrased a verse from a psalm often cited as a model of trusting God in times of turmoil. The actual verse is: "Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10 (King James Version). Foster likely meant to invoke the whole of the psalm which began: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Psalm 46:1-3 (King James Version). The phrase "to forgive as I wish to be forgiven" referenced the Lord's Prayer, which Foster would have memorized as a child. See Matthew 6:9-13 (King James Version). For a deeply compelling reading of evangelical women's cultivation of Christian resignation in the face of grief, see Catherine Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*,

Kate Foster's dilemma was common throughout the former Confederate states.[42] In December 1865, both of the ministers in Fayette, Mississippi, refused to preach on the first national day of Thanksgiving after the war, as doing so would seem a capitulation to Union victory. In their absence, Methodist preacher John G. Jones volunteered his services. Through his thanksgiving sermon, Jones gave a model for the ways that white southerners would come to reconcile their support for slavery with their belief that a sovereign, omnipotent God had allowed the Confederacy to fail and slavery to end. In Jones' sermon, disappointed Confederates learned from the figures of the Old Testament that God's chosen people were not always victorious, nor were their trials necessarily their fault.

Jones selected a text from Psalm 119, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: That I might learn thy statutes." Jones began his sermon by explaining what he understood the category of affliction to mean. Afflictions, Jones instructed his congregants, could be "special punishments for special sins" but "generally, afflictions are sent or permitted as necessary chastisements intended to instruct, discipline and confirm us in a religious life…. This is evident from the fact that the very best people are often the greatest sufferers… such as Abraham, Jacob, and Job." Jones continued, "the general object of afflictions - either sent or permitted by Providence - is the ultimate good of the afflicted, or through them, the good of others." He drew on his personal experience of affliction: the loss of his young son several years before had enabled him to sympathize more deeply with his congregants who had also lost young children. In all these afflictions, Jones explained, white southerners "should neither despise [their] afflictions or faint under them." Instead, by following the example of Jacob who believed his favorite son Joseph to be dead or the example of Job who had

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137-169.

[42] Drew Faust has noted that many elite white women faced religious doubt and questions of theodicy after Confederate defeat. Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 179-195.

his every worst fear realized, the congregation should withstand all things with faith that God sent afflictions for their ultimate good. On this day of thanksgiving, people should give thanks for their afflictions.

Jones moved on to enumerate "the peculiar afflictions of the last five years," which began with the movement toward the "disolution [sic] of the Union." The human cost of the war came next as he mourned the afflictions of the "absence of children: husbands: fathers etc. in the army" and the "Loss of the flower of our country by sickness and bullets." The war also brought broader destruction in the "desolation of our country and homes and loss of our property." Jones included a wide ranging list of people who had become afflictions for southern whites, including all manner of "Traitors: Shirkers: jay hawkers: Schalawags [sic]: Carpet Baggers and Speculators." The final affliction that he listed received the longest description of any in his sermon outline: "Emancipation has caused the ruin of the white people and the death of thousands of negroes who have been decoyed away from comfortable homes to perish from poverty and disease about the large cities: The estimated deaths in and near Natchez were 16,675 in three years." Emancipation, Jones insisted, was an affliction on par with other losses of the war. Describing plantations as slaves' "comfortable homes," revealed Jones' ongoing views of slavery after emancipation. In the face of these six "peculiar afflictions," white southerners should cultivate in themselves "resignation and obedience," by which, Jones promised, they "should secure the benefits of all these afflictions, and then we may say in truth 'It is good for us that we have been afflicted' and instead of sorrow we will have cause of joy." Jones concluded his sermon with the exhortation: "Let us to day be thankful for the return of so many of our loved ones from the army, and for the peace and security we now enjoy."[43]

Jones was careful to avoid describing 'afflictions' as divine punishments. Instead, they were painful, often tragic events – like the death of Jones' young son – that God had permitted in order

[43] Box 2, John G. Jones Papers, Millsaps College.

to bring about personal spiritual growth or renewed religious focus. Through this thanksgiving sermon, Jones articulated a well-accepted understanding of "affliction," a term that appeared dozens of times in the King James Bible. Although he considered that God's punishment was one possible source of affliction, as in mark of Cain or the sudden death of Achan who touched the Ark of the Covenant, Jones insisted that most afflictions did not correlate directly to human sins. He avoided suggesting that the outcome of the war offered a judgment on the institution of slavery. What was innovative here was the way that he identified emancipation along with the Civil War's destruction under the umbrella of divine afflictions. Jones considered the death of his son, the human and economic cost of the Civil War, the Union and Republican authorities in power, and the emancipation of slaves all to be afflictions sent by God. By lamenting emancipation as an affliction that God allowed, even though it caused human grief and pain, Jones preserved the idea that God had ordained the institution of slavery. If emancipation was an affliction, then slavery had been divinely blessed.

Others made similar arguments. Another minister took the category of afflictions or chastisement to call the white South to greater religious commitment. In January 1866, the second postwar issue of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, a weekly newspaper published for the Mobile, Montgomery, Mississippi, and Louisiana Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, took up this argument.[44] The front-page article explained: "It is not true, as some people assert, that God has abandoned this country, North or South." Instead, the catastrophes of the Civil War showed, in part, God's punishment for religious failings. As evidence of decline in popular religion, the author cited a number of failings seen during the Civil War. He wrote: "Violence, carnage,

[44] In keeping with my sources, I use "Northern Methodist" interchangeably with "Methodist Episcopal Church," and "Southern Methodist" interchangeably with "Methodist Episcopal Church, South," to distinguish the two denominations formed by the 1844 split in the Methodist Episcopal Church over the issue of slavery.

robbery, oppression, fraud, sacrilege, licentiousness, [and] intemperance, have deluged our land as they have deluged the world before the flood." Here, the failings of personal or domestic life – sacrilege, licentiousness, and intemperance – appeared on par with the violence and carnage of war. While the author did not identify these failings as the ultimate cause of Confederate defeat, he listed them as sins equally deserving of divine judgment as the sins during the days of Noah and the great flood.[45] By turning inward to questions of personal morality and of "the domestic virtues," including the religious instruction of their children, white southerners, the author suggested, could return to questions of household order as before the war, albeit with slavery omitted. While this article in *The New Orleans Christian Advocate* was more willing than Rev. Jones to identify the cause of white southerners' afflictions, both of these pieces showed southern white Christians' framing Confederate defeat as an affliction from God for the ultimate good and the religious purification of the white South. By cultivating resignation to God's action and by focusing on personal piety and the religious practices, white southerners could embrace the lessons taught by Confederate defeat.

From Defeat to (Spiritual) Victory

As southern white Christians learned to accept Confederate defeat without questioning slavery's biblical sanction, they incorporated antebellum theological commitments to family and social order into their postwar theological frameworks. Doing so allowed them to claim moral and theological superiority to northern white Christians whom they accused of abandoning spiritual concerns for worldly political activism.[46] Within months of Confederate surrender, southern white Christians asserted defiantly that they had a more vital piety and more steadfast faith in God's word than their northern counterparts. Southern Protestants insisted that emancipation and Union victory

[45] Thomas O. Summers, "The Popular Religion," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 27, 1866.

[46] For the complementary side of these arguments, see Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin* (2012).

could not resolve the sectional divisions among Methodists, Baptists, or Presbyterians. Although slavery had been the final straw in these schisms, the division between northern and southern denominations ultimately rested on questions of the authority of scripture, the primacy of evangelism and conversion, and the spirituality of the church. Thus, reunion of the major denominations appeared impossible in the aftermath of war.

While individual slaveholders like Kate Foster, John Jones, and Samuel Agnew mostly abandoned the language of benevolent or paternalistic oversight of their former slaves by the end of the Civil War, southern denominations continued to express concern for freedpeople in keeping with their antebellum efforts to evangelize enslaved populations. "A great change has taken place… in the civil attitude of the negroes toward their former masters," the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* declared, but it denied "any necessity for a change in the relations of our colored members." Painting emancipation as a disaster forced upon former slaves, much as John Jones' sermon on southern afflictions had, it concluded that "the social and constitutional infirmities and disabilities of the race, and their signal unpreparedness for the situation in which, without their own procuring, they find themselves," demanded southern white missionary efforts much like those undertaken in the antebellum period. The challenge now lay in the fact that former slaveholders "no longer feel the intimate dependence and responsibility between themselves and the negroes which once they did," while the "disposition to drifting and instability" among freedpersons led them away from their former congregations. Nevertheless, southern Methodists ministers and laity retained an obligation to "do all they can in supplying the Gospel to the colored people… and maintaining the ordinances and organization of the church among them" despite the hardships of emancipation.[47]

[47] "Report on Mississippi Annual Conference Church South held in Lexington, MS, Nov. 1, 1865," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 20, 1866.; "Montgomery Conference: Report of Committee on the Relations of the Church to the Colored People," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 27, 1866.

The summer of 1866 saw two gruesome examples of mob violence against African Americans, events that would prove crucial in motivating Reconstruction legislation in Congress. In early May, a mob of white men in Memphis attacked the black neighborhood around Fort Pickering, a mustering place for several thousand African American troops. The mob burned houses, churches, and schools; killed dozens of African Americans; and raped several African American women. When news of the event reached Samuel Agnew a hundred miles away, two days after Union troops had restored order in Memphis, he commented with alarm that it "look[ed] like a war of the races." In late July in New Orleans, a white mob attacked African American protestors who were trying to advance Republican efforts to convene a state constitutional convention. This deadly confrontation, less than three months after the Memphis riot, prompted another Congressional inquiry, which would fuel calls for far reaching Reconstruction legislation.[48]

On the eve of Congressional Reconstruction, white southern Christians feared the collective power of the Radicals in Congress and northern denominations. They had reluctantly accepted Confederate defeat, without rejecting their earlier defenses of slavery. In so doing, they retained pre-war theological and organizational commitments, including continuities between their antebellum missions to slaves and their attitudes toward African Americans. These white Christians insisted that their own pure spirituality distinguished them from their northern counterparts, whose political activism led them astray. While they remained uncertain about their immediate political future, they expressed confidence that their personal and collective righteousness would eventually be vindicated.

[48] May 5, 1866 entry, Samuel Agnew Diary, SHC.

CHAPTER TWO

Christians and Citizens? : Religion, Civil Rights, and Reconstruction, 1867-1874

On a cool December morning in 1870, several dozen African American ministers and laymen along with a few white Southern Methodist bishops marched up the steps into the First Methodist Church in Jackson, Tennessee. An African American Methodist congregation regularly worshiped in the basement of the church, but on this morning, these African American men strode directly into the church's impressive sanctuary. These men gathered in the midst of Reconstruction for a unique purpose: to create a new African American Methodist denomination, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, from former members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America would be the only Protestant denomination formally established during Reconstruction. In the experiences that they brought with them as they entered the church, these men illustrated the rapidly evolving, complex relationships between race, religion, and citizenship in the Reconstruction South.[1]

For Rev. Isaac Lane, who had been born thirty-six years earlier as a slave on a plantation five miles north of town, walking through Jackson that weekday morning as an ordained Methodist minister and a delegate to the first General Conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America must have been a remarkable experience. As a twenty-year-old man in 1856, he had been "happily converted and set out to serve God," but local Southern Methodists denied him a

[1] Manuscript Journal of the General Conferences of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, 1870, 1. Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Archives, Memphis, TN. [Hereafter cited as: CME General Conference Minutes [Year], [page number(s)].; Othal Lakey, *The History of the CME Church (Revised)* (Memphis, TN: Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Publishing House, 1995). A note on terminology: I refer to the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America (after 1956, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church) as the CME Church.

preaching license because he was a slave and gave him the lesser "exhorter" license instead. He gained local prominence as an exhorter before and during the Civil War, even attracting white congregants. Lane had been brutally beaten by a white mob toward the end of the Civil War for "holding [a] prayer meeting" where "Negroes were praying to the Almighty to be set free." He had also had a church where he preached burned down by hostile whites. After emancipation, Lane received a Methodist license to preach, and continued to preach locally despite the difficulties of feeding his rapidly growing family, which eventually included twelve children. He had been elected a delegate several weeks prior by the Tennessee Annual Conference at Brownsville. Lane would go on to become a bishop in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in 1873 and would found a normal school in Jackson that later bore his name, Lane College. Isaac Lane had always lived within a few miles of this General Conference setting, so the transformations between being denied a preaching license as a slave in 1856 and being welcomed as a delegate in 1870 surely appeared particularly striking. The continued presence of white Methodist leaders, many of whom had been slaveholders, likely highlighted the changes wrought by emancipation and Reconstruction and demonstrated the ongoing power of white elites' paternalistic power. Yet, for this former slave who would eventually found and oversee a college in Jackson, walking into the First Methodist Church as a free man and U.S. citizen, and as a minister and elected delegate must have been a key moment.[2]

Far less familiar with the streets of Jackson was one of the elder delegates, Rev. Richard H. Vanderhorst, who had traveled from Georgia for the Conference. Vanderhorst, a fifty-seven year old former slave and skilled carpenter, had joined a Methodist church in 1833 in coastal South Carolina. Like Lane, Vanderhorst had received the limited exhorter license while a slave member of the church. His owners, two elderly unmarried sisters and active Methodists, apprenticed him to learn

[2] Isaac Lane, *Autobiography of Bishop Isaac Lane, LL.D. with a Short History of the C.M.E. Church in America and of Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1916), 47, 51. http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/lane/lane.html.

carpentry and later sent him to work in Charleston as a carpenter in the bustling port city. Through his work in Charleston, Vanderhorst had been able to save the two thousand dollars necessary to purchase his freedom and the house in which he had been living. He gained an informal education along the way, allowing him to read and write. He had been married and widowed before the Civil War, and his life as a free African American skilled craftsman in one of the largest southern cities would have exposed him to a more cosmopolitan life than that of West Tennessee native Isaac Lane. After the Civil War, Vanderhorst remarried and was ordained a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church before rejoining the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in advance of the formation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. By 1870, he was living with his family in Talbotton, Georgia when he made the trip to Jackson for the founding General Conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. Vanderhorst would be elected one of the first two bishops of the CME Church at the end of the General Conference, although he would die less than two years later before he had the chance to preside over the next General Conference.[3]

[3] Lane, *Autobiography*, 147-148. Lucius H. Holsey, A.H. Spencer, and Emanuel Asberry. *Sketch of the Life of Richard H. Vanderhorst: The Second Bishop.* Ed. by Randall A. Carter and John B. Cade (Jackson, TN: C.M.E. Publishing House, 1929). Held by Pitts Theological Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. This biographical sketch, written shortly after Vanderhorst's death by several CME ministers, was published after the death of Bishop Lucius Holsey in 1922, when the printed manuscript was found amid Holsey's papers. The pamphlet is particularly noteworthy for the ways that Vanderhorst appeared as a model youth and model Methodist minister. When his contemporaries eulogized him in the early years of the CME Church and when a later generation published the work, both groups emphasized Vanderhorst's exemplary Methodist piety in language that echoed biographical sketches of hundreds of other Methodist ministers and laypeople. Incorporating common Methodist tropes allowed CME leaders in 1872 and 1929 to insist on the Methodist purity of the early CME Church. For instance, when describing his early life, the text notes: "From the Godly example of pious parents and from the preaching of the Gospel, his heart was early affected and touched by the spirit of God, and was brought to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin." Accordingly, Vanderhorst "was a stranger to the ball room and all places of public amusement; he was never found on the dancing floor, or in the bar room; he was a strictly temperate man from his boyhood to his grave." (7) When he faced his final illness in 1872, "Brother Vanderhorst bore his affliction with great patience and Christian fortitude; he felt satisfied that his work on earth was at an end and he said that he was on board of the old ship (of Zion) and his time was fixed in God. He continued in faith until he heard the Master say 'Come up higher.' … [H]e

For two of the men who stepped into Jackson's First Methodist Church that morning, the complex intersections of the antebellum past and the uncertain future loomed even more prominently than for most. Rev. Charles McTyeire, like many other delegates, had been born a slave and had joined a Methodist church during slavery in part because his owners were Methodists. He had moved from Alabama to Tennessee in the first years after emancipation along with his mother Betsey and sister Fannie, and they took the last name of their former owners. In many ways, Charles McTyeire's experience paralleled that of most of the African American delegates present. However, unlike most other delegates attending the General Conference, Charles McTyeire faced his former slave owner, Bishop Holland N. McTyeire, as one of the white bishops overseeing the proceedings on behalf of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.[4]

One can only speculate how this former relationship shaped each McTyeire's experience of the General Conference. Perhaps Charles McTyeire's recognition by his peers and his former owner as a Methodist preacher and a duly elected delegate gave tangible confirmation of his independence and his identity as a free man and a minister. He had a voice and a vote, which his former owner had to recognize. Perhaps the presence of Holland McTyeire in the bishop's seat at the front of the church would have checked Rev. Charles McTyeire's comments or votes, making him wary of challenging his former owner. For Bishop McTyeire, the presence of his former slave as a voting member of a new Methodist denomination could have magnified the paternalism he might have shown all CME delegates. Alternatively, recognizing that a man whom he had previously owned as a

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gave up the ghost and went to reap his final reward laid up for him and all who prove faithful until death," (12). For Methodist conventions of life-writing including triptych of spiritual birth, pious life, and good death, see David N. Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 55-85.

[4] For this relationship between the two Reverends McTyeire: Jonathan J. Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire: Ecclesiastical and Educational Architect* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1955), 158.

slave now had an independent position within a new denomination could have pressed Holland McTyeire to recognize the autonomy of all the delegates and of the new Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. In whatever ways their former relationship as slave and slave owner shaped their meeting in Jackson, Charles McTyeire and Holland McTyeire embodied many of the challenges and promises of this new denomination, particularly for the African American delegates nearly all of whom had gained freedom only a few years earlier.[5]

As the handwritten minutes of the first CME General Conference demonstrate, this carefully orchestrated conference proved unlike anything that those present had experienced before, yet the group of thirty-five African American delegates and a handful of white leaders drew upon shared Methodist discipline and order for the week's proceedings. In this context, even debates over routine bureaucratic details served as important opportunities to articulate an independent church identity in the midst of Reconstruction uncertainties. The first morning opened with remarks by Bishop Robert Paine, who at age seventy-one was a veteran of decades of Methodist debates over slavery, sectionalism, and race. In the 1844 division of northern and southern Methodists over the issue of slavery, Paine had chaired the nine-member committee tasked with devising the Plan of Separation for the warring Methodist bodies.[6] Surely, the fact that he would oversee the founding of an independent African American denomination in the post-emancipation South would have

[5] I have not located any additional biographical material on Charles McTyeire, beyond the brief mention in Holland McTyeire's biography (above). A number of early CME leaders wrote that they were the sons of their former slaveholders and enslaved mothers. I have no evidence that this was the case for Charles McTyeire, only that Holland McTyeire's biography mentioned Charles' mother but said nothing about his father. Still, the possibility would lend a whole other set of meanings to this interaction at the General Conference. Additionally, I have found no evidence that any of the delegates to the 1870 General Conference of the CME Church had been born as a free man. While I think it is reasonable to assume that each of the delegates had been a slave, I hesitate to claim that this was the case, as there are many delegates about whom I have no biographical information.

[6] R. H. Rivers, *The Life of Robert Paine D.D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville, TN: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884), 77-80. On the Methodist schism, see Noll, *America's God*, 367-401. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America.*

amazed a younger Paine. After these first devotional exercises, each delegate heard his name called and one-by-one took his seat according to the regional annual conference that he represented.[7]

The choreography of the opening morning offered a visual display of the authority being transferred. The physical space occupied by these religious meetings indicated the constant negotiations taking place around questions of authority, decorum, and religious authenticity. Although the African American Methodist community had usually been relegated to the church basement for their worship services, the General Convention opened in the beautiful, spacious sanctuary of the First Methodist Church. Each clerical and lay delegate was presented to the assembled group and then invited to take his seat in the front part of the church in front of a bar "fixed on an imaginary line across the room from the side of the third window nearest the pulpit." In each of the following afternoon and morning sessions, African American clergy led the opening prayer and devotional exercises. The bishop's chair in the front of the sanctuary remained occupied by one of two white bishops, Robert Paine and Holland McTyeire, until they ordained two of conference's ministers as the first bishops of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America on the third and final day of the December 1870 convention. William Miles and Richard Vanderhorst had been elected the previous day by their peers to serve as the first bishops of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. The replacement of a white bishop by an African American bishop on the final day symbolized the independence of the new denomination, yet the white bishops did not leave the building even as they relinquished the symbolic position as chair. As they continued to look over the final proceedings, Bishops Paine and McTyeire received resolutions of thanks from the delegates, and after the close of the conference, Bishops Miles and Vanderhorst

[7] CME General Conference Minutes 1870, 1-3. These 1870 minutes were written by the Recording Secretary, W.F. Bolling, presumably a white Methodist observer, and were signed at the conclusion of the Conference by the MECS bishops, Robert Paine and Holland McTyeire, and by the new CME bishops, Richard Vanderhorst and William Miles. CME General Conference Minutes 1870, 23.

together with Bishops Paine and McTyeire signed the official minutes of the first ever General Conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

Amid these carefully orchestrated transfers of leadership to the new African American denomination's leaders and the ongoing presence of white Methodist leaders, the first leaders of the CME Church necessarily articulated appreciation for the support of white Southern Methodism in the antebellum past and in the present, and they issued only cautious statements of ecclesiastical independence or political ambition. Nevertheless, the delegates maintained their claims to citizenship and their capacity for self-determination in their new denominational status. As the new bishops concluded the conference, they led the delegates in passing a resolution of "thanks to the citizens of Jackson White and Colored for their hospitality," a gesture signifying both to local residents and to white Methodist observers that the new denomination affirmed its members' citizenship alongside that of whites.[8]

Like African American communities across the Mississippi River Valley, the first General Conference of the CME Church placed a high priority on the creation of schools for African American children and adults. Taking advantage of the close observation of white Southern Methodist leaders, the CME Church delegates called upon white Southern Methodists to lend their aid, as the largest denomination in the South, to prevent violence against teachers across the region. In the final formal report delivered before the white Southern Methodist bishops yielded the chair to the newly ordained CME bishops, CME delegates expressed "in view of the great need of Education among our People," their desire to "Respectfully solicit the sympathy respect and Protection of the White People of these Southern Lands toward all persons who may be engaged in Teaching our schools let them be white or Colored." This statement surely marked one of very few formal calls for white southern Christians to work to prevent violence or hostility toward both white and African

[8] CME General Conference Minutes 1870, 22.

American teachers of freed people. In this context, the close observation by white religious officials enabled African American delegates to issue a bold defense of their need for education to support their identities both as Christians and as citizens.[9]

Christians and Citizens

African American and white Christians in the Reconstruction-era Mississippi River Valley debated the nature of religious and political identity, particularly for former slaves, and they often juxtaposed Christian belonging and citizenship as they articulated competing visions of the relationship between these categories. The early leaders and members of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America articulated claims both to a strong Methodist identity and to an identity as United States' citizens in their founding General Conference in 1870. In the midst of the chaotic and often violent Reconstruction South, CME Church clergy and lay members, like many other African American Protestants, worked to claim an identity as both Christians and citizens. In doing so, they worked to develop broad definitions for both Christian identity and citizenship. Because white southerners appeared more willing to acknowledge African Americans as fellow Christians than as fellow U.S. citizens, African American Protestants worked to expand the category of Christian identity to create opportunities for building commonality with whites and to articulate justification for more expansive rights, such as access to education.

This chapter argues that questions of African Americans' rights and responsibilities within the newly restored Union lay at the heart of the conflicts that raged during Reconstruction, and that Protestant Christianity served to midwife these negotiations of power and status. From Congressional debates in Washington to the displays of racial terror by the newly formed Ku Klux Klan across rural southern areas, African American political and social status appeared deeply

[9] CME General Conference Minutes 1870, 22.

uncertain during these years, even as African American legislators and other government officials assumed seats in state and federal governments. Within these high stakes national debates, southern churches, ministers, and laypeople grappled with the concept of citizenship alongside Christian identity. African American and white Protestants generally regarded each other as fellow Christians, but not always or equally as fellow citizens.

Citizenship in the nineteenth-century United States had many competing meanings, and different citizens could have access to varying types or degrees of citizenship. During Reconstruction, these conflicts over citizenship were particularly dramatic. As historians have shown, individuals and groups have had braided experiences of citizenship, and gender, race, national origin, class, and other factors have profoundly conditioned experiences of citizenship. Women's citizenship, particularly married women's citizenship, remained tenuous through the nineteenth century. Additionally, race and slave status shaped mid-nineteenth-century access to and experience of citizenship. The U.S. Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) had ruled that African Americans, whether free or enslaved, were not citizens, but the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution affirmed the national citizenship of all persons born in the United States, including those born as slaves. Ratified on July 9, 1868, it forbade states from denying equal protection to all citizens, but it did not specify what citizenship or equal protection entailed.[10]

The rights and responsibilities of citizenship remained uncertain and contested throughout Reconstruction. Citizenship did not include the right to vote, as women's citizenship amply

[10] The term "braided" is Linda Kerber's. Linda K. Kerber, "The Meaning of Citizenship," *Journal of American History* 84:3 (1997): 833-854.; Nancy F. Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934," *American Historical Review* 103:5 (1998): 1440-1474. See also, Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 56-104.; Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).; Linda K. Kerber, "The Paradox of Women's Citizenship in the Early Republic: The Case of Martin v. Commonwealth, 1805," *American Historical Review* 97 (April 1992), 349-78.; Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

demonstrated. Still, opponents of African American men's voting rights feared that citizenship would give African Americans greater access to the right to vote in many states, particularly after the Fifteenth Amendment prohibited states from denying the right to vote on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Indeed, the former Confederate states' new state constitutions, written and ratified during Reconstruction under close federal supervision, expanded the franchise to include African American men and disfranchised many former Confederate soldiers, despite fierce opposition from many white critics across the nation.[11]

For Americans, citizenship was an uncertain category, one that had different meanings in law and custom. Even dictionary definitions of the term appeared ambiguous. Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* modified its definition of the word citizen in the midst of the Civil War to better reflect the changes in the word's customary usage. The dictionary's 1850 and 1853 editions had defined citizen as "In a *general sense*, a native or permanent resident in a city or country; as, the *citizens* of London or Philadelphia; the *citizens* of the United States" and "In *the United States*, a person, native or naturalized who has the privilege of exercising the elective franchise, or the qualifications which enable him to vote for rulers, and to purchase and hold real estate." In 1864, it dropped the general definition and updated the more specific definition to include an additional category of non-voting citizens, including women. Both the 1864 and 1866 editions defined citizen as "A person, native or naturalized, who has the privilege of voting for public officers, and who is qualified to fill offices in the gift of the people; also, any native born or naturalized person, of either sex, who is entitled to full protection in the exercise and enjoyment of the so-called private rights." Webster's changes represented the increasing interest in what citizenship entailed. Even before the Fourteenth Amendment had been passed by Congress or ratified by states, a more specific definition

[11] Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States."

of a non-voting citizen who was still entitled to "full protection" emerged in the nation's leading dictionary.[12]

During this period, Christian identity too was in flux. Protestant churches, the most important non-state actors in the antebellum South, became more central to the social, cultural, and political life of the region during Reconstruction.[13] The long history of Protestant efforts to separate religious and political equality faced an unparalleled set of challenges after emancipation. Beginning in the seventeenth century, Protestant Christianity had adapted to the major slave societies in North America and Atlantic world. All the major Protestant traditions had developed theological arguments that sought to include slaves and slaveholders in churches without challenging the institution of slavery.[14] These arguments gained new energy in the decades before the Civil War, and they centered on the premise that Christian conversion, identity, and salvation were available universally to all people and that Christian identity offered spiritual but not temporal equality. In other words, being a Christian promised access to heaven, but not to earthly freedom or political equality. The theological defense of slavery rested on the biblical sanction for household order, placing slavery's legitimacy next to the authority of husbands over wives. Since white southern

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[12] Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, MA: George and Charles Merriam, 1850 and 1853), 208.; Noah Webster, An *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Ed. by Chauncey A. Goodrich and Noah Porter (Cambridge, MA: G & C Merriam Publishers, 1864 and 1866), 234.

[13] Numerous historians of the antebellum South have noted that churches generally constituted the only or primary voluntary organizations in the antebellum South. Missionary societies, temperance groups, and the like did not develop in the South until the late nineteenth century. Among others, see Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.; Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).; Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean To Be Counted: White Women & Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[14] The significant history of Protestant Christianity's accommodation to and support of slavery from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries is addressed in the introduction to the dissertation. However, it is important in this chapter to note that political belonging and Christian belonging had a long history before emancipation introduced a new set of complications.

Protestants in the post-emancipation period did not abandon their antebellum insistence that the Bible justified slavery, most southern white churches proved deeply hostile to African American claims for equal citizenship and franchise.[15] During this period, white churches increasingly lent their support to Confederate memorial efforts or worked to oppose the work of the Freedmen's Bureau and other federal organizations.

Simultaneously, the first years of emancipation had demonstrated that African American Protestants wanted independent churches and denominations free from white oversight. African American communities rapidly built independent churches, a process that historians have identified as a central legacy of Reconstruction.[16] African American churches fostered the consolidation of a vital public sphere among freed persons by providing spaces apart from white-controlled spaces, even as Christian identity offered ways to build ties with white Protestant groups. By drawing upon longstanding ideas that Christian identity did not equal social or political equality, southern Protestants came to suggest a variety of possible interpretations of American citizenship.

African American Churches and Education

For freed people across the Mississippi River Valley, education and literacy proved central to efforts to claim rights as United States citizens and as Christians on equal footing with their white neighbors. Literacy promised a greater capacity for individuals' and communities' efforts to identify both as Christians capable of reading the Bible and as citizens able to engage productively in local

[15] This point is discussed at length in Chapter 1.

[16] W.E.B. Du Bois first noted this growth in African American churches after emancipation: W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made under the Direction of Atlanta University; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903* (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1903). Several historians have identified the creation of African American churches as a lasting result of Reconstruction. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction*.; Sharon Ann Holt, *Making Freedom Pay: North Carolina Freedpeople Working for Themselves, 1865-1900* (Athens: University of Georgia, 2000), 100-129.

and regional affairs. In some larger cities like Natchez, Memphis, or New Orleans, African Americans had formed independent churches by the Civil War, but in most towns and rural areas, freed people constructed churches rapidly in the years after the war. Even in African American communities where "[n]early every one is 'broke.'… many are without employment," and "[s]tarvation is staring many of the old and infirm in the face," communities rapidly built independent churches.[17]

Violence did not halt efforts to start schools. Memphis had witnessed a horrific riot in May 1866 where dozens of African Americans were killed by a white mob – a massacre that helped to motivate Congressional Reconstruction policies. Yet, by the next year, the Beale Street Colored Baptist Church had opened day, night, and Sabbath schools for African Americans. By 1870, there were African American schools in a number of churches, including Collins Chapel Methodist, a congregation that would become part of the new Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. The American Missionary Association helped to run a school for former slaves that would quickly become a normal school to train African American teachers.[18]

African American communities worked to control their church and school buildings even when they invited white teachers into them. One church and schoolhouse in the optimistically named railroad town of Enterprise, Mississippi, opened for classes when still "a half-finished church with out [sic] windows or means of warming." Despite "the ground covered with snow a foot and a half deep" in an unusually bitter January, the day and night schools remained full of "scholars [who] come in five miles from the plantations." The African American community around Enterprise

[17] Hattie E. Stryker to J.R. Shipherd, Natchez, Mississippi, February 4, 1868, AMA 72262. In addition to Foner (above), several historians of African American life after emancipation note the growth of churches, but do not investigate their significance in much detail. Frankel, *Freedom's Women*.; Holt, *Making Freedom Pay*, 100-129.

[18] L.L. Barwell to George Whipple, Memphis, Tennessee, December 25, 1867, AMA H9266. On the May 1866 riot in Memphis, see Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 23-85.

claimed ownership of the school and guided the school's teacher Miss Edmonia Highgate, a white woman from upstate New York. When Highgate began "using all [her] energy to get a chimney built at the church … [to] have a fire," the freed people who had constructed the church and school building explained "that in a few months a stove or windows [would] be useless" in the hot Mississippi climate. The free people of Enterprise might have welcomed Highgate's efforts to procure "Elementary Reading charts… and also some Scriptural Reading charts" from her northern sponsors, but they maintained their ownership of the church and school building and their control over the community's building priorities.[19]

A few miles outside of the state capital in Jackson, African Americans in Raymond, Mississippi, "own[ed] a large piece of land" and by 1868 were "doing every thing in their power to collect money enough to erect a building to be used as a church and school-house."[20] At the same time in Brookhaven, fifty miles away, freed people had constructed two church buildings, one Methodist and one Baptist, which held schools with a total of two hundred students. Children and adults thronged to their community's churches for day, night, and Sabbath schools although the "rough wooden buildings" had no stoves or fireplaces, "and the Baptist church ha[d] no windows, only shutters." On cold mornings, "the boys [would] build fires out of doors" and students, often "not comfortably clothed and some… bare-footed," would take turns going outside to warm themselves by the fire while others recited their lessons.[21]

Adults too attended school at night and on Sundays because they valued literacy as a crucial tie between freedom and self-determination. The school in Brookhaven Baptist Church counted two

[19] E[dmonia] G. Highgate to M.E. Strieby, Enterprise, Mississippi, January 30, 1868, AMA 72261. For more on Highgate, see Catalog of the American Missionary Association Archives, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

[20] H.C. Bullard to E.P. Smith, Raymond, Mississippi, January 23, 1868, AMA 72260.

[21] Anna M. Keen to J.R. Shipherd, Brookhaven, Mississippi, February 4, 1868, AMA 72263-72263A.

spectacled community elders among its older students. "One of them… a Baptist minister" came to the school "very anxious to learn" in order that he could "read a chapter from his testament every night." For this minister, literacy surely had broad implications for his congregants and his preaching, but he cited his desire for literacy in connection to his own personal devotional practices. Being able to read the Bible for himself stood as a goal that fed into his concerns for self-determination.[22] Similarly, another beginning student was "an old Aunty who [did] not know her letters yet." For this elderly woman, literacy would show that she was free, and she claimed that "if she could only read and write she would ask for nothing more in this world."[23]

In Camden, Arkansas, a small town along the Ouchita River, the African American community had constructed its own church building by the spring of 1868, a sturdy wood-frame building without any "windows, blinds, benches, etc." A northern missionary teacher, who was "deeply impressed with the importance of a sound educational reconstruction," arrived that year in the sleepy county seat that would not see a railroad for several more years. He built relationships with the local community and worked with them to organize Sabbath and day schools. The local African American community raised significant monetary and in-kind donations for the projects. One "energetic Freedman, an expert and tasteful worker in wood, has donated to the Sabbath School a fine book case and table" to hold the library that the missionary hoped northern supporters would donate to the enterprise. At the same time, "without any missionary aid or assistance," "the Freedmen ha[d] purchased an elegant site for a school house, at an expense of $175.00," an impressive amount for a struggling community. Federal officials from the Freedmen's Bureau gave

[22] Perhaps too, citing personal religious devotions (rather than broader collective political or congregational aims) could have been a strategic move when this Baptist minister spoke with a white teacher. It could also have been the rationale the teacher, Anna Keen, considered worth recording in her letter.

[23] Anna M. Keen to J.R. Shipherd, Brookhaven, Mississippi, February 4, 1868, AMA 72263-72263A

funds for "building a fine school house" on the lot. Camden's African American community's efforts to construct the church and purchase the school lot and their collaboration with government officials and northern missionaries demonstrated their capacity for self-determination. Shortly after Arkansas's 1868 Constitutional Convention, which produced a state constitution that recognized African Americans' citizenship, the Camden community's actions demonstrate that in this new era, they could push for federal and state governments to supply their community with needed infrastructure. The political actions to which African American had access extended beyond male franchise to include the construction of schools and the opportunity to build coalitions with government officials and benevolent voluntary organizations.[24]

Both the erection of church and school buildings and the pursuit of literacy testified to African Americans' pursuit of religious autonomy and social power. Even if the "old Aunty" in the Brookhaven school sought "only" the ability to read and write, that knowledge would have strong implications for her attempts to claim citizenship rights. In these newly constructed buildings, religious and educational work strengthened community bonds through which freed people could unite against the myriad challenges facing them. When northern whites were the teachers, African American and white voices competed for authority in these schools. One Sunday morning when two hundred children and adults gathered for a Sabbath school meeting, "one of the colored ministers… present" rose "to make the opening prayer." He invoked divine blessing on "the teachers who left their foreign homes and firesides, and come way down South to teach his people." In addition to being a strategic move sure to please the northern white teachers, the prayer also allowed the minister present to speak as a representative of "his people" and to pray on behalf of the entire group, including the white teachers who had invited him to open the school with prayer. As he

[24] James Scoville to Jacob Shipherd, Camden, Arkansas, May 21, 1868, AMA 4120. On the 1868 Arkansas Constitutional Convention and resulting state constitution, see Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 85-175.

concluded the prayer, he invoked his own sense of an afterlife shared by the two hundred freed people and their teachers when they "might all meet in heaven at last with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Abraham Lincoln." Adding Abraham Lincoln to the Hebrew Bible patriarchs placed him in a pantheon of sainted biblical leaders and showed the minister's belief that his people's struggles resonated with the challenges faced by God's chosen people in the past.[25]

Churches as Political Spaces

In addition to supporting African American literacy and self-determination, these churches furnished spaces for voter education and political debate. African American communities invited Republican politicians to deliver campaign speeches in newly built African American churches. The churches served as locations where literacy, religious self-determination, and franchise coalesced. Republican politicians often addressed African American voters there. They were the only structures built and controlled by African Americans, and white southerners were often hostile to these 'scalawag' or 'carpet bagger' politicians, denying them access to other venues. Republican politicians who relied upon African American votes sought out the opportunity to speak in these churches, thus lending their support to churches' function as political spaces.

Republican gubernatorial candidate and former Union general, Adelbert Ames spoke in African American churches during his 1873 campaign in Mississippi. He attributed religious and political significance to these encounters. Throughout the fall of 1873, Ames traversed the state with his team of white and African American politicians who would be elected to govern Mississippi at the high water mark of Reconstruction's Republican rule in the state. He sought the opportunity to speak in African American churches, and African American voters' support enabled Ames to win the election. In Tupelo, a town in the white-majority hill country in northeast Mississippi, he "took

[25] Anna M. Keen to J.R. Shipherd, Brookhaven, Mississippi, February 4, 1868, AMA 72263-72263A.

the floor in a colored Baptist church, and spoke" for more than two hours about his vision for Mississippi's political future before "the largest audience, both of whites and blacks, ever assembled at this place." Ames credited himself with great success in "getting hold of [his] hearers and chaining them for over two hours." He earned relatively few promises of white votes from the audience, but he reported that he was satisfied that he had at least convinced many not to vote for his conservative Republican opponent, the incumbent James Alcorn.[26]

In a town with a significant white majority, the willingness of Tupelo's white voters to gather with African Americans in their church perhaps signaled an unusual willingness on the part of the white community, mostly former "bitter Democrats," as Ames noted, to give begrudging recognition to African American citizenship rights. More likely however, the gathering demonstrated frustration with the incumbent 'scalawag' Governor Alcorn, a planter from the western delta part of the state, or represented curiosity about the traveling politicians who had come to town. Ames had a clear-eyed vision of the threats facing African Americans and the whites defending African Americans' rights in Tupelo, such as the local postmistress, Miss Davis. Davis, "a quiet, pleasant person," had previously taught a school for African Americans and had earned the reputation as "a radical …[with] considerable influence over the Negroes in the county." Because of this, many in the town grew "so hostile to her that they resorted to every means to get rid of her, even to trying to Ku Klux her," but when Davis met Ku Klux Klan members "with a pistol," they retreated, at least temporarily. Still, knowing how dangerous Tupelo might prove to the young Miss Davis, Ames noted that she shared "such material as John Brown was made of" including "an expression about the eye and mouth which indicates a spirit of, if not a heroine, a martyr." Even in a town where Ames was proud of his ability to capture the attention of an audience of African American and

[26] Adelbert Ames to Blanche Butler Ames, September 30, 1873, in *Chronicles from the Nineteenth Century: Family Letters of Blanche Butler and Adelbert Ames Married July 21st, 1870, vol. 1*. Blanche Butler Ames, comp., (Clinton, MA: Privately published, 1957), 583.

white voters who gathered in the African American Baptist church to listen to his stump speech, he recognized that martyrdom could be the cost for local residents who dared to defend African American rights or to advance Republican political views.[27]

Continuing along his campaign trip, Ames made further connections between African American voters, Klan violence, and independent African American churches within his political mission. Traveling to a nearby county and stopping in the "village" of Booneville, Ames spoke "to a crowded house" of white voters. The "room not being large enough for all," African Americans "were the ones to be crowded out," so that evening, "the colored people met in their church over the hills, a half mile away," where Ames reprised his speech for "some thirty or forty colored men and women." Ames recounted the evening as "a pleasant, yet a sad sight." Because the area had "been the scene of the Ku Klux outrages, the colored people have been deprived of almost every right."[28] By lamenting the region's growing white supremacist terror, Ames affirmed the rights that African Americans were denied and clearly tied the deprivation of these rights to Klan activity.[29]

Ames' appeal to an African American audience in an independent church building marked an important assertion of African American citizenship and franchise and a clear indication of their close ties to religious life. He insisted that his listeners agreed with this linkage because "their joy was apparent when they could meet away by themselves to hear the gospel preached by such speakers as are along with me." The good news of African American civil rights amounted to a political "gospel" in Ames' assessment of the evening. As he struggled to describe the scene, Ames' drew an analogy to the primitive purity of the first centuries of the Christian church, a vision of the past to which

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Adelbert Ames to Blanche Butler Ames, October 1, 1873, in *Chronicles from the Nineteenth Century*, Blanche Butler Ames, comp., 585.

[29] Among others, see Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*.; Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th-Century South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

American Protestants since the seventeenth-century Puritans had appealed as an ideal for religious and communal life. Ames reflected: "I imagine early Christians met and worshipped in the same manner -- there was a sentinel to guard our building." Overall, the meeting "was sad because it showed how much they had been oppressed, and how eager they were for light. …Yet" Ames acknowledged that his listeners "sat and cheered and laughed in turn, probably enjoying the meeting more than meetings are enjoyed even when the audience sit on velvet cushions."[30]

This newly-built African American church hosted Ames and his delegation of Radical Republicans, who appealed to African American men for their votes and depicted for both women and men a new political vision. Here women and men gathered together to listen to candidates who hoped to represent them in the state capital. This political meeting taking place outside of town with a watchful sentinel proved a place for political "light," even as "the stars shone through the cracks" in the "half built" church building, left unfinished because the community members "were so poor they could not complete the building." This gathering appeared all the more authentic for the poverty, earnestness, joy, and hope of the men and women seated there. Ames relished the opportunity to speak to them, even as he clearly distanced himself from the deprivations of those whose votes he sought. Still, Ames and the rest of his political ticket recognized that independent African American churches proved a crucial place for the defense of African American civil and political rights in a precarious Reconstruction environment.[31]

Northern White Missionaries and African American Citizenship

[30] Adelbert Ames to Blanche Butler Ames, October 1, 1873, in *Chronicles from the Nineteenth Century*, Blanche Butler Ames, comp., 585.

[31] *Ibid.*

When northern white missionaries advocated for African Americans' access to education and to civil and political rights, they connected Christian identity to African Americans' rights as citizens. While white southerners often viewed these missionary teachers as a uniformly radical political and religious threat, northern missionaries varied in their support for African Americans' civil and political rights. Some supported equal rights across racial lines, but others, especially with the American Missionary Association (AMA) worried that African Americans, in part because of their lax religious discipline, could not yet handle equal civil and political rights. The range of attitudes toward African American citizenship among these Christian workers helps to illumine the complicated interplay between Christian identity and citizenship.[32]

When they wrote to their northern supervisors of the "citizens" of the communities where they worked, AMA teachers typically meant the white citizens of that place, and they juxtaposed "the citizens" and "the freedmen" as competing groups.[33] An important exception to this trend came in the letters of Blanche Harris, one of a small handful of African American teachers employed by the American Missionary Association. She wrote the New York office lobbying for better treatment for herself and another African American teacher and warning that "some of the old citizens (Colored)" had become dismayed by her second-class treatment that white teachers had

[32] In this assessment, I am complicating somewhat the argument made by Joe Richardson that the AMA fought (at least through the early years of Reconstruction) for African Americans' full citizenship rights. While that may have been the view expressed in a number of central organizational statements and northern editorials in these years, the tone and substance of AMA figures in Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and West Tennessee suggests that most AMA teachers in this region did not necessarily support equal civil and political rights for African Americans. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction*, 20-22.

[33] Among others, see: S.G. Wright to George Whipple, Natchez, Mississippi, November 18, 1865, AMA 71841.; S.G. Wright to George Whipple, Natchez, Mississippi, March 28, 1865, AMA 71748.; J.P. Bardwell to M.E. Strieby, Natchez, Mississippi, November 4, 1865, AMA 71829-71830.; J.P. Bardwell to George Whipple, Grenada, Mississippi, April 28, 1866, AMA 72059-72060.

shown Harris. Because of the economic power of Natchez' African American citizens, Harris warned, the AMA should beware losing their support.[34]

AMA teachers often distinguished between the Christian identity that they sought to nurture in the African American students in their day, night, and Sabbath schools, and the radical advocacy for African Americans' political and civil rights, but these two identities – of Christians and of citizens with expansive rights– frequently intersected with one another. Sometimes, AMA officials considered lack of Christian piety, according to various rubrics of respectability and church decorum, an indication that African Americans remained unfit for full political participation. Even defenders of African American citizenship, such as Blanche Harris, expressed tremendous concern about the Christian identity of her students, sometimes more than she did about their citizenship. She wrote with great eagerness about the "deep seriousness" that had "settled over my whole school" and had prompted "many with streaming eyes" to ask "What shall I do to be saved." Harris also expressed gratitude for the religious feelings expressed "among the poor" whom she and other teachers had visited. They "found those, whom sickness had brought to need nearly all the necessaries of life,"

[34] Harris had attended Oberlin College, and she traveled to Mississippi in late 1865 with teachers including another African American woman, Miss Freeman. When they arrived in Mississippi, Palmer Litts, the white teacher in charge, explained that while Oberlin had been an integrated space, segregation was necessary for their Mississippi work. Harris objected to being told that she would "be obliged to room with two of the domestics." She explained that she had "consulted with some of the old citizens (Colored)" in her decision to refuse this second-class treatment. Warning the New York office that the AMA had "lost the confidence of the greater, and richer portion of the colored people here," Harris claimed her own rights as an equal teacher with her white colleagues and cautioned against losing the support of the African American citizens of Natchez. Had the AMA recognized African American teachers as equal to white teachers, the Natchez African American community "would have given… means enough to have built a much larger house" for the proposed school run by the AMA. By identifying African Americans in Natchez as "citizens" and pointing to their economic power, Harris made an effective argument for the benefit to the AMA of recognizing African American citizenship. Blanche Harris to George Whipple, Natchez, Mississippi, March 16, 1866, AMA 71971. For other perspectives on the conflict between Harris and her white AMA supervisors, see: J.P. Bardwell to George Whipple, Jackson, Mississippi, March 2, 1866, AMA 71961.; Palmer Litts to S.G. Wright, Natchez, Mississippi, March 7, 1866, AMA 71970.; J.P. Bardwell to George Whipple, Natchez, Mississippi, March 20, 1866, AMA 71992.

but "[a]ll with very few exceptions, had great faith in God." In a particularly outstanding example, "[o]ne woman who had been sick a year, remarked, 'when I can get no meat, nor bread I feast on Jesus[']s word, and get strength thereby.'" Harris insisted that the profound Christian faith of this poor woman merited the close consideration of all those whose greater material comfort could foster a less central spiritual life. For Harris, the intimate spiritual life that evangelical faith created and the fair treatment of African American citizens that she and they demanded united in her vision of her work for the AMA.[35]

Among those less willing to show connections between Christian identity and citizenship, criticizing African American churches' practices became a means of challenging African Americans' fitness for citizenship. If African Americans were not good Christians, how could they hope to be good citizens, some observers queried. Particularly by alleging that African American churches condoned improper sexual and family relationships, white critics could claim that African Americans needed white oversight both of their churches and of their political and cultural interests. Allen Hughes, an AMA teacher, wrote that "[w]e have got to lay a foundation of correct Christlike living among them, and then keep out all the Hobgoblin, sensational [one word illegible] doctrines from the structure of the church." While there were many churches near him in Jackson, Mississippi, among both white and African American communities, he insisted that "there is no membership with whom I could conscientiously commune" because of their improper doctrine and impious lives, a problem so severe that he did "not think [it] can be properly understood by one living in New York." Chief among his complaints against African American churches were concerns about sexual practices. Hughes alleged that "[p]olygamy and fornication are practiced with impunity in all their church organizations." Echoing concerns voiced by many white critics about the excesses of state spending in Reconstruction administrations, Hughes complained about African American churches,

[35] Blanche Harris to George Whipple, Natchez, Mississippi, February 28, 1867, AMA 72245-72246.

that "[c]orruption has seized control in them all." Like the corruption alleged in Reconstruction governments, the corruption that Hughes identified represented racialized concerns about the capacity of African Americans to run institutions and criticism for political or social action that Hughes may have considered improper work for a church to undertake.

Shortly after arriving to teach in Tugaloo, Mississippi, at the school that would become Tugaloo College, H.S. Beals lamented that among "both white and col[ored] people, here, the country seems bare of every moral sentiment" because people have no "apparent ambition, except to raise cotton. Cotten [sic] is more than King here, It is Lord." Beals' concerns about the impiety and intemperance of the people he met included both the African American and white inhabitants of the area, suggesting that the concerns about fitness for citizenship and for Christian piety did not always connect immediately onto racialized divisions. Beals thought "all the people had just awoke out of Rip Van Winkle's sleep, not of twenty five, but fifty years." Like Washington Irving's character, all of Tugaloo's residents were unprepared for citizenship in the reunited union and needed to be taught what citizenship in the United States entailed. With an urgent request for more funds and missionary efforts, Beals insisted that "Africa is scarcely more deplorably destitute, than this portion of Miss[issippi.]"[36] Because the AMA's educational work would have been competing for funds with many foreign missions organizations at the time, this comparison of Mississippi to Africa would have also added a particularly apt justification for the ongoing funding of AMA missionary work within the United States.[37]

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[36] H.S. Beals to E.P. Smith, Tugaloo, Mississippi, [n.d.] [late October] 1869, AMA 72336.

[37] Central to AMA concerns about southern white and African American capacity for self-government were fears about losing control over their schools. After an 1870 meeting with Gov. Alcorn, Edward P. Smith wrote to the AMA central office that he had learned that "the colored people in the Legislature are going to insist on … a University of *their own*." Smith lamented that "Gov. A's idea is … to put the management into their hands and appoint colored teachers and managers throughout." The AMA "should hardly care to be *connected* even with an institution under such management." While they could sell the Tugaloo College property to the state at a gain, Smith

Despite the hesitance of some white advocates for African American education, other white religious leaders offered strong defenses of African American citizenship – including equal civil and political rights – grounded in religious, historical, and political arguments. When Mississippi gained official re-admittance to the Union in February 1870, the state legislature declared a Day of General Thanksgiving. As part of the celebration that included speeches, prayers, and the singing of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," Rev. Albert C. McDonald, a Methodist Episcopal Church minister who had moved to Mississippi a few years before to organize schools for the MEC Freedman's Aid Society, rose to address Mississippi's Hall of Representatives.[38] His audience included recently elected African American legislators as part of the Republican controlled state government. McDonald's sermon, "Mississippi and Its Future: A Sermon for the Times," defended African Americans' equal civil and political rights on religious grounds, and the state printer published it at the request of African American legislators. McDonald celebrated national reunion, divinely inspired political change, and radical Republican politics. He began by calling upon "a devout and Christian people" to recognize "as good citizens… that the contest is now ended, and a lasting decision has been reached."[39]

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discouraged the idea because he thought it "not at all likely that the state effort to establish a Normal School and the higher grades of Education will be all successful under negro management." Instead, it would lead to "the aggrandizement of some Dinah & Sambo, until they have floundered through two or three years – perhaps five – experience of incompetency and then new foundations will be laid and a good institution set up," again under white control. Beyond expressing racist concerns about the unsuitability of African American self-government, Smith's fears showed his desire to preserve AMA power in a changing political situation. Edward P Smith to [?], Jackson, Mississippi, April 2, 1870, AMA 72358-60. All emphases original.

[38] For more on A.C. McDonald and his work founding Shaw University (later Rust College) in Holly Springs, Mississippi, see: Paula J. Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 28-29.

[39] A.C. McDonald, *"Mississippi and Its Future" A Sermon for the Times, Delivered on the Day of General Thanksgiving in the Hall of Representatives, April 21, 1870.* (Jackson, MS: Kimball, Raymond & Co., 1870). 1, 2. Held by Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi.

The Civil War and Reconstruction ensured "the investiture of citizen rights" for all regardless of race, so that former slaves were "clothed… with the full habiliments of American citizens."[40] Recent political reforms, especially the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, drew on sacred historical and biblical precedent. McDonald identified a free public educational system as "necessary to the maintenance of republican institutions" because "[c]ommon schools are the guaranty of liberty."[41] In doing so, McDonald claimed that the "Jewish law, representing the first government ever established, 'of the people, for the people, and by the people,' required that every child should be taught. It would not be amiss, if in this land, we should make the same requirement." Americans, McDonald insisted, should recognize God's ongoing action because the United States' "progress as a nation, has been peculiarly marked…[by] God who guided our pilgrim fathers over the wave crested billows of the wild Atlantic" and guided the Republic's formation.[42] If his hearers would "commit anew the precious deposit of our State government into the Divine hand," they could trust that "when [their] children's children are in their graves, our country will … furnish[] a model government for the nations of the world."[43]

The nation – and especially Mississippi - needed leaders of biblical proportion to enact political change. "Moses," McDonald explained "was such a leader. In advance of all his country men he felt the spirit of the exodus and entered on his mission" of emancipating the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Likewise, "David, the warrior-king, who raised his people from the humiliation of defeat to a lofty pinnacle of worldly power, … made Israel the glory of the earth." So too, the prophet Daniel remained "true to principle," which "led him within the lion's den, but exalted him

[40] Ibid., 10.

[41] Ibid., 8.

[42] Ibid 9, 13.

[43] Ibid,13, 12.

to a position second only to the king, and filled the land with Jehovah's praise." Mississippi's elected representatives held "the clear duty of the leaders of Mississippi …to be *men for the times*." Despite the state's many needs in 1870, "the demand more urgent than all others is MEN FOR THE TIMES. Mississippi needs such men; men that, brushing away the blinding mists of prejudice, have the candor to accept the inevitable, and" address "demands which cannot be evaded."[44]

McDonald's insistence on the need for "men for the times" did not merely represent his appeal to the all-male elected members of the legislature, but also his deeply gendered understanding of citizenship. Indeed, throughout his defense of African American civil and political rights, McDonald ignored women entirely. In his energetic hyperbole, McDonald claimed that "the right to cast a ballot and hold official positions" had been "secur[ed] to every American citizen, irrespective of race or color." He exulted that the "whole race has been lifted to the heights of manhood" by Constitutional Amendments that "enfranchise[d] four millions of people," ignoring the fact that only African American men, who numbered far fewer than four million, could hope to vote.[45]

Nevertheless, McDonald's appeal offered a strident defense of African American men's rights on religious and political grounds. Throughout his sermon, he called on white Mississippians to turn "from the disappointments of the irreversible past" rather than become "fossils of an age gone by."[46] For white Mississippians, becoming "men of the times" necessitated "the admittance, to all the rights of citizenship, of a race they had regarded as below the common level of manhood, …the according to them of equal rights with the proudest of their race… and, most difficult of all, the surrender of prejudices inwoven [sic] with their inmost life." McDonald boldly named racial prejudice as the core issue in debates over African American men's political rights, and he

[44] Ibid., 17, 19-20, 17. All emphases original.

[45] Ibid.,10

[46] Ibid., 4, 16.

challenged the "unreasoning and vindictive" nature of prejudice. "Prejudice," he argued, "poisoned Socrates; banished Aristides; crucified the Lord of glory, and robbed Peter of the honor he might have had, and which Paul won, of being the great apostle of the Gentiles." The same unthinking resistance to change and reform with which McDonald charged many white Mississippians had caused the crucifixion of Jesus and the resistance of the apostle Peter to the inclusion of non-Jewish followers of Jesus in the early Christian church.[47]

As he linked prejudice to many acts including the poisoning of Socrates and the crucifixion of Jesus, McDonald suggested that racial prejudice often led to violence, but that Christian transformation, such as the one that the apostle Peter eventually underwent, could eliminate this prejudice. This conversion away from racial prejudice was what Mississippi so desperately needed. McDonald claimed that recent political changes affirming African American citizenship represented irreversible commitments of both the state and the nation. Although this would soon prove naïve, it represented a strident defense of African American rights through a wide-ranging appeal to the Bible and the recent amendments to the U.S. Constitution. McDonald's defense of African American men's political and civil rights proved radical, even compared to other northern white educators.

White Southern Protestants' Challenges to African American Citizenship

White southern Protestants across the Mississippi River Valley varied widely along lines of class, politics, denominational affiliation, and more, yet most proved hostile to African Americans' claims for political and civil rights. They viewed African American churches and African Americans'

[47] Ibid., 15-16, 19. Here, McDonald referred to the conflict between Peter and Paul recorded in the New Testament in Galatians 2, an epistle attributed to Paul. McDonald used the reference to argue that Peter's prejudice against uncircumcised Greek Christians, a position on which Paul challenged him, represented a similar prejudice against fellow Christians and against changing social norms as white southerners' hostility to African Americans' full citizenship. McDonald viewed Peter's high value on Jewish law as "prejudice" against non-Jewish Christians.

identity as Christians with paternalism and suspicion. Many white southerners expressed surprise at African American churches' growth and African American Christians departure from white churches. Whites' slow, begrudging acceptance of African Americans as possible fellow Christians – but Christians who needed white oversight and guidance – became a model for viewing African American citizenship as, at best, a partial version of white citizenship. As African Americans developed stronger claims for citizenship as Christians, white Protestants developed their own arguments that attempted to deny African Americans' access to political and civil rights through religious and political strategies.

A few white southern Christians begrudgingly admitted African Americans citizenship, but distinguished citizenship from equal political or civil rights. When Episcopal Bishop William Greene reflected on his church's obligations to African Americans, whose "imposed freedom" caused them "poverty and suffering," he urged his fellow Episcopalians to "do what we can to make them useful citizens." Few white southerners would have identified African Americans as citizens, but Greene, as an Episcopal leader, represented the denomination favored by the wealthiest southerners. The economic power and class status of most Episcopalians, a smaller group than Presbyterians, Methodists, or Baptists, meant that African Americans' citizenship would not likely challenge their influence. Greene, who helped establish a school to train African American men as ministers, maintained his insistence on racial inequality when he warned that African Americans could easily "relaps[e] into the native barbarism and crime of the land from which their fathers came." Still, Greene's acknowledging African Americans as potential "useful citizens" stands out among white southern Christian attitudes.[48]

[48] "Bishop's Address," *Journal of the Forty-First Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Mississippi, Held in Grace Church, Canton, On the 29th and 30th Days of April, and 1st Day of May, 1868* (New Orleans, LA: L.R. Simmons & Co, 1868), 29. Episcopalians established a training school for African American future clergy, and one African American man, George Jackson, was ordained a

Reconstruction brought financial difficulty to white southerners, including many formerly wealthy landowners who owed high taxes. Rev. John Griffing Jones, an elder Methodist minister who had long held positions of influence across Mississippi, had owned several slaves and a large farm before the Civil War, but he turned to alternate sources of income during Reconstruction. In 1870, "Mr. Frank Marschalk the publisher of the Port Gibson Harold [*sic*] employed" him as coeditor of his paper" The work still allowed Jones to attend to "pulpit and pastoral duties," and he "enjoyed it very much." Particularly pleasing was his freedom to incorporate religious material: "I had the consent of the publisher, whose wife was the daughter of a Methodist preacher and a member of my charge, to give the Herald a religious cast when I saw proper to do it." When he wrote about religious topics for the *Port Gibson Herald*, Jones formulated a broader set of arguments about religious and historical subjects than he had done in his sermons, and this setting offered him opportunities to reflect on racial and religious subjects in the context of African American citizenship claims.[49]

Jones' newspaper work "led [him] to study some subjects thoroughly that perhaps [he] never would have studied had not [his] editorial duties required it." One such topic "was the seat and extent of the ancient Ethiopian empire so often alluded to in the old Testament." His article challenged the idea that "[m]any people have got to believe that Ethiopia had always been in Africa

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deacon in 1874. The ordination sermon preached by Mississippi Episcopal priest, William Kirtland Douglas, expounded on a vision of African Americans' identity as Christians and, to a limited extent, as citizens, or potential citizens. William K. Douglas, *Christian Priest Taken from Among Men: Sermon Preached in the Church of the Holy Comforter, Dry Grove, Miss., At the Ordination of Mr. George H. Jackson (Colored) to the Diaconate of the Protestant Episcopal Church, May 14th, 1874* (Vicksburg, MS: Rogers & Groome, 1874). Held by Mississippi State Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi. On George Jackson's religious leadership, see the letters to William Douglas from his wife Sarah and their children recounting Jackson's leading service during Douglas' absence: Box 1, Folders 8-9, MS. 01918, William Kirtland Douglas Papers, 1775-1898, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

[49] "A Brief Autobiography of John G. Jones, written for his children," Box 1, Vol. 2, John G. Jones papers, Millsaps College.

and that the present race of ignorant, savage, wooly headed negroes were the descendants of the ancient noble and warlike race of Ethiopians." Jones instead "demonstrated that ancient Ethiopia was exclusively in Asia, except a little colony planted by the Asiatic Ethiopians, at a late age of their empire on the Nile above Egypt which still bears the name." Jones' article argued for excluding people of African descent from biblical sacred history. For a minister who had helped his congregants accept emancipation without abandoning their earlier proslavery theology, the chance to investigate broader topics for a newspaper allowed Jones to marginalize African Americans further. Here, Jones attacked the roots that African Americans might claim for themselves in the Bible, and in doing so, he attacked African American identity both as Christians and as citizens by denying any linkages between African Americans and ancient Ethiopia. [50]

However, for other white southern Protestants, there were far more pressing social, cultural, and religious issues than concerns over African American citizenship. For some women, the challenges of their lives as mothers and widows during Reconstruction proved paramount. For instance, Octavia Otey, a land-owning widow who was hard pressed to pay her taxes or to manage her large farm, portrayed God as her heavenly father and male advocate for her challenging daily life. A Methodist minister in Louisiana, Cyrus Harrington, noted primarily his ongoing challenges with debt in letters to his family. He did have a number of African American congregants on his Methodist circuit, but rather than identifying racial or political concerns, he noted the conflicts he had with local Baptists over infant baptism to be the most challenging issue that he faced as a minister during this period.[51]

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[50] Ibid. After consulting Harvard University and American Antiquarian Society librarians, I have determined that the *Port Gibson Herald* is no longer extant. For how African Americans situated themselves in a sacred biblical history, see Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past.*

[51] Octavia Otey Diary, 1864-1888, MS. 1608, Wyche-Otey Papers, Subseries 3.2, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.; Willcox Family Papers, 1851-1919, Box 1, Folders 1-2, Rubenstein Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

Amid Reconstruction's political reforms, white southern women were already forming Confederate memorial organizations that quickly gained churches' support. In 1873, women leaders of the Southern Memorial Association of Washington County, Arkansas invited Rev. Fontaine Richard Earle, a Confederate veteran and Cumberland Presbyterian minister, to dedicate a new cemetery for fallen Confederates. Earle's address defended the sacred mission of the Confederacy and the religious duty to honor the Confederate dead. As Earle spoke, he praised the ladies of the Southern Memorial Association for showing "their undying love for those who are buried here." Earle reminded his audience that the Confederate soldiers were "patriots" who had been "honest in their purpose" "to protect their country's honor." When Earle valorized southern soldiers' virtue and avoided mentioning slavery, his address demonstrated many of the characteristics of Lost Cause nostalgia what would continue to develop in the decades to come.[52]

Through their understanding of the Christian duty of memorializing the Confederate war dead and their using religious claims to marginalize African American claims to sacred history, white Christians preserved their antebellum proslavery theological views after emancipation. Rebuilding denominational bureaucratic structures during Reconstruction gave broader institutional support to the preservation of these views. Proslavery theology rooted slavery within divinely ordained social hierarchies where the power of masters over slaves, of husbands over wives, and of parents over children lay at the foundation of an orderly, godly society. After the Civil War, white southern Protestants skillfully adapted this theology to maintain the sanctification of social hierarchy while begrudgingly admitting the end of slavery. The white Southern Methodists who oversaw the formation of the CME Church joined in this preservation of proslavery theology well after emancipation, and one could see their relationship to the new CME Church as an attempt to

[52] [June 1873] Dedication Sermon at Fayetteville Confederate Cemetery, MS. 68, Fontaine Richard Earle Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville. Hereafter, cited as "[Item], Fontaine Richard Earle Papers, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville."

recreate older models of paternalistic oversight of African Americans' religious lives. In 1874, nearly a decade after the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, the central governing body of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, then the single largest denomination in the South, again addressed the history of "the existence of slavery in the Southern States" and concluded that "the position of Southern Methodism on that subject was scriptural. Our opinions have undergone no change." With white Southern Methodists continuing to produce such statements, CME leaders developed subtle but effective methods for using white Southern Methodist paternalism to their advantage whenever possible by stating their claims for self-determination within recognizably Christian and Methodist cadences.[53]

Strategy, Compromise, and the CME Church

Southern whites' hostility toward African Americans' citizenship rights made African Americans' efforts to use Christian identity to assert their identity as citizens vitally important. White supremacist violence, Confederate memorial organizations, white southerners' opposition to freed people's schools, and growing Democratic challenges to Reconstruction political power threatened African Americans' tenuous grasp on civil and political rights. With equal rights a precarious goal, African Americans used their Christian identity to argue for access to schools, church buildings, printed materials, and independent religious organizations. This proved especially important in a region where major violent crises proved harbingers of Reconstruction's demise with Louisiana's 1873 Colfax Massacre, Arkansas's Brooks-Baxter War in 1874, and Mississippi's violent 1875 state election. Examining the early internal debates within the CME Church allows a closer

[53] Thomas O. Summers, Ed., *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, *Held in Louisville, Kentucky, May 1874* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1874), 542. This statement arose in the midst of a discussion of the northern Methodist Episcopal Church. As such it demonstrated the vitriol that existed between these Methodist denominations and the ongoing power of theological justifications for racial inequality.

reconsideration of how these various forms of identity operated. The CME Church held its founding General Conference in December 1870 in Jackson, Tennessee, under the supervision of white Southern Methodist bishops. Comprising formerly enslaved Methodists who had not already left the white-run denomination for independent African American churches, the CME Church occupied a unique space in the post-emancipation South. From its founding, the denomination faced criticism that it was dependent on white Southern Methodist patronage, but CME leaders' strategies allowed them unique access to white leaders and to educational, economic, and religious resources from white Methodists. While not without limitations, this strategy deserves attention because it suggests a new way to understand the intersections of religion and politics during Reconstruction and thereafter.[54]

The CME General Conference's 1870 call for white Southern Methodists to support teachers in African American schools demonstrated CME leaders' efforts to capitalize on white leaders presence at the CME Conference. While whites' presence, which continued in the General Conferences of 1873 and 1874, likely curtailed some discussions, it allowed CME Church leaders to deliver the messages that they wanted white audiences to hear. Thus this newly formed denomination's debates and discussions should be read, in part, as conversations intended for larger audiences. The early debates over bureaucratic details, such as the printing press's location or local

[54] The history of the CME Church has not generally been given much scholarly attention. Its history supports a growing historiographic trend in noting the conservative role that African American churches and clergy could occupy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, an argument advanced by Barbara Savage and others. Savage, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us.* Most CME histories have been written by ministers within the church: Charles Henry Phillips, *The History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America: Comprising Its Organization, Subsequent Development and Present Status.* (Jackson, TN: Publishing House of the C. M. E. Church, 1898).; Othal Lakey, *The History of the CME Church.*; Raymond R. Sommerville, *An Ex-Colored Church: Social Activism in the CME Church, 1870-1970* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004).; Alicia K. Jackson, "The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church and Their Struggle for Autonomy and Reform in the New South," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Mississippi, 2004).; Ore L. Spragin, Jr. *The History of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (1870-2009): Faithful to the Vision* (Lima, OH: Wyndham Hall Press, 2011).

members' contributions for clerical education, showed significant concern over the implications of each decision for a tumultuous political and social environment. Given the close observation of many white religious leaders, moments when CME Church leaders differed with Southern Methodists become all the more striking.

Such instances occurred from the first day of the 1870 General Conference when the question of the name of the new denomination came to the floor. White Southern Methodist leaders had suggested that the new denomination take the name Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to show its origins within the white-run Methodist Episcopal Church, South. However, the African American delegates adopted a different name, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, to connect to the original Methodist Episcopal Church in America, "the name first given to the Methodist Church by its Founder Mr. John Wesley." Rather than being part of a southern denomination, the African American delegates passed a resolution, with MECS Bishop Robert Paine as chair, that while in the past, "we regularly belonged to the South and now as we belong to the Colored race we simply Prefix our color to the name as we are in fact a part of the original Church and as old as any in America." By doing so, the delegates "thus claim for ourselves an antiquity running as far back as any other branch of the Methodist Family on this side of the Atlantic Ocean."[55]

Claiming direct connection to the eighteenth-century founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, offered a central way that competing Methodist groups asserted their authenticity amongst a growing field of distinct Methodist denominations. In the bitter disputes between the (northern) Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, both sides claimed that they were the only true followers of the legacy of John Wesley. Warring factions made these claims in the antebellum period around the divisive issue of slavery, where both wanted to cite

[55] CME General Conference Minutes 1870, 4-5.

Wesley's views to support their opposing views, but the appeals to Wesley's legacy continued to supply fodder for disagreements well after the Civil War. In addition to showing that they could compete with both major white Methodist denominations as authentic descendants of early Methodists, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America's claims of close ties to John Wesley also served to stake out its uniquely authentic position amid rivalries from the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Citing the broad support within the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the creation of a separate denomination for its African American members, the CME Church insisted that it was not schismatic, especially by comparison to the other African American denominations. Its slave past, too, remained central to the early articulations of the church's particular legacy and identity within the Reconstruction-era South. Identifying points of continuity between a slave past and a free present would likely have reassured the white Southern Methodist leaders. Nevertheless, claims that its members' experience as slaves had helped to cultivate a Christ-like humility would emerge more strongly in future years as competition increased with the AME and AME Zion Churches, both of which had origins in antebellum free black communities of the urban north.[56]

In these early articulations of its identity in the Reconstruction South, the CME Church carefully delimited the boundaries between the religious work of their church and external political issues. Stating overt political aims would have been exceptionally dangerous at this time, but finding ways to incorporate attention to economic and educational concerns within the ostensibly spiritual work of the denomination allowed CME Church leaders to address vital concerns within their communities. Arguments about the necessity of the "spirituality" of churches had gained particularly

[56] Laurie Maffly-Kipp has shown how different African American Methodist denominations claimed unique identities through distinct origin narratives. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past*, 93-98.

strong emphasis in the wake of antebellum denominational divisions over slavery.[57] Southern Methodists had emphasized this point as they accused their northern counterparts of abandoning religious issues in favor of radical republican political agendas. Bishop Robert Paine, the Southern Methodist bishop who most closely oversaw the 1870 founding General Conference, addressed the assembled delegated and "urged upon the Conference the vital importance of a pure ministry and a spiritual membership."[58] His audience would have understood, as Paine undoubtedly elaborated at length in his speech, that political activism was central among the dangers threatening the pure spirituality of the denomination.

During the 1873 General Conference, the first one convened by CME Church Bishop William Miles, debates about relatively mundane bureaucratic issues took on much greater importance as each issue appeared an opportunity to make a statement about the nature of this new denomination's mission and scope. One of the first debates centered on the location of the denomination's printing office where the *Christian Index* periodical as well as religious books could be published. In the debates, "Bishop Miles speaking at considerable length favored its continuation at Memphis" for a number of reasons, "[o]ne of the main points was that in Memphis the Colored people would be employed by the whites and money would be more plentiful with them by which their Church would be liberally supported while farther north it was the reverse the whites doing all their own work." Miles clearly articulated the economic potential of various organizational decisions for the struggling new church and its members. Because bureaucratic issues affected members' livelihoods, these issues mattered for the new denomination.

[57] April Holm, "A Kingdom Divided: Border Evangelicals in the Civil War Era, 1837-1894," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2010.

[58] CME General Conference Minutes 1870, 8.

In addition to the financial reasons for centering publishing efforts in Memphis, Bishop Miles warned against the idea of locating the denomination's publishing work in Nashville, the home of the white Southern Methodist publishing house. He explained forcefully that "removal to Nashville … would open a door for their enimies [*sic*] to attack them[;] those enimies who said they had no Church that they were under the supervision of the white people and could not stand alone."[59] Miles persuaded the delegates to "be separate and distinct and show that they could exist in themselves and exist successfully as a separate body and command respect putting their enimies to rout in their Charges. Let us have our own imprint on all our Publications[;] let them all be in our name."[60] Perhaps recognizing some dangers in his forceful declaration of independence from white southern Methodists, Miles quickly added: "We of course desire the help of our White brethren of the Church South and will cheerfully accept all their assistance." Nevertheless, he maintained the necessity of distinct publishing efforts as he rhetorically asked, "What would become of the literature of the Church North[,] the Church South and other separate bodies without their distinct Publishing houses worked in their own name." While Miles assured white onlookers that the CME Church would "cheerfully" receive their aid, he insisted that the CME Church demanded a comparable degree of independence to that of the two bitterly divided white-run Methodist denominations.

Miles' speech demonstrated that already by 1873 the CME Church had vocal critics who expressed concern over the ongoing relationship that the new denomination had with white Southern Methodists. During its early history and into the twentieth century, the CME Church

[59] CME General Conference Minutes 1873, 56.

[60] Ibid, 56-57.

would face such criticism.[61] Every decision in these early years, then, had significant implications for the religious, social, and political identity the denomination was crafting. After voting to accept Miles' argument for locating the publishing house in Memphis, the delegates next discussed raising funds to support the publication of these periodicals and books. Some objected to the initial proposal of a ten-cent annual assessment on each church member for this purpose and suggested that five cents per year would be more feasible. However, a significant group "advocated the assessment of ten cents" because "[i]t was just as easy to collect ten cents as a smaller amount" and if some could not contribute that amount, others could give more. The advocates for the higher assessment insisted: "It was like degrading their people to say they could not raise such an amount for the elevation of their race in intelligence and Education."[62] After this discussion, the ten-cent assessment passed on a vote of 21 to 17.[63]

From the ordination of African American bishops to debates over bureaucratic issues, the early history of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in American demonstrates the high stakes of debates over citizenship and Christian identity in the Reconstruction-era South. The early leaders of this denomination used the close oversight that white Southern Methodist officials gave to their early efforts to press the white leaders to defend the educational and religious interests of the new denominations. While necessarily stating their claims as citizens only obliquely, the early bishops and delegates of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church deployed their identity as fellow Christians

[61] Among others, Sara McAfee's history of CME women's work acknowledged that the denomination had long been seen as an "Uncle Tom" organization. Sara J. McAfee *History of the Woman's Missionary Society in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, Comprising Its Founders, Organizations, Pathfinders, Subsequent Developments and Present Status* (Phenix City, AL: Phenix City Herald, 1945), 35.

[62] CME General Conference Minutes 1873, 58.

[63] Ibid., 59

and fellow Methodists very strategically to garner the support for issues that mattered most to their members across the region.

Conclusion

Amidst the tumultuous changes of Congressional Reconstruction, African Americans in the Mississippi River Valley linked their identity as Christians to their demands as citizens for civil and political rights. These years saw the greatest federal support for African Americans' rights as citizens, yet these rights faced daily threats across the region. The strategies that African American Christians developed to defend their rights during these years by linking their identity as fellow Christians with southern whites to their identity as fellow citizens would remain vital through the violent upheavals that were to come in the mid-1870s.

CHAPTER THREE

White Supremacist "Redemption," Resistance, and Yellow Fever, 1874-1882

In the final years of Congressional Reconstruction, harbingers of violent political change appeared across the Mississippi River Valley. Federal forces withdrew from the region, and in its final years, the Grant Administration offered little support to African Americans. Earlier allies, such as northern white Protestant groups like the American Missionary Association, largely acquiesced to a new regime.[1] Economic pressures intensified after the 1873 depression. On Easter Sunday 1873, dozens of African American Republicans were killed in Louisiana's Colfax Massacre, and white Democrats, inspired by the event, formed paramilitary White Leagues the next year. Arkansas's contested 1874 gubernatorial race provoked armed skirmishes known as the Brooks-Baxter War and resulted in greater power for Democrats. The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi and the newly formed White League in Louisiana gathered strength. Most dramatic were the widespread racial violence and voter intimidation in advance of Mississippi's 1875 election. President Grant declined to send the troops that Mississippi Gov. Adelbert Ames requested, a signal denial of federal support for African American voters more than a year before the Hayes-Tilton compromise ended Reconstruction. As a result, white mobs and Ku Klux Klan members worked to keep African American voters from the polls or to force them to vote for Democratic candidates in a strategy that became known as the Mississippi Plan of 1875. The election resulted in overwhelming victories for Democrats in races across the state.

[1] During Reconstruction, the AMA had worked to hand off its primary schools to local officials and to concentrate on its normal schools and colleges. Eager to protect these colleges amid a changing political environment, AMA officials did not protest the Democratic political takeovers. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction*, 250-255.

On Sunday morning, November 7, 1875, only five days after the violent elections had wrested political power from a coalition of white and African American Republicans, Reverend John G. Jones took his place in the pulpit. For that morning's sermon, he explained, "my single purpose… after our late excitement in carrying our election [is] to call your attention to the obligation of praising God for our victory." A respected Methodist minister then in his early seventies, Jones prided himself on retaining his ability to preach with fervor for nearly an hour. On the first Sunday after the dramatic election, Jones turned his attention to outlining God's work in directing Democratic victory.[2]

That morning, Jones selected a longer biblical text than normal from which to preach, an entire psalm attributed to David. "Praise ye the LORD" Jones began, and then continued to read from Psalm 147:

> The LORD… healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds….
> The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground. …
> He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.
> The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.
> Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.
> For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.
> He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.[3]

Jones read the whole psalm, he explained, because it was "very applicable to our present condition." Ministers in Jones' day frequently cited Hebrew Bible texts as directly relevant to nineteenth-century lives, but this sermon connected the lives of white Mississippians in early November 1875 far more directly than most of his sermons attempted to do. The vast majority of Jones' hundreds of sermon outlines have no direct connection to the political or social events of his day. Instead, they focused on ubiquitous Protestant topics of personal piety, faithful living, and religious discipline. He might

[2] Box 2, John G. Jones Papers, Millsaps College. For more on his later years and his comments on matters such as the difficulty of riding his horse to preach, see "Autobiography," Box 1.

[3] Psalm 147: 1-3, 6, 10-14 (King James Version). Jones read the entire psalm.

have routinely referenced current events in the extemporaneous delivery of his sermons, but it was very rare for him to build an entire sermon around a political event or to reference such issues in his brief sermon outlines.

As he delivered this sermon, Jones explained the psalm's connection to the recent election. The psalmist's Zion mapped onto Mississippi, where God had cast down "the wicked" Republicans and lifted up "the meek," the white Democrats. Jones used his biblical text to assert that the outcome had ultimately rested on divine support for white Democrats as God's people. He employed the language of "the broken in heart" and "the meek" to paint white supremacist actors as political underdogs and humble servants of God and to obscure the ways that white Democrats had combined their economic, political, social, and religious influence to secure victory despite being an electoral minority. White southern Democrats, then, had an obligation to thank God for the outcome. For Jones and his congregation, the week's events were "our election" and "our victory," and that morning, "our excitement" was no doubt palpable in the room. In these opening remarks, Jones clearly identified himself and his audience as the white Mississippians who were overjoyed by the results of the week's election.[4]

Jones then narrated a glorious antebellum history of Mississippi with the tremendous power of white churches before "the disasters of the war," of which he highlighted financial loss, loss of slaves, and the deaths of soldiers. As he described these losses, he juxtaposed African Americans as "our productive property" and Confederate war dead as "our best citizens" to indicate his stark evaluation of the Civil War's results. The war had left the (white) South devastated, yet, in Jones' retelling of "disasters since the war," Reconstruction had proven nearly as destructive as the Civil War. Reconstruction policies, he lamented, had tried to disrupt churches' influence on society, and

[4] Box 2, John G. Jones, Papers, Millsaps College. For more on Jones' life and work during these years, see Box 1, Vol. 2. See Chapter 1 for Jones' 1865 sermon that linked emancipation with Civil War casualties as afflictions sent by God.

the misrule of the "negro and schalawag [sic] government" had thrown all white Mississippians into poverty. However, a new, hopeful day dawned for Mississippi and the rest of the South in the wake of Mississippi's recent elections. Acknowledging that the election's outcome had taken a year's planning on the part of white Mississippians and that preparations had intensified over the past six weeks, Jones enjoined his hearers to give thanks to God that "Carpet baggers" had been sent away and that local opposition, whether white or African American, had been "subdued completely."[5]

Jones insisted to his congregation that they "must acknowledge the hand of God and praise Him publicly" for bringing about this political coup. In his extensive extemporaneous remarks that remain lost to the historical record, Jones may have directly addressed the violence and racial terror enacted by the Ku Klux Klan and barefaced mobs. Alternatively, he could have given tacit approval by excluding mention of these tactics entirely. Whether he would have fully endorsed the violence or perhaps offered only moderate support for these questionable means to a great end, Jones clearly celebrated the electoral results they had produced. He concluded by urging his congregation that they "must show our obligations by holding on where unto we have attained," lest other forces, such as African American Mississippians or federal forces, push back against the Democratic victory that had been achieved that week.[6]

Rev. John Jones' sermon endorsed one of the most violent, unjust elections in U.S. history as part of a political transformation that its advocates called "Redemption." As white southerners took over state governments and local offices, they claimed to be "redeeming" the South from the unjust rule of African Americans, white Republicans, and northern interlopers. Dignifying their often violent political takeovers with this theological term imbued these efforts with a broader sense

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

of religious mission.[7] "Redemption" became the goal around which a large coalition of white southern Protestants united across class, denominational, and theological lines. This coalition did not erase such differences, but was an effort to unite around a common cause despite otherwise significant fissures. The "Redemption" of the South consisted of a platform committed to white supremacy, southern home rule, and Democratic politics, and it encouraged the expulsion or suppression of federal officials and white or African American Republicans. With its growing success, "Redemption" generated new religio-historical narratives that presented southern whites' past in a way that freed them of the culpability that African Americans and northern whites had attributed to them for slavery, secession, war, and ongoing oppression.

As white southerners heralded the order and calm that they saw in these political changes, they demonstrated the ways that their theological emphases on order and hierarchy, borrowed from proslavery religious arguments, continued to shape the region long after emancipation. Redemption's coalition of white actors followed the model of antebellum proslavery advocates. In debates over slavery, many southern white Christians who could never afford to own slaves supported proslavery theology as more biblically sound, less politically motivated, and more benevolent that northern antislavery claims. Defending slavery as a corollary to marriage, advocates celebrated the orderly hierarchy promised by white male heads of households whose benevolent control guided their wives and children as well as their slaves. Similarly in the mid-1870s, the promise of society again ordered around white male control of households and of politics appealed to many white supremacist activists. Many white southerners, whether wealthy civic leaders or dispossessed laborers, banded together against what appeared to them a very real threat of African American power, political corruption, and federal misrule. As had been the case with debates over

[7] The term "redemption" also has economic meanings related to redeeming a debt or redeeming a person from slavery.

slavery, white southerners' assertions of divine sanction for Redemption constituted far more than a veneer of religiosity painted onto violent, self-interested manipulations of political and social power. These religious arguments about order and proper religiosity undergirded the entire ideological and cultural creation of white supremacist power during this period.

In the chaotic environment of Reconstruction, African Americans had insisted upon their dual identities as citizens and as Christians to situate their claims for civil rights, franchise, access to education, and freedom from violence.[8] White supremacist Redeemers responded directly to these shared religious and political claims as they stormed local political processes in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and West Tennessee. In other words, African American communities had linked their religious and political identity so successfully that their opponents had to argue that African Americans proved inadequate and unworthy both as fellow Christians and as fellow citizens to effect African American disfranchisement. As they worked to undermine African Americans' political power and civil rights, white supremacists dismissed African American religion and politics as corrupt, self-interested, ignorant, and insincere. Many local newspapers ridiculed African American churches and especially their ministers as hyper-sexualized, self-aggrandizing, and uneducated. These arguments became a significant part of the justification of the violent intimidation and disfranchisement of African Americans that formed a central goal of Redemption.

The Bible proved a vital tool for self-proclaimed Redeemers who celebrated the changing political order as the will of God, brought about through human actors. In biblical narratives, white southerners found models of their labors for political change and crafted imagined pasts that rooted their tumultuous present and their future plans in a sacred history of divine guidance within political change. In its ethical teachings, they drew out morals from which they crafted codes of personal

[8] See Chapter 2.

discipline. The Bible offered an interpretive framework that was flexible enough to endorse the varied tactics of different white groups while rooting them in familiar stories.

African American communities could also use the Bible to craft their own narratives. Some used biblical narratives to denounce racial prejudice as sin. Following in the legacy of antebellum abolitionists, such as David Walker, these African American Christians denounced the white supremacist politics as hypocritical and unchristian. They published reports of racial violence in the pages of denomination newspapers, positioning these accounts alongside devotional texts to show that the work of advancing Christianity meant both personal religious discipline and broader social reform. Such efforts increasingly articulated a deeply gendered view of citizenship where African American men's "spiritual manhood" encouraged political and social independence and self-determination.[9] Defending African American women's virtue and their reproductive, domestic, and productive labor created ways to link African American women's religious practice to civic duties.

For other groups of African American Christians, emphasizing Christian piety led to less overt political activism. Following a long history of Protestant focus on inward, personal discipline rather than social engagement, these less politically active African American Christians, particularly in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, refocused their religious practice away from efforts to assert their rights as equal citizens, even rewriting their earlier history to do so. In the face of mounting violence and danger, they emphasized a non-political Christian identity that sought to assuage white concerns. In so doing, they earned whites' praise as more pious Christians than their politically ambitious counterparts. These conservative reactions among many African American Christians reveal the power and reach of white supremacist pressures in this period and the ways

[9] The phrase comes from an obituary for an African Methodist Episcopal Church minister who was praised for his work "to plant the seeds of spiritual manhood in the soil of the Mississippi Valley." Louisiana Conference, African Methodist Episcopal Church, "Appendices," *Minutes of the Eleventh Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.* (n.p.) January, 1876, 26. [Hereafter cited as Louisiana Annual Conference of the AME Church, 1876, pg].

that certain ubiquitous attributes of Christian practice could guide both white and African American Christians toward political withdrawal. Yet, they also show that ostensibly conservative attitudes toward politics could be another strategy of resisting white supremacist pressures.

At stake for these different communities of African American and white Christians were vital questions of what proper Christian practice should be. Their disparate answers had tremendous consequences for the political transformation of the lower Mississippi River Valley into a site of white supremacist Democratic control. Different communities articulated various ideas of the nature of sin and the proper relationship between Christians' personal religious discipline and social engagement. Did sin primarily manifest itself in failures of personal discipline – intemperance, non-marital sexual activity, and hyper-emotional worship styles – or in social structures such as slavery, racism, and loss of civil rights? Should Christians focus their moral energies on personal disciplines like observing the Sabbath and avoiding alcohol, gambling, and profanity, or did Christian ethical demands place more emphasis on social issues? The social issues around which Christians felt a religious duty to act ranged from the alleviation of violence and protection of civil rights to the outlawing of alcohol distribution and sales. As African American and white Christians gave a variety of answers to these questions, they articulated rival conceptions of Christian virtue and contrasting narratives of sin. Their opposing narratives of their pasts created different ideas of the present and different goals for their futures. In the answers that they gave to these questions, questions like those with which many generations of Protestants had also grappled, they articulated contrasting moral and activist agendas in the midst of the volatile period of "Redemption."

Religious arguments powerfully shaped all sides of the white supremacist political takeover that swept through the Mississippi River Valley beginning in the mid-1870s. But religion never amounted merely to a political agenda, neither for champions of Redemption like Rev. John Jones nor for the most vocal African American defenders of civil rights and political equality. Ministers

performed weddings, baptisms, and funerals that marked life cycle events for individuals, families, and communities. African American and white Christians alike read their Bibles, taught children in Sunday Schools, and worked for the conversion of those outside their churches. They drew individually and collectively on Christian consolation in the face of tragedies such as the deaths of mothers in childbirth or of young children. Racial, political, theological, and class differences shaped these experiences, to be sure, and competing groups argued that their opponents' religious practice focused overly on political goals rather than on "true religion," however defined. What types of activism counted as political and what was simply religious work varied as well, with white Christians quick to criticize churches that they thought valued political activism over personal morality.

This chapter engages first with white southern Christians' endorsements of Redemption and then with African American Christians' responses. White and African American religious voices are treated separately here because each set of voices largely spoke to its own audiences, rather than across racial lines; indeed, part of white southern Christians' vision of Redemption lay in whites' paternalistic oversight of African Americans whose consent appeared irrelevant. The first section of this chapter demonstrates the ways that white ministers and their churches endorsed biblical interpretations that sanctified "Redemption" as the work of God. The next section turns to white voices in less religious settings, namely local newspapers, to show that when white supremacists wanted to disparage African American claims to citizenship, they attacked African American churches and ministers as improperly religious in deeply gendered and sexualized criticisms. The third section introduces a variety of African American religious responses to the tumult of these years, from using religious periodicals to draw attention to white supremacist violence, to arguing that racial prejudice amount to sin that Christians should work to eradicate. Other African American figures, examined in the fourth section, drew upon their Christian identity as a strategy to withdraw from visible political positions and to pursue a version of Christian piety that was less threatening to

whites. The final section of the chapter examines the devastating 1878 yellow fever epidemic to show the ways that white and African Americans deployed the strategies that they had developed through this period of Redemption to negotiate the yellow fever crisis.

White Churches' Redeeming a New Political Order

As political and religious support for "Redemption" policies began to coalesce, white leadership of African American churches and politics appeared as an uncontroversial statement of the natural order of society. Just after the 1875 elections, an article in an Arkansas paper titled "The Church and the Negro" presented white churches as taking up the mantle of white oversight of African Americans from federal Reconstruction officials who had "lost interest" in African Americans. The article completely ignored African American communities' independence or efforts at self-determination as it praised the new social order. If white churches could control the religious and political content of African American churches, the article explained, these churches could yield new types of African American citizens: a sober, industrious man completely uninterested in political activity and his virtuous, supportive wife. African American political activism appeared as a temporary project of northern white Republican politicians, rather than an organic, community-centered process among African Americans. The article presented white control as assumed; African Americans' need to consent to such a project was immaterial to the goals outlined. The article suggested the ways that white Christians chose to normalize white supremacist power as redemption from northern white Republicans. Presenting northern whites as their opposition, southern white Christians chose to ignore African Americans, except as the object of white paternalistic oversight.[10]

Even more pronounced in their endorsement of white southern political Redemption as a divinely sanctioned transformation were sermons like the one from Methodist Rev. John Jones with

[10] "The Church and the Negro," *Little Rock Daily Gazette*, November 24, 1875.

which this chapter opened. By insisting on divine support for the changes, and by prioritizing the maintenance of order and calm, these voices articulated strong defenses of the new political order. Southern white churches and ministers did not need to offer vociferous defenses of the racial violence in their midst; praising the political outcome while ignoring the means by which it was achieved gave a tacit endorsement of these violent tactics. The connections that whites articulated between contemporary political changes and biblical narratives argued that God was on the side of southern white Democrats, who were a latter-day chosen people.

Sermons much like Rev. John Jones' were likely preached across Mississippi in white churches that Sunday, whether Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian. While the theological differences between these denominations would have shaped the extent to which preachers mapped contemporary events directly onto biblical texts, white Protestant churches largely lent their support to the political leadership of white southern Democrats. Presbyterian minister Samuel Agnew had significant theological difference with Methodists like John Jones, who were not Calvinists, and Agnew's evenings were often filled with reading Calvinist materials, some of which directly attacked Methodist theology. Nevertheless, both men, as former slaveholders and Mississippi Protestant ministers, lent their support to the Democratic takeover of the state. As a staunch Calvinist, Presbyterian minister Samuel Agnew's sermons probably appealed to a mysterious divine Providence without directly claiming, as Jones had, that God had directly orchestrated the 1875 election. Still Agnew endorsed the changing balance of political power.[11] In his diary, he noted a week before the election that he joined a mass meeting in Guntown, Mississippi for Democratic supporters who were preparing strategies for election day. Agnew noted approvingly that the town's merchants collectively decided, "not to credit any black or white man who votes the Radical

[11] No record is left of Agnew's weekly sermons, except occasional comments that he made in his daily diary entries. Samuel Agnew Diary, SHC. For more on this manuscript source including links to digitized portions, see Chapter 1.

[Republican] ticket." Such economic threats contributed to the decisions by local Republicans not to vote on November 2, and Agnew welcomed the outcome, when he noted that the election's results promised, "Mississippi will once more have a decent Legislature."[12]

Processes similar to Mississippi's 1875 election were underway in neighboring states where white ministers and their congregations also constructed theological support for "Redemption" and African American disfranchisement. In Arkansas, conflict in the spring of 1874 between rival Republicans both claiming to be the rightful governor became known as the Brooks-Baxter War, although it was nearly bloodless. With the victory of Elisha Baxter, a Republican who had earned the support of most of the state's Democratic voters, the path toward Democratic control of the state had been set, and a Democratic governor would be elected in the next election. In this setting, Confederate veteran and Cumberland Presbyterian minister, Rev. Fontaine Richard Earle preached a sermon of thanksgiving for the political changes underway.[13] He selected a verse from Proverbs for his text, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." From this text, Earle explained to his congregation that God's power extended over all political factions and nations, from time immemorial to the present. Emphasizing God's sovereignty more than Methodist Rev. John Jones had done, Earle maintained the necessity to give

[12] October 28, 1875 entry, November 7, 1875 entry. Samuel Agnew Diary, SHC.

[13] The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was a distinct Presbyterian denomination with origins in early nineteenth-century revivals in the Cumberland Plateau region of Tennessee and Kentucky. It was distinguished from other Presbyterian denominations by its lower educational requirements for clergy, which enabled the church to spread more quickly into newer communities in the Trans-Mississippi West. Earle, however, did earn a college degree from Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee before he moved to Arkansas in 1859. See Finding Aid, Fontaine Richard Earle Papers, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville.

thanks to God for the political changes, even though it was "impossible for us to say how much is due to the direct agency of the Lord and how much to man."[14]

As Earle enumerated the challenges of Reconstruction which had just ended, he encouraged his listeners to "give thanks to-day" because Republican "manipulators" had been vanquished "like Haman." Linking federal officials and Republican politicians to the biblical figure of Haman, an evil man who had conspired to kill all of the exiled Jewish people according to the Hebrew Bible book of Esther, was a powerful reference that would have hardly needed explanation to his congregation. Yet, Earle surely dwelled at length on the story of Haman, an advisor to King Ahasuerus, who plotted to kill all the Jews in Ahasuerus' enormous Persian kingdom because they refused to bow to Haman. King Ahasuerus had selected the Jewish girl Esther as his wife without knowing that she was Jewish, but when Haman plotted to kill all Jews, Esther's uncle Mordecai urged her to action. Esther's bold and strategic appeal to her husband the king ended with Haman's execution on the gallows he had prepared for the Jews' execution. The story concludes with Esther's uncle Mordecai's elevation to the place of honor that Haman had once occupied, and Earle likely insisted that the complete reversal of power in the story endorsed a parallel overthrow of Reconstruction alliances of white Republicans, federal officials, and African American voters in favor of southern white Democrats' political control.

This well-known story offered Earle the opportunity to link federal officials, Republican politicians, and African American voters to the deposed and executed biblical villain Haman. Comparing African American voters to Haman could imply that, like Haman, they had had

[14] Proverbs 29:2 (King James Version). As is common in these sources, Earle wrote out a brief, one page outline for a sermon that likely lasted for almost an hour. This sermon outline is undated, but because it references "the last eight years" of Reconstruction and Republican politics, it seems reasonable to assume that it was preached at some point in 1874, when the Brooks-Baxter War, the passage and ratification of a new Arkansas State Constitution, and the election of a Democratic governor took place. Box 1, Folder 9, Series 2, Fontaine Richard Earle Papers, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville.

murderous intentions against God's chosen people. Although Haman had been second to the king, a divinely inspired political transformation led to his execution – an outcome that could have chilling implications for African American and white Republicans in mid-1870s Arkansas. These biblical types and narratives would have constituted common knowledge for Earle's audience and for similar communities across the region. Through this comparison, Earle could insist that white Democrats in the South followed in the legacy of the exiled Hebrew people. Linking these almost universally known stories to contemporary events allowed ministers like Fontaine Richard Earle or John G. Jones to connect the events of the mid-1870s to the sacred narrative that undergirded the whole of their religious, intellectual, and ideological world. Seeing themselves as the modern-day Hebrew people who had nearly escaped the murderous intentions of their oppressors, white southerners who listened to Earle's sermon or to similar sermons preached across the region would have felt emboldened that not only was their political "Redemption" justified, it represented a continuing legacy of the courageous Queen Esther and her pious, steadfast, and successful uncle Mordecai.

Attacking African American Christianity & Citizenship

Alongside arguments that white Democrats' strivings amounted to a divinely sanctioned transformation of society, white southerners claimed that African American Christianity was impious, undisciplined, and uneducated. Recognizing the close links between African American Christianity and citizenship, these attacks on African American Christianity served as attacks on African American citizenship. Such claims were not merely the province of ministers or church publications, but appeared from many white southern voices. Indeed, many of the most aggressive attacks on African American churches and clergy as selfish, ignorant, immoral, and sexually unrestrained came from local Democratic newspapers. White supremacists' attacks on African American Christianity revealed the centrality of proper sexual morality to white Redeemers' concepts

of proper religious practice and citizenship. In order to discredit African American franchise and equal citizenship, Democratic newspapers attacked Africans American Christianity and its allegedly deficient sexuality morality. As such, these attacks demonstrated the centrality of sexuality to religious practice and of Christian practice to African American claims of equal citizenship.

Sexual morality, namely a commitment to women's chastity and to marital fidelity, had a long history in Protestant ethics, but in the mid-nineteenth century, sexuality became a particular focus of defenders and opponents of slavery and of activists after emancipation. The divine sanction of a household headed by a married man who controlled the labor of his wife and children became a model for justifications of slavery, as a further extension of the white male household head's authority. The inability of slaves to marry and the power of slavery to sever the affective bonds of partners or of parents and their children spurred a generation of antislavery activism, particularly among northern Christians. In all of these arguments, marriage and the gender hierarchy at its core emerged as the best model for social organization, whether for proslavery insistence that slavery was like marriage or for antislavery challenges that slavery prohibited slaves' marriages.

In the wake of emancipation, marriage emerged as both a policy objective and a religious imperative.[15] By the mid-1870s, white Christians who advocated for Redemption situated pre-marital chastity and sexual fidelity within marriage at the center of the personal discipline that Christianity and civil belonging demanded. Such sexual morality became a prerequisite for proper Christian practice; without it, no individual or church community could claim to be faithful Christians. The fact that advocates of Redemption writing outside of religious periodicals continued to prioritize

[15] Historians of emancipation and Reconstruction have noted the priority of marriage in Freedmen's Bureau policies, including blanket declarations that all cohabiting couples be declared legally married, a move that tried to address African Americans' lack of access to marriage under slavery. The Freedmen's Bureau, as well as local and state governments, sought households headed by a man who controlled the labor of his wife and children. Cott, *Public Vows,* 77-104.; Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms*, 117-134.; Frankel, *Freedom's Women*, 79-122.; Susan O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 193-198.

issues of sexuality shows the power that sexuality wielded in determining religious fitness and fitness for citizenship.

Criticizing African American churches as superstitious, licentious, and ignorant laid the groundwork for allegations that churches were little more than Republican recruiting grounds. This emphasis on sexual practices claimed that African American families, who had, under slavery, lacked all access to marriage, demonstrated pervasive sexual license and lack of marital fidelity. White critics focused on sexual behavior as a key marker of African Americans' lack of fitness as equal citizens or equal Christians. Discrediting African American ministers, laypeople, and whole congregations through allegations of sexual impropriety became a common theme in local white-run newspapers. In Mabelville, Arkansas a few miles from Little Rock, "a colored preacher" grew "jealous of a young man in his congregation who was sharing favors" with a young woman whom the minister "conceived to be his own property." The minister allegedly lured his rival to join him on a town green after dark and fatally stabbed him in the chest. He escaped local law enforcement by drawing a shotgun on the constable and then leaving town. Such stories emphasized that African American ministers sought self-aggrandizement over any religious motivations and that their unrestrained sexual ambitions could have disastrous – even murderous – results. This account omitted any account of the actions of the woman in question, suggesting that unlike idealized white women, African American women lacked the virtue and chastity that might keep them from becoming entwined in such relationships.[16]

Similar strategies emerged in the months leading up to the November election, when white southerners suggested that African American fitness for the ballot appeared doubtful in light of inadequate religious practice. These white supremacist arguments, published by local newspapers,

[16] "The Knife: How a Colored Preacher Used that Style of Weapon near Mabelvale," *Little Rock Daily Gazette*, November 21, 1876.

claimed that religious fitness, including conformity to certain sexual norms, necessarily preceded African Americans' fitness for the franchise. "That the negro has a ballot in his hand is a small achievement," the article pronounced, "unless he can have integrity in his character." Even if African Americans were admittedly "religious, they are not moral." The claim revealed the priority of personal discipline and individual morality to white Redeemers' views of Christian practice. The alleged lack of sexual morality – including legal marriage with a husband's control over his wife – meant that "the religion of the black race" proved merely "a religion, after a sort" whose adherents were frequently "swept headlong into sensuous sin by their emotions." "The colored churches" proved "but little better than caricatures" of true piety and religious discipline. Far more important than the ballot, African Americans needed "the Gospel of chastity, honesty, and industry," with an emphasis on "the seventh commandment" which forbade adultery. Eschewing "mere emotional piety," African American churches, the article concluded, needed to focus on personal moral discipline rather than political ambition, and "the Gospel [would] be made more to [them] than republicanism." In presuming that "republicanism" amounted to the full "Gospel" of African American churches, this argument insisted that the inadequacy of African American religion amply demonstrated the reasons that African Americans did not deserve the right to vote.[17]

A few months after the 1875 elections, an article printed in multiple Mississippi newspapers described a recent Republican meeting in an African American church with a sarcastic merging of political and religious salvation. Nearly sixty people had come to a rural church to hear Republican speakers, and the "expectant darkeys, … had expected to receive the bread of Republican life from these holy men." However, because the two most prominent Republican speakers did not appear, the crowd of several dozen African Americans "went home hungry and disappointed" after not receiving this political communion. Instead, a local judge and deputy sheriff spoke briefly, and the

[17] "The Negro at the South," *Hinds County Gazette*, June 9, 1875.

attendees received only the judge's "sacerdotal benediction." In this newspaper article, the religious substance of the church had shrunk to "the bread of Republican life," and African American communicants could not rely on even this diminished matter. By subsuming African American religious life within a waning trust in Republican politics, white community leaders dismissed African Americans' ability to be either active Christians or active citizens.[18]

To further discredit African American church figures in such stories, many white authors and editors chose to represent African American speech in dialect. Lizzie Huggins, "a pudgy, fat-faced, fiery-eyed little colored woman" allegedly appeared in court in response to charges of her disturbing a meeting by publicly accusing her minister of having an affair with a woman in the congregation. The white newspaper reported that Huggins had interrupted the minister's sermon by shouting, "What bizness you go 'zortin' [exhorting] … sinners to come to the mourners' bench. Better clean your own self before you get up there 'zortin' sinners – you had. You an' 'Manda Tuggett goin' 'roun' and doin your devilishness an' then you comin' here an' 'zortin'!" While the minister did not deny the affair with Amanda Tuggett, he did successfully press charges against Huggins and see her fined a dollar for having disturbed his congregation, according to the article.[19] The dialect here rendered the church service and its participants a farce of undisciplined religious and sexual lives. Contrasted with the standard English of the article's white narrator, the dialect encouraged the newspaper's mostly white readership to view these proceedings as totally unlike any they knew within their own communities. Portraying African American speech in dialect proved an important white supremacist strategy for marking speech as racialized 'other' language, especially

[18] [Untitled Article], *Hinds County Gazette,* July 19, 1876. The *Hinds County Gazette* had reprinted the article from the *Meridian Mercury*.

[19] "'Sturbing a Meetin': How a Young Woman Got Up an Excitement in a Colored Church," *Little Rock Daily Gazette*, February 14, 1877.

when the spelling of words in dialect did not indicate any change in pronunciation (as in "bizness" and business).

Stories in dialect proliferated in these years and highlighted African Americans' supposed lack of religious, sexual, and political fitness. Whether or not the stories drew upon actual events, they functioned to denigrate African Americans' identity as Christians and as citizens. Many stories centered on alleged improprieties of African American ministers, such as one minister who seduced the wife of a man in his congregation after being invited to dine in the couple's home. This story turned a standard trope of hosting a minister for Sunday dinner into a scene of black male sexual aggression and female lasciviousness.[20] Other dialect stories told of a minister who stole a mule and was defended by an inept African American lawyer before an ignorant African American judge, or a story of a minister who encouraged his fourteen-year-old daughter to fight and throw rocks at another girl, cheering her on from the sidelines as she hit and bit the younger girl.[21] Another minister, whom a dialect newspaper story accused of stealing a mule, had allegedly turned to work as a minister after his earlier efforts in politics had failed.[22] These recurrent themes of thieving and sexually unrestrained ministers, who destroyed women's feminine and sexual virtue, linked religious authority with sexual license. The accounts of ministers' engagement with courts argued that African Americans could neither understand nor participate in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The decision by critics of African Americans' citizenship to focus their arguments on African American religious character further demonstrated the strong relationship between African

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[20] "Badly Treated: A Colored Man Unfortunately Invited a Preacher to His House," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, September 16, 1880.

[21] "Why a Colored Preacher Sold His Mule While En-route for Church," *Little Rock Daily Gazette*, March 5, 1880.; "A Brutal Preacher: How Allen Eckridge, a Colored Divine, Took a Hand in a Fight," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, August 17, 1880.

[22] "Preached to Mules: How a Colored Preacher Explained the Situation– The Court's Action," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, November 23, 1881.

Americans' identity as both Christians and citizens. White leaders recognized that having African Americans appear equally pious as whites could have significant implications for African American political equality. These articles warned of African American ministers' proclivity to abuse their power for personal gratification and self-aggrandizement, particularly through sexual misconduct. Lack of commitment to male-headed marriage and lack of discipline in adhering to premarital chastity and marital monogamy demonstrated, these authors claimed, that African American religion failed to adhere to the basic sexual norms that undergirded Christian practice. In making these claims, white authors, writing outside of explicitly religious periodicals, underlined the links between African American Christianity and citizenship, and between sexual discipline and religious and political fitness.

Witnesses to Violence, Advocates of Christian Citizenship

For a sizeable group of politically ambitious African American Christians, their religious and political missions fused in efforts to fight racial prejudice and to further Christianity. Reporting on racial violence and denouncing racial prejudice as sin worked together with other forms of Christian duty to reform a chaotic southern community. In the face of religious defenses of "Redemption" and of whites' attacks on African American Christianity, arguments for African Americans' identity as Christians and as citizens became all the more important. Advocates of this Christian citizenship cited racism and prejudice as evils that Christians should oppose. These voices represented a courageous, well-educated minority, and their arguments demonstrated the centrality of Christian identity within African American political activism.

Sporadic violence had long plagued the post-emancipation South, but with white supremacists' political takeovers and the withdrawal of federal forces, this violence increasingly had the support of state power. Reporting on the outrages occurring around the region became even

more dangerous, yet some African American denominational organizations and periodicals gave courageous witness to the tumultuous reality of life in the lower Mississippi River Valley. Because of their commitment to Christian citizenship and their membership in broader national groups such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, these politically active African American communities crafted a discourse that decried the violent and coercive changes underway in language that they hoped would force fellow Protestants to recognize the politics of "redemption" as sin. After the hopeful moments of Reconstruction, the mid-1870s brought what African Methodist Episcopal Church ministers identified as "the inhuman and unchristian assault made upon our race."[23]

The mid-1870s saw the creation of new white supremacist organizations and the strengthening of others, including the Ku Klux Klan. In 1874 Louisiana, white Democrats inspired by the Colfax Massacre formed loosely federated White Leagues that would become effectively a paramilitary wing of the Democratic party.[24] Shortly after the White Leagues emerged, African American Methodists and their white allies began to publish warnings about the group and its growing number of alleged crimes. The *Southwestern Advocate*, a weekly paper published in New Orleans for the mostly African American members of the (northern) Methodist Episcopal Church in Louisiana and Mississippi, sounded repeated alarms as white supremacists appeared to gain power across the region. Drawing upon local reports as well as articles from sympathetic northern and mid-western newspapers such as the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, the paper explained that the White League held

[23] This quote comes from a report defending the AME Church against charges of impiety and ignorance. M.R. Johnson, C. Burch, George W. Bryant, "Report on the State of the Church," Louisiana Annual Conference of the AME Church, 1876, 23.

[24] On the founding of White Leagues in 1874 and their growth through the state, see George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 132-142.; James Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 116-143.

"the avowed object of depriving negroes of all political rights, th[r]ough the establishment of a white man's government" much like the Confederate government that had "been voted down and fought down at the cannon's mouth and at the point of the bayonet." These arguments emphasized the continuities between the Confederate vision of a slaveholding republic premised upon proslavery theology and the white supremacist vision of African American disfranchisement and white male rule. Doing so enabled the paper to stress that African Americans' identity as Christians and as citizens deserved solidarity and protection.[25]

Recording "the outrages perpetrated upon innocent, inoffensive citizens … by members of the so called White League" became an increasingly important goal of the *Southwestern*'s reporting as "these outrages… increased to an alarming extent." In White League attacks, "Men have been shot, hung and burned on account of their political opinions, and because their skins were not of the same hue as that of the devilish and cowardly assassins." Even closer to the minds of the editors were the allegations that "[n]ewspapers have been threatened" for opposing the White League's actions.[26] Nevertheless, the *Southwestern Advocate* continued to report lists of White League activities including the names of murder victims from across the state, the alleged murder of sixteen people in one rural parish (county), and notes of civil servants and ministers who had been driven from their offices and sometimes their towns. By positioning these articles alongside the paper's standard fare of devotional mediations, religious poems, and exhortations for holy living, the *Southwestern Advocate* demonstrated the centrality of the mission of bringing attention to these violent acts to the paper's larger mission for Louisiana and Mississippi-area African American Methodists.[27]

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[25] "The White League," *Southwestern Advocate*, July 16, 1874. The paper was called the *Southwestern Advocate* until 1877 when it changed its name to the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*.

[26] "The White Leagues," *Southwestern Advocate,* August 27, 1874.

[27] "A Few of the Things the White Leagues are Responsible For," *Southwestern Advocate,* August 27, 1874. Additional articles about the White League and white supremacist paramilitary violence

After Mississippi's infamous 1875 election, the *Southwestern Advocate* declared that "[t]he election in Mississippi went Democratic not because there are a majority [of] Democratic voters in that State," but because of "intimidation and violence." Lest any reader misunderstand the election's results, the paper explained that "colored republican voters… were given to understand they must vote with the Democrats or not at all." In some counties that had had large Republican majorities, "not a single Republican vote was cast," and in other towns, only a handful out of hundreds of registered Republicans voted. This political coup had not emerged spontaneously but "the plan was laid months ago, and has been fully carried out to carry the State *peaceably if possible, by force if necessary!*" The paper looked to other electoral races across the country for more hopeful results, and from these races, insisted that Republican success elsewhere "prove[d] that the people of this nation prefer to trust the Republic in the hands of the party which saved it, rather than in the hands of those who sought to destroy" it. These results, particularly in northern cities' local elections, forecasted, that there was "no doubt" that a Republican would win the 1876 presidential race. Although that prediction would prove naïve, the statement demonstrated the Methodist Episcopal Church paper's commitment to Republican politics and to African American enfranchisement. Through such articles, the paper emphasized that the Christian work of Methodists in the lower Mississippi River Valley included reporting political fraud and promoting political views, and it showed their commitment to a vision of Christian citizenship for African Americans.[28]

In this period of political unrest, African American Christians proclaimed that racism and prejudice drove the violence and that such attitudes were deeply unchristian. They insisted that

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continued to appear in the So*uthwestern Advocate*: "Immigration and White Leagues," *Southwestern Advocate*, August 27, 1874.; Emerson Bentley, "The Catholic Attitude in Louisiana," *Southwestern Advocate*, December 30, 1875.; "Friends of the Negro," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, March 20, 1879.; "A White League Hymn," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, February 12, 1880.

[28] [Untitled Editorials], *Southwestern Advocate*, November 18, 1875. These quotations come from adjacent untitled editorials.

Christian practice demanded active attention to the political and social crises facing their communities. The African Methodist Episcopal Church in particular located the fight for political equality within the Christian mission of the denomination. AME Church Bishop John M. Brown, speaking in January 1876 to AME ministers in Louisiana and to a group of white and African American ministers from the Methodist Episcopal Church, placed the fight against racism squarely in the center of the ministers' collective responsibilities. Brown explained: "We are co-workers on the same building, we are battling in the same arena, therefore, let us move on the enemies [sic] stronghold – in one unbroken phalanx. Negro hate is not an anglo-saxon instinct. It is the result of early teaching." While many white southern ministers would preach that Christian duty lay first in proper sexual practices or in the avoidance of alcohol, profanity, gambling, or Sabbath activities, Brown insisted that the systemic powers of racism proved the greatest challenge for the spread of Christian holiness. Brown's prescription for the Mississippi River Valley was ultimately one of religious-based heart change. He enjoined his listeners:

> But the spirit of Christ, the grace of God, the blood of Jesus, is able to cleanse the heart, sanctify the soul, and give us proper ideas concerning our fellow man. The world must be evangelized by the preaching of the glorious gospel of God. Let us as brethren beloved and as soldiers of the cross, set our faces as flint and steel against the sins of caste, prejudice and wickedness in high places.

Brown encouraged his listeners that the chief sins of the day – racial prejudice and abuse of power – could be overcome through collective action backed by divine approval. Because the promotion of African American Christian citizenship was a central mission of the AME Church, Brown urged his "brethren beloved," who were "soldiers of the cross," to battle against racial prejudice.[29]

This mission had distinct historical, economic, educational, and political components. As African Americans' articulations of Christian citizenship adapted to the shrinking political opportunities available for African Americans in the lower Mississippi River Valley, they grew more

[29] Louisiana Annual Conference of the AME Church, 1876, 7.

deeply rooted in narratives of sacred history and of U.S. religious history. Writing themselves into broader currents in American Protestant culture allowed African Americans, most of whom had been slaves until the Civil War, to claim broader narratives for their own. Distributing Bibles at low cost or no cost had been a central voluntary project of antebellum Protestants particularly through the American Bible Society. Noting the 1816 founding of the American Bible Society by a group of northern white Protestants, an AME Church group explained that only recently had African Americans "as a people" had the opportunity to participate in such work. However, African American Christians could claim this Bible distribution legacy as their own precisely because they had been slaves: "while we as a race did not directly contribute to this great work, yet, indirectly we did; because by our labor we furnished means to those who did." In this remarkable claim, these AME ministers insisted that their members, through their enslaved labor in previous decades, had furnished the wealth to white Protestants, including those in northern cities, that had in turn funded the cause of Bible distribution. From this past, current AME leaders pressed for further work "circulating the Bible to our poor, despised and suffering people" because Bibles were in great demand in African American communities. Economic as well as religious concerns drove this work for Bible distribution because "our people are commonly charged double prices for all they purchase," and ministers wanted to ensure that Bibles were affordable. As this case shows, even issues that seemed purely devotional or religious in content, such as the ubiquitous Protestant focus on Bible distribution and reading, could offer a forum in which to articulate African American equality, strategy, and independence.[30]

African American ministers and lay people articulated the intertwining of their religious and political identities frequently during this period. While the relative priority of personal piety and

[30] "Appendices," Louisiana Annual Conference of the AME Church, 1876, 20-21. The American Bible Society is not mentioned by name, but the references to a Bible distribution organization that began its work in 1816 clearly indicates the American Bible Society.

political activism often varied widely, the ongoing connections between independence, conversion, piety, and politics demonstrated the strength and malleability of these discourses. Emperior Williams, who had received a license to preach from the African Methodist Episcopal Church while he had been a slave, told a group of AME ministers that "In the African [M.E.] church I was taught to love liberty first, and then to love God." This priority of loves – first to liberty and second to God – is particularly striking because Williams was a slave when he joined the AME Church. Although a love of (and desire for) liberty would have been common among enslaved Christians, Williams' claim that the AME Church prioritized the love of this-worldly freedom above its emphasis on the spiritual love of God would have been a bold move for any antebellum African American church. Williams subsequently joined the Methodist Episcopal Church because he thought his membership in a denomination with white bishops and northern ties would help him "secure [his] freedom" from "the man calling himself my master." His joining a church with a less pronounced emphasis on freedom probably would have mollified the concerns of a slaveholder. Still, years after Williams had changed his church allegiance, he insisted that he "would always love… and respect" the AME Church for its role shaping his early religious life.[31]

The love of liberty that formed a vital component of the religious message of the AME Church inspired an appeal to Christian manhood that had both religious and political implications. Particularly with the male franchise under assault, AME Church men labored to assert their independence and capacity for self-government. Across Louisiana, they insisted "our independent manhood, and our reliance on God, has brought forth from our enemies the highest encomiums." This independent manhood likely involved the pursuit both of economic independence – with the goal of landownership – and of marriage with its opportunities for overseeing dependents like a wife and children. When Simeon Taylor, an AME minister, passed away in 1875, his fellow ministers

[31] Louisiana Annual Conference of the AME Church, 1876, 7.

eulogized him by praising his work "to plant the seeds of spiritual manhood in the soil of the Mississippi Valley." This manhood collaborated with "the strong arm of God" which "strikes down the barriers of caste, prejudice, and enmity, and rears upon the ruins of vassalage and ignorance an African church where God… gives life and vivacity." The Christian mission of the AME Church, its Louisiana ministers articulated, uprooted racial prejudice and planted independent manhood. Likewise, women's gendered virtue formed an important element in the AME Church's defense against its critics. Accusations of sexual license among African American women – and of churches' condoning non-marital sexual relationships – appeared frequently among white supremacist critics, as seen above. To such critics, AME Church leaders responded: "We would have them understand that amid our females, virtue produces her most beautiful blossoms: and where ever our standard has been hoisted these infamous charges have melted and passed away into oblivion."[32]

The AME Church repelled charges of sexual impropriety as abhorrent, but to broader charges of having "not reached that high standard of practical religion taught in the Bible," they blamed the legacy of slavery. "[W]e would have… the world to know that if degradation [or] dishonesty" is found among "our people, it emanates from that class and race of people who *branded* us with it. If there be dishonesty among us, it came from having been *robbed of our daily bread* by vampires and leeches of the so-called *dominant race*." Echoing claims made by antebellum abolitionists, these leaders insisted that slavery's brutality had long-term effects for the formation of African American families and communities. Any faults that white observers found in the propriety of African American churches had been forced upon them by slavery and racial inequality, and because of that, the ministers insisted: "We hurl back into their faces their infamous charges and will teach them by our onward Christian march that such slanders… must not stop or impede our progress." That progress toward African Americans' independent manhood and virtuous

[32] Ibid., 26.

womanhood stood at the center of the religious mission of the AME Church, and in pursuing these goals, they relied on the promises claimed by their belonging to a nation where the "Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, is shouted along our lines from Maine to the Rio Grande" and from east to west coasts. In other words, promises of national unity and of a brotherhood that included all men served as the foundations for the religious flourishing of the AME Church, and African American Christian practice promised to bolster both "that high standard of practical religion taught in the Bible" and the independent political and economic identity of African American citizens.[33]

Conserving an African American Religious Identity apart from Politics

For some African American ministers, changing political fortunes encouraged them to take more cautious political stances in an effort not to provoke white southerners to further violence. When they advocated withdrawal from politics, these more conservative African Americans drew upon a long history of Protestant withdrawal from worldly affairs to focus on the cultivation of personal religious experience and communal church life. These conservative African American Christians also joined a strong legacy of Christian focus on personal rather than political change. In other words, whatever the political motivations of their conservatism, these African American

[33] Ibid., 23. All emphasis original. Many sources placed the preservation of African American civil rights squarely within the mission of African American Protestant Christianity. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* continued to decry violence and inequality and to raise alarm about the growth of southern exceptionalist language that smacked of Confederate ideology. "The Situation in Louisiana," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 4, 1877.; "The Africo-American," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 12, 1878.; "Mr. Blaine's Speech on a Solid South," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 2, 1879.; "Those Murdered Witnesses," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 9, 1879.; A.E.P. Albert, "The Negro," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, February 13, 1879.; "Friends of the Negro," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, March 20, 1879.; "The Negro Nemesis," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 3, 1879.; "The Belt of Danger," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 18, 1879.; "The Late Elections," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 13, 1879.; "The Color Bearers in the Belt of Danger," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 4, 1879.; "Politics in the Pulpit," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 15, 1880.; "Louisiana Conference," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, February 12, 1880.; "A White League Hymn," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, February 12, 1880.; Isaac G. Pollard, "Letter from Arkansas," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, March 24, 1881.

Christians may have strongly believed that their deliberate avoidance of political activism proved the better religious choice for Christian communities. Often they employed similar language of personal piety that white southern Christians used to describe the importance of individual conversion and personal piety as a contrast to public advocacy for political and social change. The decision of some African American churches and ministers to adopt this more inward, pietist approach made their religious practice intelligible to white Christians and helped to assuage white Christians that these African American Christians did not pose the same political threat that activist churches did. While ostensibly avoiding political engagement, these strategies also resisted white supremacist power.

A month before Mississippi's 1875 elections, a Democratic newspaper, the *Hinds County Gazette* published an "Appeal of an Able Colored Minister to His Race." The paper almost never published anything written by an African American author, so publishing Rev. J. G. Johnson's lengthy open letter to fellow African Americans with a favorable headline was truly exceptional. Even more exceptional was the letter's content. Johnson's letter suggested very strongly the power of white supremacist political forces in shaping his appeal because it echoed what white Democrats would have wanted an "able colored minister" to write. Indeed, one could wonder if personal threats or violence had led him to write such a letter, or even if the editors of the paper had fabricated some portions of the appeal. However, in the chaos and violence of the months preceding Mississippi's 1875 elections, Johnson may have chosen to advocate as he did to appease whites and reduces violence toward African Americans. In the absence of strong support from federal troops or northern voluntary groups, African Americans in Mississippi were particularly vulnerable to white supremacist violence, and Johnson may well have believed that a more conservative approach might save lives within his community. Johnson encouraged "the colored people of Mississippi" to follow more closely the political view of their "white neighbors" in the upcoming election. He explained his advice by emphasizing that "[w]ith these neighbors you have

been most intimately associated" since "[n]o geographical lines have separated you, but from childhood you have grown up as the members of one great household, in the bonds of common sympathy and good will." This idea of a white-run household that included enslaved African Americans as its members harkened back strongly to antebellum proslavery ideology, and Johnson added that the "war did not change these relations."[34]

If Johnson's account of the antebellum past appeared unusual, his description of the post-emancipation period was even more remarkable. "Since you were free," he explained to his African American readers, "you have found your white friends true to you – their best counsel has ever been given you." Johnson insisted that white Mississippians "have planted with you for your prosperity, they have aided you when in trouble or distress, and when death has entered your households you have had their sympathy and consolation, and their tears have been mingled with your own." Despite all of these images of white sympathy that drew upon antebellum visions of household accord across rigid lines of free and slave status, African Americans, Johnson bemoaned, had used their freedom and the franchise for ill.

> As soon as the colored men became voters…. The words of advice and warning from his friends fell alike unheeded on his ears. He [ignored] the character of the men whose names were upon his ticket. … And what is the result of all this? … You are cut off from the confidence of the General Government – you are disowned by

[34] J.G. Johnson, "Appeal of an Able Colored Minister to His Race," *Hinds County Gazette*, September 29, 1875. Whatever the circumstances behind this letter's publication, the fact that its authorship was listed as that of Methodist Episcopal Church minister Rev. J. G. Johnson from Jackson, MS demonstrated the important place that ministers occupied in social and political debates. In 1887, Rev. J. G. Johnson was involved in founding Campbell College for African Americans in Jackson, Mississippi. Perhaps his acquiescence to white Democratic interests in the 1875 election helped him to earn the support of the white donors and friends who would assist in the creation of the college. John Russell Hawkins, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the A.M.E. Church, 1916), 295-296. I presume this is the same J.G. Johnson as both would have been influential African American Methodist ministers in Jackson, Mississippi in 1875 and 1887. Records of the Methodist Episcopal Church list Rev. J.G. Johnson in 1880 as a Presiding Elder of the Holly Springs District of the Mississippi Conference, but noted that he lived in Jackson, Mississippi. *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conferences 1880* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1880), 6.

> the National Republican Party. Your white friends at home are made your political enemies, and your friends North, and in foreign lands, are fast losing confidence in you, and questioning whether your enfranchisement has not proved a curse instead of a blessing to you.

This letter implied the veiled threat to African American suffrage that white supremacists wanted to convey in the 1875 election: vote for white Democratic candidates or do not vote at all. Yet it also recognized that the Republican Party and other potential northern allies had grown tepid in their support for African American franchise and civil rights.

Noting the violence surrounding politics, Johnson added apocalyptic language as he urged African Americans to vote with their white neighbors in order to stem bloodshed across the state:

> The blood of the white man and of the colored man so needlessly spilled is crying from the ground to high Heaven against this unnatural and unholy antagonism. The end is near, and can you doubt what that end will be if you persist in your present course? … This is your country – here were you born, and here have you always lived…. Your interests and the interests of the white people are identical, why, then, should there be strife and enmity between you? Turn away, and forever, [from] the political leagues… which have enslaved you. Be worthy the name of freedmen! … Join hands with the white people in redeeming from the spoiler your common country, and peace and prosperity will soon come to you and them alike.

By positioning the task of "redeeming" their "common country" as the work of both African American and white southerners, Johnson painted a new vision of southern Redemption. This appeal implied that southern whites and African Americans were equally the perpetrators and objects of violence, but that by working together, they could transform their society. The evil "crying… to high Heaven" was not the violence facing African American voters and white Republicans, but the "unnatural and unholy antagonism" between southern whites and their African American neighbors. To "be worthy the name of freedmen," then, required that African Americans recognize that their political goals were "identical" to those of their former slaveholders. Whatever else this open letter demonstrated, it clearly showed the tremendous pressures facing African Americans to vote for the Democratic candidates chosen by white Mississippians and the very real

threat of violence as well as the outlines of a more cautious political agenda in the face of Redemption.[35]

A cautious tone also emerged in these years from the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, but CME leaders tended to eschew politics entirely rather than advocate, like Johnson, that African Americans vote with white Democrats. The CME Church had maintained ties with white Southern Methodists since its 1870 founding, and its earlier meetings had insisted, albeit cautiously, on CME independence from white Southern Methodists, many of whom had been their former slaveholders. However, in their General Conferences of 1878 and 1882, a noticeable shift occurred in the discourse of the denomination's leadership. During the 1878 General Conference, CME leaders noted African American citizenship, but tended to avoid mention of racial violence; they prescribed centrally religious and non-political responses to the needs they identified in their communities.

CME leaders called their church members to muster "renewed energies to meet the aims and ends of our advancing civilization" because "our people are becoming a reading people and are beginning to understand the new position in society." Simultaneously, they expressed concern over the "rupturing of society and civil life" by " new forms of unbelief, and laxed [sic] morals," in the face of which the CME Church labored to maintain "good spiritual christianity." Here religious skepticism and new theological ideas were the central danger facing their church; evangelical piety, rather than political action, promised the solution. These concerns over morality and education demanded "an educated and intelligent leadership in the church." As they identified education, piety, and personal morality as their central religious goals – rather than the defense of African American civil rights or more political aims – CME leaders argued that Christianity's proper sphere was "to mold and shape and sanctify the moral nature of man." This attitude toward Christian piety remained firmly within Protestant norms, yet it differed sharply from the emphasis on liberty,

[35] Ibid.

independence, and freedom from violence that fellow African American Christians in the AME Church or in the pages of the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* had addressed.[36]

More striking during this period was the shift in the discourse of CME Church leaders about their relationship to the white Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Only a few years earlier, CME leaders had insisted on their independence from the group that in 1878 they described as "our foster mother in the past[,] our true friend of the present and for time to come." CME leaders averred that their "prayers will ever be that that church may continue to manifest their love for us."[37] The deaths of white Southern Methodist leaders offered an opportunity for CME officials to express gratitude for Southern Methodist leadership. Instead of earlier efforts to demonstrate CME Church independence, the 1878 General Conference praised the late Rev. Thomas Taylor whose "heroic labors" as the superintendent of Southern Methodists' "colored work" after the Civil War had prepared for the 1870 founding of the CME Church. In a glowing memorial, CME leaders praised the "untiring fortitude" and "extraordinary character" of "that sainted servant of Christ" who had been "a true friend, an able counselor and Christian worker."[38] When noted Southern Methodist proslavery activist Rev. Thomas O. Summers died during the 1882 General Conference, CME leaders paused the business of their General Conference to pass a resolution of "sympathy… in the loss of this great and good man" in whose "death we have lost a father and a friend." Ignoring his

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[36] CME General Conference Minutes 1878, 143-148. The discussion then took a strongly anti-Catholic turn, by vilifying Catholics for wanting to keep African Americans uneducated, while Protestants "since the day of Martin Luther" had presented the Bible and literacy to "the common people." Shared anti-Catholicism would have formed another link between the CME Church and Southern Methodists. Ibid., 149-150.

[37] CME General Conference Minutes 1878, 221.

[38] CME General Conference Minutes 1878, 213. On Thomas Taylor's work in the CME Church's founding: C. H. Phillips, *The History of the Colored Methodist Church in America: Comprising Its Organization, Subsequent Development and Present Status* (Jackson, TN: Publishing House of the C.M.E. Church, 1925), 27. http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/phillips/phillips.html.; William Gravely, "Christian Methodist Episcopal Church," *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South,* Ed by Samuel S. Hill, Charles H. Lippy, and Charles Reagan Wilson (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 189-191.

support of slavery and his ongoing leadership in a denomination that had defended the biblical sanction of slavery after emancipation, CME leaders mourned his death and helped to appease white Southern Methodists concerned about the CME Church's political agenda.[39]

Numerous approving accounts of the CME Church, published in the white Southern Methodist newspaper the *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, praised the CME Church for its disavowal of political activity, in contrast to other African American denominations. One white observer praised the CME for "endeavoring to keep their religious assemblies from that complication with political parties and demagogues that has been so damaging to the spiritual interest of the colored people of the South" by making a "rule … that their church houses shall not be used for political speeches or assemblies."[40] Other articles singled out Bishop Isaac Lane, a West Tennessee native who traveled across Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, for his exemplary focus on true religious piety rather than politics. Lane's virtues appeared to be written into his body which was "tall, erect, and showing in his general appearance a preponderance of the Anglo-Saxon blood." Here Lane's being the son of his former slave owner, rather than exposing the non-marital, often violent sexual practices that slavery had encouraged and the vulnerability of enslaved women, rendered Lane a less threatening African American leader whose appearance shared much with fellow white Methodist preachers but who lacked all political ambition. His fellow ministers, whites encouraged, should "imitate him, and avoid the corrupting influences of politics."[41] Rather than preaching a

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[39] CME General Conference Minutes 1882, 244, 246. On Summers' proslavery publishing, see William A. Smith, *Lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery, as Exhibited in the Institution of Domestic Slavery in the United States*, Ed. by Thomas O. Summers (Nashville: Stevenson and Evans, 1856). http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/smith/menu.html

[40] "The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, May 8, 1879.

[41] J.W. McNeil, "The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of America," N*ew Orleans Christian Advocate*, December 6, 1877.

radical political message, Lane's "plain and direct" sermons dwelled on "morality and virtue," and he emphasized to his hearers that "till their standard of morality was raised higher they might not expect to rise higher as a people."[42] These emphases on personal moral discipline rather than politics earned white Southern Methodists' strong approval.

Their shared Christian and Methodist heritage offered another avenue through which CME Church members and Southern Methodists could articulate a joint religious heritage without an equal political status. Drawing on Protestant arguments dating to the Reformation that shared religious affiliation did not connote social, political, or economic equality, CME Church leaders emphasized shared evangelical idioms and a focus on conversion. In a story reprinted in several Southern Methodist papers, CME Bishop Holsey praised Southern Methodist Rev. W. A. Parks for his sermon in an African American church by recalling that two decades before, Rev. Parks' sermon and his praying with Holsey, then an enslaved young man, had led to Holsey's personal conversion experience. After he related this story in front of his congregation, Holsey turned to Parks and "said, with much emotion, and his finger pointing up to heaven: 'Mr. Parks, when you get to heaven, and the Lord Jesus places a crown upon your head, I will be one star in that crown.'" Parks was overwhelmed by "emotions of joy" at the story, which had positioned Holsey's conversion as equally valuable as that of any white Methodist while also drawing connections between the Southern Methodist past under slavery and the ongoing relationship between the CME Church and the white Southern Methodists. The next day, Bishop Holsey was invited as an honored guest to a meeting of white Southern Methodist ministers and their bishop, and the group assured Holsey of their "abiding interest in [the] present and future welfare" of "the church and race he represents."[43]

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[42] J.W. Medlock, "Notes from the South Bossier Circuit," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, July 25, 1878.

[43] "The Colored Bishop and His Spiritual Father," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 8, 1880. The article was originally published in the *Wesleyan Advocate*.

When white Southern Methodists held their 1882 General Conference, Bishop Holsey addressed the several hundred white ministers and laymen with "a message of love and Christian fraternity." Holsey's presence as an African American invited speaker among a Conference of hundreds of white ministers and lay people, many of whom were former slaveholders or the sons of slaveholders, testified to the remarkable position he held. He earned applause with his assurances that the CME Church remained "proud of our ancestry and noble parentage" from white Southern Methodists, yet he did not simply conciliate to white wishes but advanced requests for financial and other aid for the CME Church.[44]

Borrowing language from a Pauline epistle, Holsey insisted that his congregants were "fellow citizens with the Saints, who are of the household of Methodism, and built upon the same foundations of grace and truth in common with yourselves."[45] His address presented African American Methodists as uniquely capable of practicing "an active, living and spiritual Christianity" because despite their slave past and present poverty, they had avoided the "foul blotch of infidel" ideas spreading among late nineteenth-century white Protestants. He and his fellow CME ministers remained "aloof from the corrupting and entangling alliances of party politics" because "the evangelical work of the gospel" could not coexist with "the intrigues of the politician." Holsey acknowledged and resisted Southern Methodist claims about the justification of slavery by pointing

[44] "Bishop Holsey's Address," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, June 8, 1882. Holsey's planned visit to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had been discussed at the May 1882 General Conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, and Holsey had strategized with other CME leaders to identify the areas where they most wanted aid from the MECS. CME General Conference Minutes 1882, 256.

[45] Holsey paraphrased Ephesians 2:19-20 (King James Version): "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Because the term "citizen" originated in the text, Holsey's choice to use this verse could have been a careful way to introduce African American citizenship into the opening of his address. Alternatively, the term citizen here could have connoted shared religious identity independent of political or social status.

out that "[w]hether God designed the institution of slavery or not… it does not now exist." CME Church members, if often "servants," were now "citizens" with white Methodists, and they had a unique claim on white Methodist aid for help "in redeeming your friends and former slaves from… darkness and degradation." For that work, Holsey sought "your helping hand, your prayers, your co-operation, and your money," each of them bold requests in an era of violence and the growing power of Redeemer politics.[46]

As the example of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church demonstrated, these seemingly conservative responses to the violent political conflicts of the mid-1870s into the early 1880s had a long history in Protestant thought and practice. Eschewing political activism earned whites' approval as a better form of religious practice, yet operating within biblical language and religious narrative allowed CME Church members to articulate claims for institutional and financial support from their white co-religionists. While decidedly less politically engaged than others, the strategies of the CME Church represented an approach to Redemption politics, one that would remain crucial as African American franchise and equal citizenship rights diminished over the rest of the nineteenth century. Becoming white Southern Methodists' favored group of African American Christians conveyed significant benefits to CME Church leaders and members. As the next chapter will discuss, after the threat of African American political equality had largely disappeared, Southern Methodists led other white Protestants in efforts to build schools and colleges for African Americans. Many of these had special ties to the CME Church, and CME Church bishops and other leaders occupied senior positions within the schools' leadership.

[46] "Bishop Holsey's Address," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, June 8, 1882.

Yellow Fever in Black and White

In the summer and fall of 1878, the nation's worst yellow fever epidemic raged across the Mississippi River Valley, killing twenty thousand people from New Orleans to Memphis. The 1878 yellow fever epidemic upended efforts at creating order and stability. No one knew that the mysterious vector spreading disease was the mosquito, and ineffective quarantines and disinfection measures only exacerbated the sense of terror in the region as no efforts could slow the epidemic's spread. Tens of thousands fled the cities, often bringing the disease with them in train cars and horse-drawn carts. Many of those who stayed in the worst infected cities were the poorest and most vulnerable citizens who could not afford to go anywhere or who were prohibited from travel by various quarantine measures. In Holly Springs, Mississippi, a town that had thought itself protected by its higher elevations, when residents opened their doors to refugees from low-lying areas, they found themselves rapidly one of the deadlier centers of the scourge's havoc. In New Orleans, the disease seemed particularly lethal to small children, a group whom previous yellow fever epidemics had mostly spared. Wherever one looked, whether to the panicked parents fleeing with their children, to the endless parade of coffins, or to the incredulous national media's reporting on the devastation, the overriding panic caused by the epidemic emerges palpably from the historical record.[47]

And yet, with the chaos that the epidemic wrought across the region, one of its central effects was to strengthen ascendant white power structures. Arriving on the heels of Redemption politics in the region, the epidemic tested the organizing strategies that both white and African

[47] The 1878 yellow fever epidemic has generally received little attention from historians of the post-emancipation South. A notable exception has been Edward Blum's work. Examining national periodicals such as *Harper's Weekly* which treated suffering white southerners sympathetically, as well as published expressions of gratitude from southern whites to northern whites, Blum has argued that the epidemic – and the charitable aid that it elicited – served to reunite northern and southern whites. Edward J. Blum, "The Crucible of Disease: Trauma, Memory, and National Reconciliation," *Journal of Southern History* 69 (Nov 2003): 791-820.; Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2005), 146-173.

American communities had developed toward Redemption politics. White and African American southerners employed the arguments that they had honed over the years preceding the epidemic. During and after the epidemic, the momentum of Redemption politics continued in the direction of white supremacist goals, demonstrating the power of white Christians' arguments when combined with the economic, political, and educational power of white southerners. Nevertheless, African American communities seized opportunities in the chaos of the epidemic and its aftermath to demonstrate through their active citizenship that they sought full civil and political participation in local affairs.

Class, immigration status, and race had tremendous effects on the ways that different individuals and communities experienced the epidemic. Before 1878, some cases of yellow fever appeared most summers in New Orleans, and smaller epidemics occasionally occurred in towns around the region. New Orleans residents considered it a "strangers' disease," because recent European immigrants proved more susceptible than those exposed to the disease as children because yellow fever had a lower mortality rate among children and survival conferred immunity. New Orleans' elites, whose fortunes depended on the commerce of the port city, rarely enforced adequate quarantines of ships from the Caribbean or South America where yellow fever was endemic. Prevailing wisdom before 1878 held that African Americans were immune to yellow fever, but this epidemic demonstrated otherwise. Preventable deaths from the poor sanitation in the parts of towns where African Americans were forced to live, compounded by yellow fever deaths, meant that reported African American death rates were far higher than those of whites, even though African American deaths from yellow fever were routinely underreported.[48]

[48] Jo Ann Carrigan, "Privilege, Prejudice, and the Strangers' Disease in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans," *Journal of Southern History* 36:4 (1970): 568-578.; Jo Ann Carrigan, *Saffron Scourge: A History of Yellow Fever in Louisiana, 1795-1905* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1994). That the 1878 epidemic affected African Americans, possibly for the

As white southerners faced the rapid spread of yellow fever in their communities, churches led work to give medical aid, distribute relief, and comfort the bereaved. Religious newspapers reprinted state board of health notices and advice on treating yellow fever as front-page news.[49] National fraternal organizations, such as the Masons and Odd Fellows, gave thousands of dollars to affected communities which ministers like Southern Methodist Rev. John G. Jones received and distributed.[50] Having ministers who embraced the political goals of Redemption distribute aid to their communities meant that the aid stayed within the white community. Indeed, as white southerners recounted the tragic deaths of whole families in letters and religious newspapers, they often excluded African Americans from their accounts of the epidemic. The deaths of white

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first time, was suggested by a somewhat sarcastic newspaper article at the time: "The slaves of the Southern cities had this disease very rarely before 1853. Since then they have been becoming more and more subject to it. Yellow fever is a great turn-coat, and henceforth we may expect it to be loyal to the constitutional amendments, and make its attacks 'without regard to race, color or previous condition.'" William H. Holcombe, "Queer Things About Yellow Fever," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, February 6, 1879. Debates over whether people of African descent have natural immunity to yellow fever have appeared in professional literature throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; however, for the purposes of this chapter, it is important that nineteenth-century consensus held that African Americans possessed a strong ability to resist yellow fever or to recover fully if infected. For recent arguments that people of African descent possess some immunity to yellow fever, see: Kenneth Kiple and Virginia King. "Black Yellow Fever Immunities, Innate and Acquired" *Social History Society* 1:4 (1977): 419-436. For the opposite argument, see William Coleman, *Yellow Fever in the North*: *The Methods of Early Epidemiology*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 13-14. Sheldon Watts, "Yellow Fever Immunities in West Africa," *Journal of Social History*, 34.4 (2001): 955-967. See also Kiple's and Watts' responses to each other in the same issue of *Journal of Social History*.

[49] "How to Treat Yellow Fever," *New Orleans Christian Advocate,* August 1, 1878.; "Yellow Fever Treatment," *New Orleans Christian Advocate,* August 8, 1878.; "How to Treat the Fever," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, October 3, 1878.; "Dr. Austin's Treatment of Yellow Fever," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, October 10, 1878.

[50] Methodists Rev. John G. Jones in Port Gibson, Mississippi and Rev. William H. Watkins in Jackson, Mississippi received Masonic and Odd Fellow funds for their communities and wrote letters of thanks later published in J.L. Power's account of the epidemic. J.L. Power, *The Epidemic of 1878, in Mississippi: Reports of the Yellow Fever Relief Work through J.L. Power, Grand Secretary of Masons and Grand Treasurer of Odd Fellows, A Practical Demonstration of the Generosity and Gratitude of the American People* (Jackson, MS: Clarion Steam Printing Establishment, 1879), 101, 103.

religious leaders or of entire white families appeared as grave tragedies, while African Americans, if mentioned, were treated as an undifferentiated mass.[51]

White ministers had readily celebrated Democratic political victories as the work of God, but finding explanations for the advancing epidemic proved far more difficult. At the funeral of Presbyterian Rev. M.W. Trawick and his wife, both of whom had died of yellow fever, a fellow Presbyterian minister, Dr. Palmer, drew upon a Calvinist resignation to "suffer in a suffering world" as he discussed the couple's death. Relying on standard Calvinist tropes and quoting the Hebrew Bible figure Job who had long been a biblical model for suffering, his sermon did not attempt to make sense of the epidemic or these deaths in any direct sense. Palmer maintained that these "afflictions" showed that "Jehovah is asserting his sovereignty," the divine "attribute of which he is so jealous." These appeals to the mysterious, sovereign God of Calvinist theology would have resonated with Presbyterian congregants, and they revealed the difficulty of articulating any more direct explanations of the epidemic.[52]

Louisiana's governor declared October 9 a day of prayer and fasting for an abatement of the dreaded "scourge which, baffling human skill… still spreads desolation throughout our own and sister States."[53] On that day, Rev. Linus Parker, a well known Southern Methodist minister and editor of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, preached to a congregation of weary, grieving New Orleans residents. He acknowledged that the epidemic affected "the rich, the poor, the young and

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[51] John A. B. Jones, "From Port Gibson, *New Orleans Christian Advocate,* September 12, 1878.; William Barton, "From Memphis," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, September 19, 1878. Some letters noted African Americans as a group that was less likely to die from cases of yellow fever, but identified a large number of white people by name and included moving depictions of the deaths within particular families: W.H. Watkins, "From Jackson, Mississippi," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, October 17, 1878.

[52] "Funeral Address," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, October 17, 1878.

[53] "Proclamation by the Governor," *New Orleans Christian Advocate,* October 3, 1878.

the old" and that "the predominance of young children" among the dead caused great grief. Still in his sermon, with its frequent references to "our calamities" and "our afflictions," he referred only to white Louisianans. His sermon balanced "the inscrutable character of the pestilence" with a call to action for greater personal piety, mirroring the vision of true Christian practice advanced by white Christian defense of Redemption. Like his Presbyterian counterpart, Dr. Palmer, Parker also identified the epidemic as a "providential affliction" although as a Methodist Parker did not draw upon Calvinist resignation to a mysterious divine will. He insisted that it was "impossible" for God to "afflict willingly;" instead, an affliction like the yellow fever epidemic had to be "a rebuke of sin." In the four years since White Leagues had been formed, racial and politically motivated violence had risen, yet the collective sins that Parker identified were "Sabbath breaking, profanity, gambling, general neglect of religion, Our worldly mindfulness [and] ingratitude." Louisianans could "only humble [them]selves before God," repent of their "sins and unworthiness," and pray for God's "help and deliverance" from the yellow fever epidemic.[54]

In noting these failures of personal piety or religious discipline as the primary sins of which Louisianans should repent, Parker followed the model of religious defenses of Redemption politics. By arguing that true religious practice began with individual piety – Sabbath observance, temperance, not gambling, adherence to sexual norms, and the like – white Protestants had identified their religious lives as those that were primarily inward focused. On these issues, white southerners had argued that African American religious practice was inadequate and thus African American were unfit for equal citizenship. By reinforcing the priority of these areas of religious practice in an explanation of the causes of the yellow fever epidemic, Rev. Linus Parker reiterated the white

[54] Linus Parker, "Fast Day Sermon, October 9, 1878," Box 2, Folder 7, MS. 091 Linus Parker Papers, Pitts Theological Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

southern reliance on individual religious piety rather than the types of civic and political engagement that many African Americans considered crucial to their Christian practice.

For African Americans, the yellow fever epidemic brought devastation when individuals and communities had few resources to spare. Churches, as well as fraternal organizations, faced demands that taxed their time, energies, and finances.[55] Yet, the epidemic also created an opportunity for African Americans to engage as active citizens in an effort to participate alongside whites in community relief projects. When white leaders in Hernando, Mississippi established a citizens' relief committee, they appointed an entirely white board of doctors and other prominent figures to aid locals, with the vast majority of aid going to white community members. Still, they recorded with gratitude the cash support that they received from "the colored people in town." The five-dollar gift from an African American benevolent society represented a small donation, yet it allowed the African American organization to be recorded as a participant in the community's relief efforts. Similarly, an African American man, John Brown, gave another five dollars a few weeks later in the epidemic, and his donation was recorded alongside white donors' contributions. Through actions such as these, African Americans could demonstrate that they were active participants in community relief, and accordingly also fellow citizens with local whites.[56]

White leaders' responses to the epidemic also allowed African Americans to demonstrate southern whites' hypocrisy in wanting federal intervention only when it served their own interests.

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[55] Ida B. Wells-Barnett lost her parents and a younger brother in the epidemic. The family received some assistance from a local fraternal order in Holly Springs, Mississippi, but in order to support her younger siblings, Ida Wells moved to Memphis where she worked as a teacher before moving into journalism and activism. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* Ed. by Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 10-20.

[56] Annie Ruth Brown and Ozell D. Scott Eds., *Yellow Fever Journal: Records of the Citizens Relief Committee of the Town of Hernando, Miss., September 12th through October 29th 1878* (Hernando, MS: Genealogical Society of DeSoto County, 1993), 15, 27. Informally printed pamphlet held by Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi.

In an article in an African American newspaper a few months after the epidemic, the author pointed out that "the advocates of State rights… who are determined to prevent the use of troops in the punishment of conspiracies and mobs against the laws an dignity of the United States" had rushed to request federal aid during the yellow fever epidemic. When refugees from Memphis formed camps outside the city to avoid yellow fever, "the authorities appealed… for army tents to cover the refugees," which were "promptly furnished." Although "[o]ne would suppose that the States were the proper agents to appeal to in" this crisis, state governments were incapable of meeting citizens' needs, even those of white citizens. This example showed "the practice of States rights advocates as opposed to the doctrines" and the "failure of those doctrines to accomplish beneficial results." When white citizens felt threatened by "the incompetency of States to deal justly" with the crisis at hand, they were only too willing to appeal for the federal support that they resolutely denied to African Americans. Reflecting upon the handling of the yellow fever epidemic gave African Americans an opportunity to point out white southerners' self-serving invocations of states' rights and to argue that just as federal oversight of health and quarantines in the region was needed, so too was federal intervention to uphold the law in the face of mob violence.[57]

In addition to contributing to relief activity and articulating criticisms of Redemption political ideology, African Americans also seized greater civic roles in at least one instance – the Memphis police department. During Reconstruction, Memphis had never allowed any African Americans to serve in the police force although other southern cities had done so, but because the city was particularly devastated by yellow fever deaths and thousands of emigrants who left for safer cities, like St. Louis or Nashville, Memphis had a dire shortage of police officers. Combined with the greater need for police in a crisis situation, the shortage of police led white leaders to admit African Americans to the police force during the epidemic. By 1880, nearly a quarter of Memphis police

[57] "Appealing to the General Government," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 31, 1879.

were African Americans, still a far smaller proportion of the police force than they were of Memphis' population but a significant percentage. The arming of African American men as local police with the authority to arrest white citizens offered a striking affront to Redemption policies and an unexpected result of the epidemic's destruction. African American men seized this opportunity to participate far more actively in civil activities and to demonstrate their capacity for serving as citizens. The opportunity to serve as police would be short lived for African Americans; most of the African American police officers were fired for various (often dubious) reasons by the late 1880s, although one man persisted into the 1890s. Still, that African Americans served as police officers in the chaotic days of the 1878 yellow fever epidemic demonstrated the ways that the epidemic presented Africans Americans with renewed opportunities to assert their citizenship and their capacity for civil involvement.[58]

The 1878 yellow fever epidemic created new challenges and opportunities for whites and African Americans to assert their views of proper religious practices and active citizenship in the midst of Redemption's political gains. As white southerners came to rely on aid from national voluntary and fraternal groups as well as the federal government, they appeared more conciliatory toward northern whites than they had previously. Widely reprinted poems, such as Canton, Mississippi newspaper editor Emmett Ross' "The Solid South," written in January 1879, praised northerners for their aid against "the Saffron Foe" and promised an end to divisions created by the Civil War:

> The Southron's hand that erstwhile drew his sabre from its sheath
> And dipped its blade in brother's blood to win the patriot's wreath,
> Now presses on a throbbing breast in pledge to self and God
> That Peace and Love shall ever reign where hostile armies trod.[59]

[58] Dennis C. Rousey, "Yellow Fever and Black Policemen in Memphis: A Post-Reconstruction Anomaly," *Journal of Southern History* 51:3 (1985): 357-374.

[59] Power, *The Epidemic of 1878*, 116.

However, just as African Americans' service in the Memphis police department would be short lived, so too would this exuberant promise of sectional reunion fade as white southerners moved forward from the epidemic. As white southerners continued to press forward in their agenda for Redemption, they would articulate new claims of southern exceptionalism and continue in their efforts to rebuild an orderly social hierarchy premised on white male control, much like the social order that antebellum biblical defenses of slavery had sought. Facing growing white supremacist power, African Americans would continue to pursuing diverging strategies of community building, religious activism, and political resistance, yet after this period and after the close of the yellow fever epidemic's moment, opportunities for claiming equal citizenship had ended, at least for the nineteenth-century history of the region.

CHAPTER FOUR

Churches and the "Negro Problem" Under a New Regime, 1882-1890

By the early 1880s, federal intervention in the former Confederate states had ended, leaving African Americans with few resources to oppose restrictions on political and civil rights. In 1883, the U.S. Supreme Court, in an 8-to-1 decision, declared much of the 1875 Civil Rights Act to be unconstitutional. The court ruled that Congress lacked the authority to prohibit racial discrimination by private businesses, like railroads, hotels, and retail stores. Following white southerners' efforts in the mid-to-late 1870s to "redeem" the South for white supremacist rule, these years saw the gradual move toward legal segregation, which would become codified in Mississippi's 1890 state constitution and subsequent laws across the region. During these years, white southern Christians turned with new fervor to address what they called the "negro problem." The suppression of African Americans' political and civil rights made them less of a political threat to white southerners, and some white southern Christians began for the first time to support schools and colleges for African Americans. At the same time, extralegal terroristic violence, such as lynching, became increasingly widespread, and especially targeted African Americans who challenged white supremacist rule.

White southern Christians, who had long opposed federal interventions to support African American equal rights and education, insisted that churches, rather that the state, were the best source for aid to African Americans. They articulated a very particular narrative of historical continuity from the antebellum period to the 1880s. White southerners appealed to their churches' antebellum efforts to preach to slaves as a model for guiding the South forward to the end of the nineteenth century. These invocations of history begrudgingly acknowledged emancipation, but claimed that white leaders' antebellum experience as slaveholders or as children in slaveholding

households gave them unique insight to guide African American communities toward greater religious purity, educational attainment, and non-politically threatening citizenship. Antebellum missions to slaves, white southerners argued, modeled religious engagement across the color line and proved white southern Christians' commitment to African Americans' best interests.

White southerners deployed these paternalistic claims of continuity with the antebellum period to propose widely varying agendas from expansive educational schemes to more restrictive plans for consolidating white political power. Despite different approaches, white southerners shared a concern about the urgent need to address "the negro problem" and the fact that churches would play a vital role in this work. Their historical narratives often re-wrote individuals' own pasts as well as political and denominational history in an effort to root white Christians' vision of the future of the South in an idealized vision of the antebellum past. These narratives constructed white supremacist fantasies in which African American slaves had been happy recipients of their white owners' generous benevolence. Rather than desiring and working toward their freedom, slaves had been content in their position in white households and had held deep affection for their owners. Slave children and white children had played together on plantations before gracefully assuming their adult roles as property and property owner. Ironically, these fantastic visions of the antebellum past drew upon the intimacies of slaveholding households and the close contact between whites and African Americans under slavery in order to argue for an increasingly segregated society. The expertise that white southerners claimed to have in knowing African Americans' best interests drew upon a form of intimacy that they sought to erase.

The deep ironies of white southerners' reliance on accounts of antebellum intimacies between enslaved African Americans and their white owners in efforts to craft an increasingly segregated society emerged most strikingly in concerns about African American sexual practices. Slavery had given white men unimpeded sexual access to enslaved women, but this history of sex

across the color line nearly disappeared in whites' reconfiguration of historical narratives.[1] Nor did enslaved African Americans' inability to marry figure into white accounts of idealized antebellum household order. Instead, white southerners expressed growing anxieties about African Americans' contemporary family and sexual lives, particularly around marital monogamy. The sex across the color line that concerned white southern Christians in the 1880s was not the long history of white men's sexual power over enslaved women but the fictionalized fear of African American men's sexual threats to white women. As white southern Christians articulated concerns about African Americans' sexuality, they demonstrated the centrality of sexual discipline and marriage to their understanding of proper Christian practice. Deploying selective concepts of sexual practice in the antebellum period and in the 1880s, white southerners judged African Americans' religious and sexual lives to be mutually reinforcing evidence of the need for white southern Democratic political rule and especially white religious influence.

Faced with these white fantasies and a violently unjust society, African American Christians insisted on their belonging as citizens and Christians through alternative religious and historical narratives. African American Christians argued that any Christian practice that condoned racial prejudice was a false form of Christianity, and they decried white Christianity as hypocritical. God, they insisted, supported justice and thus supported African American Christians in the myriad dangers and difficulties that they faced. African Americans argued that their moral and religious

[1] The only place I have found white southern Christians refer to white slaveholders' sexual power over enslaved women is in accounts of Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America ministers who appear, in whites' accounts, less threatening to the racial order because they had white fathers. In some instances, "Anglo-Saxon blood" is seen as carrying with it a certain measure of respectability, even though it represented the non-marital sexual activity of white men. See Chapter 3 of this dissertation and Lucius H. Holsey, *Autobiography, Sermons, Addresses, and Essays of Bishop L. H. Holsey, D. D.* (1898). My use of the phrase "sex across the color line" borrows from Martha Hodes' analysis. Hodes has shown that the term "interracial," when applied to sex or marriage, wrongly serves to rarify putative white and African American racial difference. Hodes has analyzed the changing understanding of sex across the color line, especially between white women and African American men before and after emancipation. Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men.*

conduct proved that they richly deserved the civil and political rights due them as citizens. Through these strategies, African Americans contended that white Christians' racism represented a failed version of Christianity, and they simultaneously sought to demonstrate that their moral, religious, and political actions showed how fully they deserved the civil and political rights that southern whites denied them. In other words, African Americans' claims established a new set of arguments about what true Christian practice should entail, while they also sought to satisfy whites' focus on moral and sexual discipline as prerequisites to Christian identity and political participation.

African Americans judged white Christians' narratives of antebellum continuity in the present to be nonsensical. As communities worked to address the many pressing economic, legal, political, and educational issues facing their communities, African Americans offered contrasting historical narratives that centered on African Americans' contributions to the South and the nation through the many disruptions that characterized the past several decades. Many African Americans insisted that there was no such thing as a "negro problem," but instead the obvious evils of the progressive loss of political and civil rights and of the rapid increase in racial violence, including lynching. Indeed, according to one African American Christian newspaper, "the great Southern problem" occupying whites' attention, was "how to disfranchise the Negro within the forms of Constitutional requirements," namely the Fifteenth Amendment's prohibition of denying franchise on the basis of color, race, or previous condition of servitude. As the paper insisted, "it can't be done" without violating African American's Constitutional rights, the article revealed African Americans' knowledgeable resistance to white southerners' manipulations of political rights and protections.[2] Another newspaper insisted that the solution to the so-called "negro problem" was

[2] "Multiple News Items," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 3, 1889.

simply "to give to the negro his civil and political rights…. If the negro can but receive his just rights there will be no need of agitating this great problem any longer."[3]

This chapter argues that in the 1880s, years that saw white Democrats' growing political power and a move toward legal segregation, white southern Christians developed new historical narratives of continuity with the antebellum period. These historical claims ignored much of the previous two decades' history and disregarded African Americans' exercise of political and civil rights. White Christians consolidated earlier efforts to transform antebellum theological defenses of slavery into a theological justification for segregation and racial inequality. They argued that African Americans' best interests were served better by churches' efforts for religious and educational progress than by governmental protection of civil and political rights. Within these new arguments, some white Christians worked to support the building and funding of schools and colleges for African Americans, yet as African Americans pointed out, such efforts often fell short of what whites promised. African American Christians countered whites' narratives with claims that African Americans were better Christians than whites whose religious faith was marred by unchristian racial prejudice. As they crafted new religious arguments against racial discrimination, African Americans sought to create new narratives of their active, loyal participation in cultural and religious life.

The argument of this chapter unfolds over three sections. The first examines white southern Christians' new narratives of historical continuity with the antebellum period and argues that these claims about the past shaped whites' early efforts to educate African Americans. The next section reveals how African American Christians mounted strong defenses of their political and civil rights and condemned racial prejudice as sin, especially in denominational newspapers. As the third section demonstrates, African Americans labored to construct Christian arguments against lynching in the

[3] "The Negro Problem Solved," *Christian Index*, February 16, 1889.

face of this rising extralegal terror. The chapter concludes by showing how proslavery theological arguments had been repurposed to justify white supremacist politics.

Antebellum Paternalism in the Creation of Segregation

White southern Christians, who had rejoiced in the "redemption" of southern state governments from Republican control in the 1870s, insisted in the 1880s that they held deeper commitments to African Americans' well being than any other group of white Americans. Northern Republicans had only cared about African Americans as potential voters, and northern Christian groups had been tainted by Republican politics and weakened by their naiveté about African Americans. By contrast, white southerners, because they had been raised in a slave society, could implement better educational and religious programs among African Americans. To defend these claims, white Christians crafted a very particular historical narrative, one that created new accounts of the antebellum period, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.

In the 1880s, white southern Christians framed their ongoing relationships to African Americans as a continuation of the antebellum past. Their antebellum efforts to convert slaves to Christianity, they argued, showed their commitment to African Americans' best religious interests. White Christians invoked their antebellum past with scarcely a nod to emancipation and Confederate defeat, or to the tremendous changes of the 1860s and 1870s. Instead, they maintained that their "work done among the colored people … before the war" gave "sufficient proof" of their commitment, and that "the best material, in preachers and members … among the blacks in the South to-day" were those whom white Christians had converted under slavery. Repeatedly, whites invoked "the *antebellum* past and its history of faith and zeal in behalf of the colored people," and

ministers claimed authority to know what was best for African Americans because, as one white minister explained, "in the days of slavery I preached to them."[4]

This invocation of the antebellum past revealed the extent to which white Christians, many years after emancipation, chose to disregard African American communities' own goals or desire for self-determination. African Americans' consent, while vitally important for whites' proposed schemes to succeed, scarcely factored into these ideas, which made many plans completely implausible. With their appeal to the antebellum period, white southerners signaled their desire for a near-totalizing paternalism and their continued reliance on ideas that undergirded their theological defenses of slavery. Some authors even claimed that African American slaves had not wanted to be free. Mississippi Methodist Rev. C. K. Marshall wrote in 1883 that African Americans' "present condition" of freedom was "not in any degree a matter of their own procuring" because African Americans had been "faithful to the Lost Cause. … The whites were not more true." Upon emancipation, former slaves' condition showed "the excellent care, discipline, preservation of health, abundant food, suitable clothing, and general protection" that slaveholders (slaves' "benefactors" in Marshall's parlance) had given them. Marshall ignored the history of Reconstruction, and skipped to the late 1870s, since which time African Americans' "conduct… demonstrate[d] the solid improvement they have made in … true civilization" in the years after their disfranchisement. This narrative erased African Americans' exercise of political and civil rights, their election to public office across the region, and the white supremacist violence that drove the transformation to the state of affairs that Marshall desired.[5]

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[4] "Our Work Among the Negroes," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, February 16, 1882.; "Southern Methodism and the Negro," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, April 8, 1886.; A. B. Nicholson, "Something Ought to Be Done," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, November 22, 1888.

[5] C.K. Marshall, "The Education of Freedmen," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 18, 1883.

Rev. C. K. Marshall's historical narrative, while a white supremacist fantasy, represented a common retelling of the history of slavery, emancipation, and postwar changes among white southerners in the 1880s. These accounts presented the Civil War, emancipation, and Reconstruction as unfortunate, temporary interruptions to southern whites' benevolent care for African Americans. After the Civil War, a "wide chasm yawned between the whites and blacks of the South," not because of slavery or emancipation, but because of federal interference. Northern whites imparted "crude ideas of citizenship, and the rights it involved" to African Americans, and "alienated" them from white southerners "who were their best friends, and knew best how to develop them into thrifty, industrious and useful citizens." No group "had stronger reasons for treating the Negro fairly" than white southerners because "they had grown up together on the same plantation; they have played, hunted, fished, and often worked together." Slavery, then, showed southern whites' commitments to African Americans' best interests, and "the white churches that … labored for the blacks so earnestly and successfully previous to the war" had produced "the best elements in all the negro churches" in the 1880s.[6]

According to white Christians' narratives, even white Democratic takeover of local politics in the mid-1870s had served African Americans' best interests. To the charge that white southerners had neglected this benevolent work among African Americans in the 1860s and 1870s, Rev. W. T. J. Sullivan contended that: "Southern people have done a great deal for the colored people incidentally, in resisting false political creeds, in saving the country from negro rule, and thus securing civil and social, as well as industrial, salvation." With this civil, social, and industrial salvation in place, white Christians were finally free to pursue their benevolent religious and education work again.[7]

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[6] W. W. Bennett, "Southern Methodism and Six Millions of Negroes," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, March 2, 1882.

[7] W. T. J. Sullivan "Have We Failed in Our Duty to the Colored People," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, March 16, 1882. Sullivan, a prominent Mississippi Methodist, was a trustee for Sardis

Such narratives claimed that northern Christian groups had disrupted the harmonious relationship between antebellum southern whites and African Americans with dangerous political ideas that undermined white southerners' control. Northern Christians had "prejudice[d]" African Americans "against their Southern benefactors, … the people who had brought them to Christ" for political, not spiritual purposes. By relying on "military aid, [and] by operating upon the prejudices of the negro," northern Christians "took our colored work out of our hands." In other words, African American communities had been unwitting pawns of northern white groups, rather than centers of organized opposition to the religious and political goals of former Confederates. These arguments disparaged African Americans' capacity for self-determination and presumed that northern Christians sought only political gain. They also further idealized the antebellum South as a place of religious and racial harmony, free of self-interested political scheming.[8]

For Southern Methodists, these claims that their Christian paternalism had continued since the antebellum period, interrupted only by northern intrusions, met a challenge in the history of the Colored Methodist Church in America. Southern Methodists had supported the 1870 founding of this denomination as a separate body for the formerly enslaved members of their denomination. Across the South, African American members of white-run denominations left rapidly after emancipation, and Southern Methodists had consented to the forming of the CME Church as an attempt to counter the growth of the AME Church and other independent African American groups. Southern Methodists had praised the CME Church as less politically active than other African

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Female College, chartered in 1876 by the Mississippi Legislature, and along with Bishop C. Galloway, helped to found the Mississippi Methodist Historical Society in 1892. See Horace M. Du Bose, *A History of Methodism: Being a Volume Supplemental to "A History of Methodism" by Holland N. McTyeire, D.D. Late One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Bringing the Story of Methodism, With Special Reference to the History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Down to the Year 1916* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1916), 418.

[8] "Our Work Among the Negroes," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, February 16, 1882.

American denominations. The leadership of the new CME Church and of the Southern Methodists considered the creation of an independent denomination to be an important recognition of the dramatic changes that emancipation had wrought in religious life. However, in the 1880s, Southern Methodists created new narratives to explain the founding of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. With the "close of the fearful and fateful war between the States" and emancipation, which whites euphemistically termed "changed relations," Southern Methodism's "wise men" had struggled over how best to maintain their paternalistic duty toward African Americans. The creation of the CME Church had been their best attempt to "advocate their [African Americans'] religious interests" and was never meant "for the purpose of securing honorable relief from responsibility" for African Americans' religious oversight.[9]

These new accounts of the founding of the CME Church ignored African American Methodists' advocacy for an independent denomination. African American Southern Methodists did not want to remain second-class members of the white-run denomination, and they demanded to have their own bishops and separate institutions, including a publishing house and periodical. But in the 1880s, white Southern Methodists accounts changed to fit the CME Church within this new narrative of white Christian paternalism from the antebellum period into the 1880s. Now, the CME Church proved an ally to white paternalist goals, as Southern Methodists touted the CME Church's commitment to "teach their people to be quiet and law-abiding citizens, and to cultivate the closest friendships with our church and the Southern people as their natural and providential allies." While their ongoing ties to Southern Methodists and their less overtly political efforts earned criticism from other African American groups, the members of the CME Church labored to distinguish themselves as an independent denomination. In the 1880s, their criticism of southern whites,

[9] "Southern Methodism and the Negro," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, April 8, 1886. As noted in previous chapters, I use "Methodist Episcopal Church, South" and "Southern Methodist" interchangeably, in keeping with my sources.

including Southern Methodists, grew much more strident. Nevertheless, Southern Methodists positioned the CME Church under the new claims of their ongoing paternalism from the antebellum period into the years when segregation was being constructed.[10]

Through these claims, white southerners in the 1880s demonstrated how fully they had adapted their antebellum proslavery theological commitments to shape the post-emancipation South. Their efforts to recreate antebellum paternalism, albeit without slavery, reflected their ongoing commitment to an organic view of social order, where racial and gendered hierarchy allowed white men to govern dependent members of society. These views opposed an individual, rights-based view of proper social structure as less Christians than their view. Northern Methodists and Presbyterians might appear similar to their southern counterparts, but "they are not the same people," an editorial insisted. Southern churches alone bore the responsibility "to keep clear of the partisan and secular spirit, [and] to preach the gospel in its purity" since northern Christians had abandoned this work.[11]

Animosity grew strongest between divided groups who claimed the same denominational history but had split over the issue of slavery or secession, such as Northern and Southern Presbyterians. Amid efforts to create fraternal ties between the Presbyterian denominations, Southern Presbyterian James A. Waddell found such plans impossible because Northern Presbyterians had "converted their Church into a political machine, to propagate political dogmas." Northern Presbyterians argued that slavery and secession were sins on the part of white southerners, and claimed to be the moral superiors of their southern counterparts. Waddell countered these claims as inappropriate for a religious body. Still, he held strong political and religious opinions of his own, namely that Confederate secession had been neither a sin nor a violation of the U.S.

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[10] T. J. Upton, "Report of Special Committee on Paine Institute, Appointed by Louisiana Conference," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, February 9, 1888.

[11] "To Be Preserved," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 29, 1880.

Constitution. Waddell's central contention, then, was that Northern Presbyterians' politics diverged from his own, and two decades after secession, he insisted that these differences prohibited fraternal relations between the two major Presbyterian denominations. In his focus on the Constitutional right to secede and the limits of states' rights, Waddell worked to define the differences between the two Presbyterian denominations on grounds that had little relationship to slavery. Doing so allowed him to claim that Southern Presbyterians' unique identity lay in greater piety and religious devotion, rather than simply in their support for racial discrimination and nascent segregation policies.[12]

Claims that the northern branches of major Protestant groups had become too politically active demonstrated the particular attitude that southern white Christians held about the proper relationship between church and state. Churches should not advocate, as northern denominations had, for African Americans' political rights, but rather should work for African American education in church, rather than state-sponsored contexts. In practice, this meant opposing African American men's right to vote while teaching a politically conservative message of personal moral discipline and religious piety. As a result, white southerners' reclaimed antebellum paternalism became the foundation for their educational efforts for African Americans. Funding schools for African Americans proved a very controversial idea among many white Christians, so the advocates for this work claimed that it represented the ongoing legacy of antebellum efforts to Christianize slaves. Positioning these efforts as a continuation of earlier preaching to slaves allowed white Southern Christians to distinguish this work from that of their Northern counterparts.

Following other arguments for continuity with the antebellum past, supporters of schools for African Americans presented their goals as a response to emancipation in keeping with white southerners' slaveholding past. When attempting to raise funds among their members, Southern Methodist leaders insisted on this work as a paternalistic Christian duty, one that would address

[12] James A. Waddell, "Political Religion," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 34:2 (April 1883): 371-390, 373.

whites' "*material* interests" which had languished since emancipation by training students to "*learn to work,* as well as to study books." Such schools would also address the need for African American ministers more like antebellum "white pastors" than current African American ministers who were mostly "field hands, without education or … discipline." It might have been "the United States, who set them free," but "the Christian church," meaning white Christians, "should furnish Christian teachers for their schools and educated ministers for their pulpits." Such educational efforts recognized emancipation without endorsing it, and argued that white Christians' educational work for African Americans would serve whites' own best interests.[13]

Southern Methodist fundraising for Paine Institute, a Methodist training school for African American ministers and teachers that white Southern Methodists created in a lopsided partnership with the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, framed donations as part of whites' benevolent concern for African Americans' religious and moral needs. An 1885 pamphlet explained that the school was "reaching out after the masses who sit in the darkness of ignorance and sin in our immediate midst" with "the refining process of Christian education." The pamphlet acknowledged that the curriculum remained under development, but that new pupils should arrive having "studied history of the United States; Fourth Reader; Arithmetic (through Fractions); English Grammar; Spelling; Writing."[14] The CME Church, alone among African American denominations, had not received financial support from northern churches or Republicans, and thus "had no one to

[13] J.E. Evans, "Paine Institute, Augusta, Ga.," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 25, 1883. For similar links between antebellum missions to slaves and educational work in the 1880s, see above and "Our Work Among the Negroes," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, February 16, 1882.; C.K. Marshall, "The Education of Freedmen," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 18, 1883. For more fundraising appeals to white potential donors for Paine Institute (later Paine College), see W.C. Dunlap, "A Statement and Plea to Southern Methodists," *New Orleans Christian Advocate,* February 19, 1885.; W. C. Dunlap, "Paine Institute," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 28, 1886.

[14] "Paine Institute, Augusta, Georgia: Under the Auspice of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America." 1885 pamphlet. Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL), Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

look to for help, except the Southern Methodist Church." The CME Church deserved that support more than any other African American group because "they teach their people to be quiet and law-abiding citizens, and to cultivate the closest friendships with our church and the Southern people as their natural and providential allies." Paine Institute was "the supreme opportunity that God has opened to our church to do a great missionary work for the negroes of the South by the establishment of these training-schools." Whites should fund this school to help the spiritual – not the political – needs of African Americans.[15]

Even southern white Christians' most radical proposals for African American education deployed the antebellum past to justify educational efforts in the 1880s. One of the most progressive arguments for African American education came from Southern Methodist Rev. Atticus Haygood, who helped to found Paine Institute. His controversial 1881 book, *Our Brother in Black: His Freedom and His Future,* called white southerners to recognize African Americans as fellow Christians. Haygood sidestepped political rights entirely, while presenting one of the strongest defenses of African Americans' intellectual, moral, and religious equality with whites. While noting that his father's slaves had been well-treated and well-loved and that he grew up believing that slavery was justified, Haygood insisted that his views had changed, so that he saw slavery as wrong. As he addressed a variety of issues that other white critics used to claim African Americans' inferiority, Haygood explained ways that these seeming weaknesses were the results of slavery, not racial inferiority, or were common to many rural southerners or to poor laborers around the world. *Our Brother in Black* called white southerners to work for "the right education and elevation of our black

[15] T. J. Upton, "Report of Special Committee on Paine Institute, Appointed by Louisiana Conference," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, February 9, 1888. See also: W.C. Dunlap, "A Statement and Plea to Southern Methodists," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, February 19, 1885.; "Paine Institute," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 28, 1886.

brother, the free negro, in our midst." In doing so, it criticized a range of prejudicial attitudes toward African Americans, while avoiding condemning antebellum whites or the Confederate cause.[16]

Our Brother in Black still relied on certain continuities with the antebellum South – Haygood's boyhood affection for the slaves whom his father had owned helped him to appreciate the needs of African Americans after emancipation – yet he recognized that a significant break had occurred and insisted that white southerners needed to recognize more fully the implications of emancipation. Unsurprisingly, Haygood's views provoked criticisms from fellow southern whites. Southern Methodist Bishop Christian Keener's scathing review of the book insisted that "the term [brother in black] is chosen with much skill, and it is full of error and sentimental nonsense, calculated to deceive." Haygood's "sentimental use of language, which ignores the real difference between the races" represented, Keener claimed, a willful manipulation of white readers. Other readers were less critical, but many southern whites chose to advocate for African American education without accepting the controversial idea of Christian brotherhood between southern whites and African Americans.[17]

White southern Christians' efforts to support African American education represented religiously-inspired benevolent work for the benefit of an inferior group in need of education. When they had opposed federal interventions to defend African American civil and political rights, white southerners insisted that churches, rather than the state, offered the better strategies to address African Americans' best interests. As some southern Christians embraced Haygood's more progressive concept, that African Americans were their "brothers in black," they maintained as an obvious fact, apparent to Haygood and others, that "the difference between the negro and the white

[16] Atticus G. Haygood, *Our Brother in Black: His Freedom and His Future* (Nashville, TN: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1881), 129.

[17] Christian Keener, "The Negro Bonanza-Extravaganza," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, February 23, 1882.

man is more than skin deep."[18] It was, white Christians insisted, because of the self-evident inferiority of African Americans and the deficiencies of their religious practice that these religiously-sponsored educational works proved so important.

In varied African American educational efforts by white southern Christians, the specter of social equality, with its connotations of sexual relationships across the color line, remained a potent danger to their educational projects. Rather than expressing concern over the well-documented history of white men's sexual violence against women of African descent, these fears of social equality centered on the figure of the sexually aggressive black man as a threat to white women. The pains to which white southern Christians went to insist that African American education would not encourage "social equality" demonstrated the centrality of sex to concerns about racial separation in these years of nascent segregation practices. When Southern Methodists raised funds for Paine Institute, they presented Paine as a force for maintaining racial distinctions and preventing sex across the color line. In addition to praising the CME Church in America for having "remained singularly free from all political alliances, and … held steadfastly to the one end of giving the gospel in Methodist simplicity to their people," white southerners recognized that CME Church leaders "have maintained their Church in harmony with us in keeping the two races apart, socially, and in the marital relations. They stand for the purity of their African as we do for our Anglo-Saxon blood." The irony that many of the CME Church leaders, such as Bishops Isaac Lane and Lucius Holsey, had identified themselves repeatedly as the sons of their former slave owners disappeared entirely in these accounts.

While most calls for African American education revealed white southerners' insistent belief in racial inferiority, a few voices suggested that this educational work was important precisely

[18] J. W. Medlock, "'Extravaganza' - Where?" *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, March 16, 1882.; Haygood, *Our Brother in Black*.

because of African Americans' equal ability to learn. Writing under the pen name Gilderoy, Mississippi minister Robert G. Porter wrote that "[n]o sane man will deny the fact that the negro can learn anything and everything that white men learn." That equal ability showed that "God has not been as partial as many of us suppose in the bestowment of mental capacity." Beyond recognizing African Americans' innate ability, Porter explained that whites needed to recognize that "negro teachers are more competent than many of us are willing to allow." Porter cited a white school supervisor who was surprised to find African American teachers equal to white teachers. The white man, Porter insisted, had "no negro mania" and his "prejudices were stung by this fact," but he reluctantly admitted the teachers' and students' equal ability. This equal intellectual capacity was matched by equal religious capacity. White southerners' Christian duty, Porter explained, required that they acknowledge that "God has poured the Holy Spirit upon some Negroes just as copiously as upon some white men."[19]

Porter claimed that whites' beliefs in African Americans' religious and intellectual inferiority represented sinful prejudice. He compared whites' prejudice against African Americans to the New Testament apostle Peter's prejudice against gentile would-be converts to Christianity by referencing a story where a supernatural vision teaches Peter to accept as his spiritual equal a Roman centurion named Cornelius, who did not follow Jewish dietary law, but who desired to be baptized. Quoting Peter's New Testament speech after he had realized his error, Porter reminded Southern Methodists: "God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." Like Peter who realized that his views on unclean food should not cause him to reject Cornelius, white southerners should recognize that "no work," including

[19] Gilderoy [Robert Gilderoy Porter], "Educating the Negro," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 25, 1883. While the article insisted on intellectual and spiritual equality, it said nothing about political, civil, or social equality. These omissions demonstrated the limits of Porter's critique of racial prejudice.

teaching African Americans, was "unclean work" if it had "the approval of God upon it." To ostracize white teachers of African Americans or to condemn such work would contradict the New Testament example of the apostle Peter.[20]

As some white southerners promoted educational work among African Americans, other white southerners' ostracizing white teachers of African Americans posed a challenge. In part because many teachers after emancipation had been northern advocates for African Americans' political and civil rights, teachers faced harsh scrutiny from southern whites, which prevented many from undertaking such work. Porter and other advocates for African American education insisted that southern Christians should value the work of teaching African Americans, much as they lauded the model of Christian missionaries in Africa. This teaching work applied that noble missionary zeal closer to home. In many accounts, educating African Americans paralleled Christian missionary work in Africa or Asia. These comparisons bolstered claims that Christians' religious duty obligated them to this work, but they also reinforced links between African Americans and seemingly uncivilized foreign groups. Atticus Haygood's *Our Brother in Black* insisted less on African Americans' spiritual and intellectual equality than Porter's article, but Haygood pointed out the hypocrisy of southern Christians' high praise for missionaries in Africa, such as David Livingston, when contrasted with hostility for teachers of African Americans. He devoted a full chapter to arguments that teaching formerly enslaved African Americans should be valued as important Christian service. Similarly, Southern Methodist Bishop Charles B. Galloway criticized the "travesty" of the "disposition to canonize missionaries who go to the dark continent, while we have nothing but social ostracism for the white teacher who is doing a work no less noble at home." Others proposed

[20] Ibid. Porter quoted Acts 10: 34-35 (King James Version).

that the problem of southern whites' unemployment could be reduced if more people would teach in African American schools.[21]

These claims represented some of the most expansive views of white southern Christians in this period. Yet, their comparison of African Americans in their communities to the objects of foreign missionary endeavors testified to the significant differences that they maintained between African Americans and white southerners. Even Haygood's and Porter's more progressive arguments for African Americans' access to education ignored political rights. The sinful prejudice that Porter condemned did not apply to whites' opposition to African American franchise. African American and white Christians could see each other as fellow Christians, but that recognition did not affect their unequal access to political rights, jobs, or other opportunities. Access to education should lead to greater piety and personal moral discipline, not to dangerous forms of social equality.

Nevertheless, the arguments that Haygood and Porter made departed from more common white claims of African American moral, intellectual, and religious inferiority. Most white southern Christians rooted their educational work in African Americans' strong racial deficiencies. Episcopal minister Rev. J. L. Tucker took advantage of belonging to a denomination that had reunited its northern and southern factions after the Civil War to press the northern portion of the denomination to give funds for southern Episcopalians' work to educate African Americans. In a speech at a national gathering, later expanded and published as a pamphlet, Tucker outlined the need for a racially distinct education for African Americans directed by southern whites. Emphasizing

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[21] Gilderoy, "Educating the Negro"; Haygood, *Our Brother in Black*, 1881.; Charles Galloway quoted in P.A. Johnston, "The Race Problem," *New Orleans Christian Advocate,* September 26, 1889. For this citation, as well as several others in the *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, I am indebted to: Northern Methodism-Negro Methodism-Race Relations, Notes on "New Orleans Christian Advocate," MS. 77, Walter M. Lowrey papers, Archives and Special Collections, Centenary College of Louisiana, Shreveport, Louisiana. On teaching African Americans as a solution to southern whites' unemployment, see C.K. Marshall, "The Education of Freedmen," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, January 18, 1883.

"the vast mental and moral differences between the races," Tucker insisted that white southerners urgently needed to address the problems created by northern whites when "the North made citizens of a race utterly unfitted for citizenship, and then failed utterly … to educate the race into fitness for citizenship." In Tucker's appraisal, "God ordered … slavery in order to bring a great body of the African race … to a civilization and Christianity," but since emancipation, chaos had ensued. White Southerners alone knew that African American Christianity represented only "a form of Christianity without it substance." After the Civil War, "negro churches sprang up everywhere, built largely by Northern money." These churches were full of "shouting, praying, singing, all manner of excitement, hysterics, trances, loud calls upon God; but … no religion, at least none of that kind which has its issue in a holy, humble and obedient walking before God." Racial inferiority manifested in religious and moral failings, and Tucker insisted that African American Christianity lacked all focus on personal morality and thus was "no religion." Personal moral discipline, such as chastity and other forms of personal restraint, remained vital aspects of Christian practice according to Tucker's appraisal, yet African American Christianity neglected these vital elements.[22]

Throughout his speech, Tucker dwelled at length on comparisons to African savagery and indicted his northern listeners for their naïveté. Because, he claimed, African American churches ignored personal morality entirely, Tucker sought to attract African Americans back to white churches where they could sit in separate balconies to hear white ministers' teaching the religious obligation to personal morality. Still, Tucker's prescription for white Christians' work to draw African Americans' back to white churches, appeared strikingly comprehensive. White churches should offer a wide range of religious, educational, and social services, from free schools and employment centers to hospitals and orphanages. Bands of white missionary women should teach

[22] J.L. Tucker, *The Relations of the Church to the Colored Race: Speech of the Rev. J.L. Tucker, D.D., Of Jackson, Mississippi, Before the Church Congress Held in Richmond, Va., on 24-28 Oct, 1882* (Jackson, MS: Charles Winkley, 1882), 1-3, 17.

night schools for workers, train mothers in care for their children, and nurse the ill. White churches must devote tremendous energy to this crucial religious responsibility. Once these services were in place, Tucker imagined that "Negroes looking on [would be] saying: 'is that the white folks religion? To educate our children, to nurse the sick, to care for our orphans, to help us get work? The Lord Jesus must be there: we will go and learn of him.'" Local southern churches would implement this work, Tucker suggested, but they needed generous funding from northern Episcopal churches who should allow southerners complete freedom to direct the work. This plan carried the page after page of endorsements from dozens of religious and civic leaders, including white ministers, bishops, judges, government officials, and a few African American ministers.[23]

Tucker's vision of southern white churches whose expansive social service projects would attract large numbers of African American members to a second-class membership could never come to fruition. Like so many white Christians, Tucker utterly discounted African American Christians' desire for equal status and self-determination, and he considered inadequate any form of Christian practice that was not overseen by southern white ministers. He dismissed all previous benevolent efforts by northern Christians as misguided and harmful, but demanded that they fund southern whites' work while leaving the control of all programs to southerners. This plan, while unlikely to have ever succeeded, is important because it shows how white southern Christians' educational and religious efforts on African Americans' behalf could develop in the 1880s from a strident belief in African Americans' racial and religious inferiority, rather than from any commitment to shared identity as Christians and citizens.

As white southern Democrats consolidated their political power in these years of nascent segregation policies, they relied upon white Christians' narratives of continuity between the

[23] *Ibid.*, 26. Several dozen pages of endorsements followed Tucker's speech from a number of religious and civic leaders. Ibid., 29-89.

antebellum past and the 1880s. Christians from a variety of denominations constructed white supremacist fantasies that linked the present dominance of white political power to visions of peaceful plantations and happy, dutiful slaves. These historical narratives represented a new version of antebellum theological defenses of slavery repurposed to justify segregation and racial discrimination. From these appeals to antebellum benevolence, white southern Christians supported educational efforts on behalf of African Americans with the goal of producing morally disciplined Christians who did not seek political equality, or its increasingly dangerous corollary, social equality.

"There is room for grave fears": African American Christian Activism in the 1880s[24]

African American Christians recognized their precarious position in the South after the withdrawal of federal protections and the loss of many civil and political rights, and countered white southerners' new narratives of historical continuity and claims about proper Christianity with arguments of their own. African American Christians argued that true Christian practice could not coexist with white supremacist goals, and that white Christians' hypocrisy revealed their true political goals and their spiritual deficiencies. To defend their political and civil rights, African Americans countered whites' claims of continuity since the antebellum period with accounts of the dramatic changes that emancipation and Reconstruction had wrought. They emphasized African Americans' vital contributions to the United States throughout its history, beginning with the valor of Crispus Attucks, an African American man whose death in the 1770 Boston Massacre made him the first American casualty in the Revolutionary War. These contrasting narratives emphasized African Americans' merit of political and civil rights based on their upright moral conduct and their loyalty to the United States and to the South. For African American men still able to vote, voting with

[24] This quotation came from an editorial written by "Iola," the pen name used by Ida B. Wells in these years. Iola's columns appeared in the *Christian Index* weekly during 1889. "Iola's Corner," *Christian Index*, June 29, 1889.

white Christians for prohibition ballot initiatives demonstrated good citizenship and religious discipline together with class and educational identity by voting as white Christians wanted. Pressing for economic self-help and racial solidarity, African American Christians proposed new strategies for helping their own community as white southerners' promises of educational aid rarely materialized.

Denominational newspapers created a forum through which African American Christians could critique contemporary events and craft arguments for solidarity among readers across the region. Through a variety of religious, social, and political arguments, these papers targeted what they considered white southerners' hypocritical views of religion and race. The *Christian Index*, published in Jackson, Tennessee, by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, and the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, published in New Orleans, Louisiana, by the Methodist Episcopal Church show African American Christians' tactics during these years. These papers commented regularly on national, regional, and local politics, and the range of reports and letters that they published from ministers and lay members offer a diverse set of perspectives across the Mississippi River Valley. Both papers decried white supremacist violence and the silence of white Christians about these horrors. Both papers defended African Americans' civil and political rights, though with different emphases. Clerical and lay subscribers to the paper were encouraged to read issues aloud in churches and other settings, so that even non-literate or semi-literate African American Christians could engage with the papers' content.

The significant overlap between the two papers, which were sponsored by denominations that often took different approaches to political activism, demonstrated the ways that certain strategies of resistance coalesced during these years. Because the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America had retained ties to white Southern Methodists, the denomination often eschewed political activism in favor of greater focus on personal piety through choices that often appeared to be designed to appease southern whites. However, in a range of editorials in the mid to

late 1880s, editors of the *Christian Index* lambasted whites' prejudice. Religious arguments against racial prejudice worked alongside claims for political and civil rights or access to education by arguing that southern white Christians, as Christians, should avoid racial prejudice.[25] The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* published more strident defenses of African Americans' rights and more articles about the rising scourge of lynching. While its connections to the northern Methodist Episcopal Church suggested a more national perspective, the paper centered much of its critique the growth of white supremacist power in the Mississippi River Valley where its subscribers lived.

True Christian practice was incompatible with racial prejudice and violence, according to African American Christians' repeated arguments. African Americans would be incredulous were it not so dangerous to ignore whites' prejudice, yet they asked: "How a man can be a possessor of true religion and continue to sanction all the wrongs perpetrated upon a down-trodden race, continue to hold prejudice against his fellow man, and fail to recognize them as brethren, etc., is a wonder to us." The power of white Christians' racial prejudice "almost made" many African Americans "doubt the power of Christianity" as presented by its white adherents. Instead, African Americans rejected white Christians' practice as false and hypocritical. They prescribed a true, authentic conversion for whites, who needed to learn to follow Christ. "As we see it," the article continued, "all persons who profess to have Christ dwelling within then, and at the same time continue to retain any ill-will

[25] The *Christian Index* was published beginning in 1869, but no issues are extant until 1885, when the paper was published monthly. No issues are extant from 1886, and the paper was published weekly beginning in 1887. I regret not having access to earlier issues to see if these late 1880s editorials represented a shift from earlier views, or if the paper had consistently criticized white Christians' racism. However, after significant research efforts, including the services of several of Harvard's research librarians, I do not believe that extant copies remain in any library or archive from these early years. All citations are from microfilm copies in my possession, duplicated from microfilm held at the Tennessee State Library & Archives in Nashville, Tennessee. Archives of physical copies at the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee, are partial, with a scant number of 1890s issues and more twentieth-century issues.

whatever in their hearts against their brother in black, are surely in need of the Savior. They may have a great deal of religion, but possess none of Christ, be they clergy or laity."[26]

African American Christians insisted that whites' racial prejudice was hypocritical, and they marshaled religious arguments against racism. White Christians' racial prejudice was "a sin, a shame, a huge iniquity, an undeniable sign of complicity with the iniquitous sin of slavery." No Christian organization could be called "a Christian society" unless its "work is to bring all redeemed souls into one fold," and "there can be no fraternity and unity without equality." To the white southerners who claimed to be Christians, their African American fellow Christians "entreat our brethren to cast off these filthy rags of self-righteous cast[e], and put on the only Christ[ian] robe of brother love."[27] Even if racial differences mattered to those "of the world," a common Protestant term for those outside the Christian fold, they should not matter "among the Christian family." Instead, quoting the New Testament narrative where the apostle Peter learned that he should not discriminate against early Christians who did not follow Jewish dietary law, the article insisted that white Christians who "always preach and argue that God is no respecter of persons" should not "claim to be his followers and act so very different." Being fellow Christians meant that "no matter how black, white, red, blue or any other color, we are all brethren." Since religion "has great power … sufficient to overcome all things" even to make "a bad man a good man," it was "strange" that it "has thus far failed to break down the prejudice between the races." The article concluded sarcastically that the only reasonable conclusions from this were that Christianity lacked the power that its adherents ascribed to it, or that

[26] [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, January 21, 1888. For similar claims, see below, also [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, August 13, 1887. The use of the phrase "brother in black" referred to Haygood, *Our Brother in Black*, 1881.

[27] "Color and Christ," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 31, 1882.

white southerners were not truly converted. Because whites would not have accepted either option, the article's conclusion further insisted on the hypocrisy of white southern Christians.[28]

Despite white Christians' ongoing racism, African Americans should believe that "God has a hand in the work of bringing about better things for the colored people of this country." Education formed a growing part of this plan. Even when "some enemy will rise and give vent to his feelings," such as a white minister who used a racial slur in a recent sermon, "the hand of the great Creator can be seen ever and anon working mightily in the elevation of the race." Increasingly, it should then follow that "No man clothed in his right mind will oppose the education of the Negro."[29] Even in less overt cases of discrimination, such as when a white observer praised an African American's character as "good for a darkey," the paper pointed out that "the expression" revealed "that he considered the 'darkies' to be… inferior to the whites." Seizing upon the opportunity to defend racial equality, the article insisted that African Americans possessed equal attributes "making up a man and a gentleman" as any race, including being "a good and quiet citizen, one who has great respect for the laws that be, and who loves his country, his people and his God." Indeed, African Americans' "respect for the truth, right and justice, for religion, morality, intelligence, temperance, etc." equaled or exceeded that of whites. African Americans' desire for education demonstrated these superior qualities, and education strengthened moral and religious commitments.[30]

African American Christians seized many local events or the opinions of other newspapers as occasions to insist that racism and Christian practice were mutually exclusive. When famous evangelist Dwight L. Moody visited the area and allowed his hosts to demand that he preach to white and African American audiences separately, African American Christians criticized his

[28] [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index,* May 28, 1887.

[29] "How is This?" *Christian Index,* April 6, 1889.

[30] "Good for a Darkey," *Christian Index*, January 21, 1888.

capitulation and insisted that true religion drives out prejudice. Although Moody was one of the most respected Christian ministers in his day, his African American critics insisted that they had "no faith in any man's religion who will carry or encourage prejudices against a race on account of their color." Moody and many of his followers "could learn some very important things respecting the religion of our Lord Jesus" by recognizing the hypocrisy of their racial prejudice. Criticizing such a prominent figure showed the courage of African American Christians to maintain that "white professors of religion [who] hate their brother in black … have not the true religion." Moody's travels, which received much attention by many religious periodicals and local papers, became another occasion to criticize white Christians' hypocrisy.[31]

From their steadfast insistence that racial discrimination marked a failure of true Christian practice, African American Christians worked to claim their political and civil rights, including access to education, as citizens. In doing so, they directly challenged white southerners' claims of historical continuity from the antebellum period and claims that white southerners sought African Americans' best interests. When quoting a standard white claim from a local paper that white southerners were African Americans' best allies, who offered far more than northern Republicans had, sarcasm proved a valuable tool. "Hold on, sir," the article began, "We have heard that racket before and don't believe a word of it." White southerners might claim to do more for African Americans than Republicans had done during Reconstruction, yet it was not, the article insisted, for African Americans' good. The white South "lynches his brethren by the wholesale, drives them from place to place like so many dumb cattle, will either keep them from voting or 'cast his vote out' after it has been 'put in.' Oh, yes; the South does a great deal for the negro." Whites' claims that they respected African Americans' rights were an outright lie. African Americans knew that for the South to

[31] [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, February 4, 1888. The use of the phrase "brother in black" referred to Haygood, *Our Brother in Black*, 1881.

become a safe place for their rights, it would take "a revolution … in the government affairs and in hearts of the bourbon democrats."[32]

In arguing that they deserved equal civil and political rights, African American Christians deployed contrasting historical narratives to counter whites' uses of history to defend white supremacist rule. Rev. E. W. Moseley sought to support African American's political and civil right by situating them more broadly in a defense of African Americans' character, religiosity, and loyalty to America over the previous century. He first claimed that "the negro is an American citizen," yet "the colored people are mistreated" in both "north and south." Such mistreatment of "citizens be they red, black or white" was "a farce, a failure, a stench before the nostrils of high heaven." Yet the rest of his article defended African Americans' civil and political rights based African Americans' historical loyalty through periods of war and turmoil. This narrative began with the first American patriot killed in the Revolutionary War, the African American slave Attucks who "fought for the establishment of this great republic." Attucks gave us his life to aid the creation of the United States, and his memory "speaks up from the dust" to proclaim African Americans' loyalty to the nation. Later in the War of 1812, "the colored man fought bravely," earning the praise of Gen. Andrew Jackson who "acknowledged their work and complemented their bravery" in the Battle of New Orleans, saying: "My colored countrymen, you made good and loyal soldiers."[33]

Taking on whites' historical narratives even more directly, Moseley then turned to the Civil War as an example of African American loyalty, focusing on the loyalty of slaves to their masters' households and Confederate support. Because of the loyalty of slaves to their owners even during

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[32] "A Few Words About the Race," *Christian Index*, July 28, 1888. The article began with an extended quotation from an article in the *Gallatin Examiner*. For a similar critique of a white newspaper editorial, this time the *Nashville Daily American*, see, "Let Justice Be Rendered," *Christian Index*, January 26, 1889.

[33] E. W. Moseley, "The New Exodus Scheme," *Christian Index*, February 4, 1888.

the Civil War, "southern whites know something about negro loyalty," and should recognize African Americans' belonging as peaceable citizens in the 1880s. During the war, "when the old 'masters' and the young ones, too, shouldered their muskets and went out and fought to uphold slavery, their servants remained at home, worked, fed and protected old 'miss' and the little ones." Many of these loyal slaves protected their owners' livestock and money by hiding it from Union troops. Yet, two decades later, "alas, all this has been forgotten" by southern whites who think "the negro is a thief and a worthless scamp." Moseley's account of slaves' loyal service throughout the Civil War contradicted war time accounts by many observers, but it is telling that Moseley deployed this narrative, one that white southerners had created to insist that slaves had not desired freedom. White southerners used similar accounts of the Civil War to justify whites' paternalistic control of African American, but Moseley insisted that these stories showed African Americans' strong moral commitments and work ethic, virtues that showed they deserved civil and political rights.[34]

Occasionally, articles reported small groups of African Americans' colonization and emigration plans, suggesting that African Americans must leave the South, or even the nation, to find just treatment. Moseley protested the idea that "our people … have to leave the country they have made and seek shelter in an unknown land in order to be treated as humans." Change must come across the South and the nation. African Americans needed first to recognize that God "will be the leader" of such efforts, but this recognition did "not mean … the colored man should not vote. Yes, vote every time you can." Through this combination of religious faith and political effort, African Americans must labor for the political and civil rights that they already deserved as citizens and as a group that had defended the American (and Confederate) nation for more than a century.[35]

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[34] Ibid. On slaves' rapid departure from plantations and their efforts to emancipate themselves, see among others, McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*.; Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms*.

[35] E. W. Moseley, "The New Exodus Scheme," *Christian Index*, February 4, 1888.

When the *Christian Index* protested racial prejudice, it often showed some of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America's earlier focus on personal religious piety rather than strident political rhetoric. In efforts to claim "all rights, suffrages and immunities guaranteed to our fellow-men of the great Anglo-Saxon race," African Americans needed to "tak[e] God as their shield" and to demonstrate that they were "God-fearing [and] loyal to our government." By doing this, and being strategic in their willingness to adopt new approaches to the fight for equal rights, African Americans could hope to battle against whites' racial prejudice.[36] Although African Americans were "citizens of this country… their rights are very limited," and "their privileges at the ballot box are a mere myth in most of the Southern States." Retaining the right to vote remained of vital importance so that both political parties would have to respond to the demands of African Americans, yet "the surest road to success is for the negro to labor hard and obtain wealth and intelligence accompanied with good religion and morality." With such markers of personal wealth and fitness for the franchise, "no power that is formed against him shall stand." These claims for political rights rooted their arguments, not in a call to immediate reinstatement of equal rights, but in African Americans' burden to prove their fitness for rights that they had previously exercised.[37]

Temperance and prohibition became important ways for African Americans to demonstrate their fitness for their imperiled civil and political rights. Restricting alcohol consumption and encourage temperance pledges – commitments that individuals would abstain from alcohol and encourage others to do the same – had long been features of evangelical piety. In the 1880s, many opponents of alcohol consumption increasingly turned to the regulatory powers of the state to

[36] John N. Daniel, "Our Only Hope," *Christian Index*, February 26, 1887.

[37] "The Negro," *Christian Index*, August 6, 1887. An editorial compared the 1883 Supreme Court decision on Civil Rights to *Dred Scott v. Sandford.* "Civil Rights" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 1, 1883.

prohibit the sale of alcohol through state laws and local bans.[38] Prohibition efforts appeared on local and state ballots in these years, as supporters sought to restrict the production and sale of alcohol. African Americans' support of these efforts demonstrated that they used the franchise to support the same goals as those of many refined, educated white Christians. Joining in these efforts became an important strategy for African Americans to demonstrate their fitness as voters and their Christian piety.[39] Because African American men's right to vote grew increasingly imperiled in the

[38] On the growth of temperance and prohibition activism in the late nineteenth century, especially the importance of Christianity, see among others: Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).; Joe L. Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007).; H. Paul Thompson, *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode: Religion and the Rise and Fall of Prohibition in Black Atlanta, 1865-1887* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013).

[39] The *Christian Index* was full of articles on the evils of alcohol and the importance of abstaining from drink and of supporting temperance and prohibition efforts. These articles included poems, songs, short stories, scientific literature, and more. Many were copied directly from other religious periodicals or WCTU materials with little reference racial or regional specificity. For a large portion of 1887, the paper had weekly columns dedicated to temperance articles. "Miss Willard's Centennial Address," *Christian Index*, November 1, 1885.; "Alcohol and Health," *Christian Index*, January 7, 1887.; "A Deathly Business," *Christian Index*, January 7, 1887.; H. R. Smith, "The Evils of Strong Drink" *Christian Index*, January 15, 1887.; Rebecca M. Gray, "Temperance," *Christian Index*, March 19, 1887.; J.A. Viney, "Prohibition Even in Texas," *Christian Index*, May 21, 1887.; "Moonshine," *Christian Index*, July 8, 1887.; C.S. Day, "Battle for the Right," *Christian Index*, July 8, 1887.; "Work Without Beer," *Christian Index*, July 8, 1887.; "S.S. Temperance Day," *Christian Index*, July 8, 1887.; "The Rum Thirst," *Christian Index*, July 23, 1887.; "Labor and Drink," *Christian Index*, July 23, 1887.; "Temperance Items," *Christian Index*, July 23, 1887.; "Temperance Items," *Christian Index*, July 30, 1887.; "Fight or Die," *Christian Index*, July 30, 1887.; "In the Gutter," *Christian Index*, August 13, 1887.; "Not a Nutriment" *Christian Index*, August 13, 1887.; "Labor and Strong Drink" *Christian Index*, August 13, 1887.; "Convincing Testimony" *Christian Index*, September 3, 1887.; "The Man Who Drinks" *Christian Index*, September 3, 1887.; "Afraid of it" *Christian Index*, September 10, 1887.; "Inherited Vice" *Christian Index*, September 10, 1887.; "Why She Refused" *Christian Index*, September 10, 1887.; "A Tribute to Whisky," *Christian Index*, September 17, 1887.; "Alcohol's Latitudes" *Christian Index*, September 17, 1887.; "Emphatic Testimony" *Christian Index*, September 17, 1887.; "Impressive Temperance Lessons," *Christian Index*, September 17, 1887.; "For Pity's Sake," *Christian Index*, September 24, 1887.; "Women and Drink," *Christian Index*, September 24, 1887.; "The Michigan Temperance School Law," *Christian Index*, September 24, 1887.; "Christopher's Wife's Story," *Christian Index*, October 1, 1887.; "Temperance in Africa," *Christian Index*, October 1, 1887.; "Opinion of a Scientist," *Christian Index*, October 1, 1887.; "Temperance Items," *Christian Index*, October 1, 1887.; "A Child's Tear," *Christian Index*, October 8, 1887.; "Drinking in Italy," *Christian Index*, October 1, 1887.; "Laborers and Temperance," *Christian Index*, October 1, 1887.; "Baby's

1880s, demonstrating African Americans' focus on temperance became a vital strategy. In some parts of the Mississippi River Valley, African Americans remained a significant voting block, and they sought to prove their fitness for franchise by pointing out the ways that they had voted, especially for the prohibition of alcohol sales. Ministers and bishops urged members to vote for prohibition measures, and numerous articles appeared about local temperance and prohibition organizing.

In the early 1880s, African Americans often appeared to white observers to be opponents to temperance legislation, rather than advocates for restrictions on the sale of alcohol. Many white Christians thought that "freedmen oppose temperance, and must be made to understand" the evils of alcohol consumption. However, African American Christians had formed groups pledging to pray for and to work toward the success of temperance measures in local elections. But in at least one Louisiana parish, "the white temperance element" proved "unwilling to join hands with the negroes to back this law," and this refusal to collaborate across racial lines meant that the temperance ballot initiative failed.[40]

Shoes," *Christian Index*, October 22, 1887.; "Woman Workers," *Christian Index*, October 22, 1887.; "Temperance Items," *Christian Index*, October 22, 1887.; "Alcohol as a Medicine," *Christian Index*, October 22, 1887.; "I Will Not," *Christian Index*, October 29, 1887.; "A Long Step In Advance," *Christian Index*, October 29, 1887.; "Temperance Items," *Christian Index*, October 29, 1887.; "Beer and Digestion," *Christian Index*, October 29, 1887.; "How Jones Was Cured," *Christian Index*, November 5, 1887.; "True Heroism," *Christian Index*, November 5, 1887.; "Temperance Items," *Christian Index*, November 5, 1887.; "WCTU Portraits," [advertisement] *Christian Index,* November 5, 1887.; "The Saloon in Politics," *Christian Index*, November 12, 1887.; "The Tobacco Habit," *Christian Index*, November 12, 1887.; "Temperance Habits," *Christian Index*, November 12, 1887.; "A Mother's Influence" *Christian Index*, November 26, 1887.; "A Pertinent Question," *Christian Index*, November 26, 1887.; "Forgotten Ones," *Christian Index*, December 5, 1887.; "A Veritable Leech," *Christian Index*, December 5, 1887.; "From the Standpoint of Labor," *Christian Index* December 3, 1887.; "All Over," *Christian Index*, December 10, 1887.; "Drunkenness and Lying" *Christian Index*, December 10, 1887.; "Temperance Items," *Christian Index*, December 10, 1887.; "Can Whisky Talk?" *Christian Index*, December 10, 1887.; "A Fatal Fallacy," *Christian Index*, December 24, 1887.; "The Captain's Pledge," *Christian Index*, January 14, 1888.; "It Is Prohibition," *Christian Index*, June 9, 1888.; "God and the Liquor Traffic," *Christian Index*, December 15, 1888.

[40] "The Colored People and Moral Reforms," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 19, 1882.

Gradually over the decade, some white Christians began to view African American Christians as possible allies around questions of temperance. While these partnerships did not lead white Christians to defend African Americans' political rights, they did allow broader opportunities for African Americans to be seen by southern whites as morally upright Christians. In 1882, African American minister Rev. D. A. Williams of the Methodist Episcopal Church and white Southern Methodist minister (and future bishop) Rev. Charles B. Galloway became co-editors of a monthly temperance journal, *The People's Adviser*. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* praised Galloway for being "a minister… who despised caste" and showed commitment to "preaching *with* and to the colored people."[41] This cross-racial collaboration between the two Mississippi ministers was an exceptionally rare occurrence, and the joining of "tremendous moral forces" promised that "ere long the stain and blotch of other days will be wiped away" and "all hearts and races" join together in religious work.[42] By configuring temperance as a religious and political effort, African American Christians presented arguments that they had developed during Reconstruction for their linked identity as fellow Christians with white southerners and as fellow citizens deserving civil and political rights.

Such strategies appeared successful, at least with a more progressive group of white southern Christians. Southern Methodist Rev. Atticus G. Haygood argued that although the decision to extend the franchise to African American men had been a hasty, misguided effort, educated African Americans overwhelmingly voted for prohibition measures. Well-educated whites, Haygood bemoaned, often sided with alcohol distributors to oppose prohibition measures. Haygood argued in the months before the 1888 elections that educated African American voters proved a stronger ally

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[41] [Untitled Editorial], *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* October 5, 1882.

[42] "What Are We Coming To?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 31, 1882. I have been unable to locate any records or extant copies of *The People's Adviser*, which these articles indicate was published monthly in Jackson, Mississippi.

for religious causes than many whites.[43] Through these claims, Haygood echoed African Americans' insistence that they deserved the right to vote. When Arkansas voters supported prohibition ballot initiatives in the 1888 election, African American voters insisted that they had led the way in voting to restrict alcohol sales.[44]

Despite the opportunity to vote for prohibition initiatives, the 1888 elections proved disappointing for African American Christians' efforts to strengthen their political rights. Both on local and national levels, they saw growing disfranchisement and greater apathy from former allies, such as the Republican Party. Even though white southerners praised the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America for avoiding politics, the denomination, through the *Christian Index*'s editorial page, claimed that Democrats main goal was "keeping the negroes in a state of serfdom, [and] taking from them their rights." To "keep the Negro down" was "the prevailing idea of southern democracy, which is being developed more and more every week." These efforts meant that "the great mass of colored voters in the South are disenfranchised" and that "daily the papers contain the record of lynchings … so that the condition of the Negroes of the south is almost hopeless." In light of the assaults, African American support of Democrats meant "to kiss the hand that murders their fellow man. Every negro vote cast for the democratic party is but endorsement of the many wrongs done their brethren." Similarly, the paper proclaimed that "every negro should come boldly to … rally around the Republican standard" because "the Democrats – especially those of the south – are unwilling to give the negro his rights. They allow him to be lynched … without offering any protection whatever." These bold statements showed that not even the CME Church

[43] A.G. Haygood, "Educate the Voter," *Christian Index*, January 21, 1888.

[44] "News and Notes," *Christian Index*, February 2, 1889. The same article pointed out that South Carolina's voter rolls had shrunk, suggesting increased disfranchisement of African Americans. See also: "Prohibition in Tennessee," *Christian Index*, April 2, 1887.; W. G. Foster, "Bartlett, Tenn," *Christian Index*, July 8, 1887.; "A Glorious Resurrection," *Christian Index*, May 21, 1887.

entirely eschewed politics, as their white observers hoped. Nevertheless, the relative scarcity of these political pronouncements – which appeared in only a few of the weekly issues in the months before the election – indicated that electoral politics remained a risky topic for the denomination's paper.[45]

After Republicans won control of Congress and Republican Benjamin Harrison became president, African Americans hoped that the party would recognize their support for Republican candidates. National Republicans had no interest in such projects, nor did they want to include African Americans in appointed positions within their new government, despite the fact that nearly all African Americans who could vote, had voted for Republicans.[46] President Harrison, African Americans hoped, would "doubtless… see to it" that white southerners' extralegal oppression of African Americans in the name of "so-called states rights" ended.[47] Nevertheless, African American Christians insisted that the "only live issues before the American people" were "the temperance question" and the rights due "the Negro [as] a citizen." The Republican party needed "the moral courage to take these up and solve them;" otherwise, the party did not "deserve future success."[48]

Such action did not happen for many reasons, including the fact that African American voter rolls were shrinking rapidly across the South. Among those who were able to vote, many feared that their votes had not been counted because white Democrats controlled elections closely enough to ignore votes for Republicans.[49] Particularly concerning were reports from Jackson, Mississippi, that

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[45] [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, July 28, 1888.; [Untitled Editorials], *Christian Index*, August 18, 1888.

[46] "Shall They Be Forgotten or Left Out," *Christian Index*, February 2, 1889.; "Clippings about the Negro," *Christian Index*, February 9, 1889. These articles both called for Republicans to include African Americans in appointed positions.

[47] [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index,* April 13, 1889.

[48] "Multiple New Items," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 5, 1889.

[49] As an editorial indicated: "The Southern Negro is beginning to ask, 'What became of my vote. [sic] Why was it not counted?' A voice whispers, 'it was not for the right party.'" [Untitled Editorial],

for the first time since the beginning of Congressional Reconstruction, not a single Republican remained in office in any elected municipal position after "the negroes abstained from voting" because of collective threats that local whites would kill any African American who voted for Republicans. The 1875 election had seen Democratic victories in major statewide office after chaotic, violent threats from white mobs including the Ku Klux Klan. But even more concerning was the increasingly public and open operations of white Democrats who issued threats in printed circulars decorated with images of guns warning African Americans not to vote. In light of these reports, the *Christian Index* editors invoked divine blessing, "God pity our southland, and may He speedily hasten on the day when things shall assume a different phase."[50]

The Terror of Lynching and the Specter of Social Equality

On Sunday evening, July 6, 1885, four hundred residents of Oxford, Mississippi, gathered in the yard outside the Southern Methodist church to witness the lynching of Harrison Tunstal. Tunstal, an African American man, had been accused of the rape "of a young white lady of the town" in the early morning hours of that same day. The woman and her sister had allegedly identified him that morning, and Tunstal did not have a clear alibi for the previous night. Without any further evidence or investigation, a self-appointed "committee of twelve citizens" deliberated over the case for a few hours that Sunday. The sham court believed that "the evidence strongly pointed to his guilt… but there existed a reasonable doubt." Their ad hoc deliberations "stayed the hands of violence" for a few hours until the father of the young woman interrupted the committee's deliberations to gather others to join him in lynching Tunstal. With the father, a group of "about

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Christian Index, November 17, 1888.

[50] "Election at Jackson, Miss: A Significant Election," *Christian Index*, January 21, 1887.; "[Untitled Editorial]," *Christian Index*, January 21, 1888.

thirty or forty men went to the jail and brought forth Harrison" to the yard of the white Southern Methodist church. There the white mob prepared to hang Tunstal before "a crowd numbering 400" on a makeshift gallows that rested on a large oak tree next to the church and on the fence surrounding the church yard. Rev. Burrell L. Crump a minister with the (northern) Methodist Episcopal Church witnessed the scene and recorded Tunstal's final moments.[51] Before he was killed by the white mob, Tunstal addressed the assembled mob and "said a thing happened last night, and he was accused of it." Tunstal continued, "I suppose I will have to suffer for it, but I am not guilty. [Tunstal] said pray for me, pray for me." Rev. Crump then prayed for Tunstal, and Tunstal in turn prayed for Crump. "After prayer he bid them all good by" and readied himself to be killed by the mob. Moments later, he was hung and died instantly, his lynching witnessed by hundreds of Oxford residents in the yard of one of the most influential white churches in the small town.[52]

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[51] I have been unable to find a written statement of Rev. Burrell L. Crump's racial identity, but given his access to this scene, it seems highly likely that he was white. Various Methodist Episcopal Church conference reports indicate that Crump was a minister (or, after 1891, a Presiding Elder) in Mississippi from at least 1879-1900. *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conference 1879* (Cincinnati, OH: Hitchcock & Walden, 1879), 7.; *Report of the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the General Conference of 1880* (Syracuse, NY: Masters & Stone, 1880), 86.; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conference 1899* (Cincinnati, OH: Cranston & Stowe, 1888), 11.; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conference 1889* (Cincinnati, OH: Cranston & Stowe, 1889), 14.; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conference 1891* (Cincinnati, OH: Cranston & Stowe, 1891), 9.; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conference 1899* (Cincinnati, OH: Curts & Jennings, 1899), 14.; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conference 1900* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings & Pye, 1900), 25.

[52] B. L. Crump, "Lynching in a Churchyard on Sunday," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 6, 1885. His letter was dated July 12, 1885, and referred to the events that happened "last Sunday evening," from which I concluded that the events happened on Sunday, July 6, 1885. Amy Louise Wood has opened her chapter on lynching and religion with the story of this lynching, as narrated in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*. The victim is named Harris Tunstal in her account, and the timing of his lynching is the morning rather than the evening. Nevertheless, all the pertinent details match, including Tunstal's request for prayer. Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 45-47.

As Harrison Tunstal addressed the lynch mob and hundreds of spectators with his final words and prayers, his last moments mirrored well-known accounts of Christian martyrs.[53] He maintained his innocence but, recognizing that he could not prevent the assembled crowd from killing him, he simply asked for their prayers. When Rev. Crump came forward to pray for him, Tunstal joined in the prayers, indicating his Christian identity, one that Crump recognized when he wrote that Tunstal joined with him in prayer. In his account of the lynching, Rev. Crump lamented the time and place of the lynching as magnifying the injustice done by the lynch mob: "I hope I shall never see anything like it again. Oh, just to think of hanging a man on Sunday." The desecration of a Sunday evening in a churchyard made this lynching significantly more gruesome, and his letter recording the event concluded "Please pray for us here in Oxford."[54] When the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* printed this letter, the editors added an additional editorial condemning the event. Emphasizing that Tunstal deserved a fair trial in which he would be given the benefit of "the least doubt of guilt," the editors were clear that the lynching served one aim: white supremacist terror. The clear purpose of "this… disregard for the forms of law" was "to impress the Negroes with a sense of their helpless condition, and to inspire them with fear." During the "twenty long years" since the end of the Civil War, "these horrible killings have gone on," but the setting of "the Lord's day and the Lord's house" showed new fearlessness on the part of white mobs. The incident showed

[53] The portrait of a soon-to-be martyred Christian speaking to the assembled crowd drew upon the sermon delivered by Stephen, the first martyr, in Acts 7 (King James Version). Protestant martyrs had long been a celebrated part of American religious culture, especially in the memory of England's Protestant martyrs recorded in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.* Adrian Chastain Weimer, *The Martyr's Mirror: Persecution and Holiness in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[54] B.L. Crump, "Lynching in a Churchyard on Sunday," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 6, 1885.

that "unlawful killing" had become "more sacred in the eyes of these actors" than "the influence of the Sabbath and the church."[55]

The 1880s saw a significant rise in lynching, which would continued to terrorize the South into the twentieth century, and a corresponding effort among African Americans to protest these extralegal murders whose perpetrators routinely went unpunished. African American Christians argued that lynching was a tool of white supremacist terror; a few victims were accused of raping white women, but many more faced other charges, such as being too politically vocal. African American Christians were clear: lynching made a mockery of "our Christian civilization."[56] Some white Christians urged an end to lynching because it violated law and order, but most stood by quietly, even offering tacit or vocal support for the extralegal terror in the name of protecting white womanhood.

African Americans' arguments about the evils of lynching regularly invoked religious concepts of evil and pointed to the hypocrisy of white Christians' sympathy for lynchers. Such claims emerged in cases where the innocence of the victim was clear, such as when many eyewitnesses offered a strong alibi or when the true perpetrator was known to be one of the white members of the lynch mob.[57] Yet it was particularly when there were allegations (that whites might find credible) that an African American man had raped a white woman that white Christians' hypocrisy stood out. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* decried "the horrible lynching of a poor colored man" in Mississippi who "was *suspected* of committing a criminal assault upon a white woman." "A crowd of white men" murdered him with "no judge, no jury, no trial." No arrests were

[55] "The Oxford Lynching," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 6, 1885.

[56] "A Correspondent from Sturges Station," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* August 22, 1880.

[57] "A Few Days Ago Dispatches from Mississippi," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* April 21, 1881.; "Birmingham, Alabama Has Been the Scene," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 13, 1883.; "Political Review," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, March 4, 1886.

likely in the case because "the public conscience has been seared, and preachers, teachers, lawyers, officials and people, all sympathize with such outrageous lawlessness." How could southerners, white or African American, "pride ourselves upon our Christian civilization" under such circumstances, the article asked. Yet if human means of justice failed, white Mississippians must remember that divine justice would remain, as the Bible promised "'vengeance is mine. I will repay' saith the Lord."[58] The promise of divine justice served both as a warning to whites and as recognition of how little African American communities could do to stop lynching. With "the daily reports of the lynching and otherwise murdering of Negro men and women, most of whom could, perhaps, not be convicted even by a jury chosen with that intent," the idea that "we live in a civilized Christian land (?) [sic]" appeared a farce.[59]

White Christians rarely spoke against lynching. When they did, they largely criticized it for the ways that it challenged proper law and order, not because it strengthened white supremacist power through its violent, terroristic purposes. For instance, a wealthy white man called for the "leading men" of both races to work "to bring about the best feelings" between whites and African Americans. He criticized all "riots and mobs," and without using the word lynching, he obliquely criticized the "unnecessary striving between the two races caused by the actions of the low grade men of our own race." Suggesting that lynching and other mob actions did not promote racial harmony was hardly surprising, yet even in this criticism, the article blamed working class white men when in fact the acceptance of lynching required the support of many elite whites.[60] The strongest white criticisms of lynching came from Rev. Atticus Haygood, one of the most progressive southern

[58] "A Correspondent from Sturges Station" *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* August 22, 1880. All emphasis original.

[59] "The Year Closes as It Began," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 30, 1886.

[60] W. W. Thompson, "Feeling That Should Exist Between the Two Races," *Christian Index*, July 20, 1889.

white voices. Haygood insisted that "there is no such thing as 'lynch law'" but that "'lynching' is itself lawlessness." Lynching, he maintained, was "a crime against man and God" that Haygood equated to "vengeance," "barbarism," and "anarchy." Rather than being justified for white women's protection, "lynching does more to put down law than any crime it takes in hand."[61] African American papers reprinted such statements from Haygood and praised them as "a vigorous and manly blow to the terrible crime," but lack of similar statements, or any meaningful action, from white southern Christians more broadly demonstrated that the vast majority were unwilling to condemn lynching.[62]

Only the most violent and chaotic events could jar any significant response from southern white Christians, but the murder of thirteen African Americans on the steps of the courthouse in Carrollton, Mississippi, while the court was in session, proved to be such an occasion. Two African American men had brought charges against a white man for assault after he fired upon them with his pistol. On March 17, 1886 while the case was being tried, a group of white men stormed the courthouse and killed more than a dozen African Americans, and wounded others. The Southern Methodist *New Orleans Christian Advocate* condemned the "butchery" that "fill[ed] every true citizen with horror and sorrow," and many other religious periodicals and local newspapers joined in expressions of outrage. The events forced whites to wonder if they were "indeed a civilized people" and to ask, "Must we surrender to the reign of the mob?" The setting disturbed white southerners the most, because "this blood was shed in the county courthouse and while a justice was on the bench trying a criminal cause." Some whites argued the event was spontaneous rather than premeditated, but the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* knew that spontaneous impulses could not have

[61] Haygood, "The Crime of Lynching," *Christian Index*, June 9, 1888.

[62] "Is the Pulpit Afraid?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, February 14, 1889. Much of this article reprinted portions of an article by Atticus Haygood published by the *Wesleyan*.

"brought a number of men together from scattered houses, on a certain day, organized them, and guided their horses along the public roads for miles to the county town." The law must be defended because "if such outrages are to be condoned and the perpetrators go unpunished, Mississippi ought to pluck from our national flag the star that answers to her Statehood." However, after the shocking reports, white southerners ignored the events, and no charges were filed in the murders.[63]

African Americans were hardly surprised that after the initial "unqualified condemnation from a large portion of the Southern press," no indictments followed for the "deliberately planned murder, executed with military precision" in Carrollton, Mississippi, that "region of crime where the light of liberty does not dispel the darkness."[64] A clear recognition of the powers of white supremacy in "the failure to indict, arrest and punish any participant in the massacre" showed "the peculiar notions" of justice where "the laws and courts are merely for the protection of white people."[65] Nevertheless, leaving the South – or even abandoning Mississippi – was not the answer because African Americans could rely on God's aid against injustice. While "troops of cruel and malignant enemies to their freedom and progressive prosperity" might swarm around them now, "like Gad of old, the Negroes will overcome these foes at the last." Deploying phrases from the Hebrew Bible of Gad, one of the sons of the patriarch Jacob and thus the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, African Americans welcomed aid, but not the advice to run away from these dangerous settings.

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[63] "The Carrollton Tragedy," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, March 25, 1886. See also, "The Carrollton Tragedy Again," *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, April 1, 1886. The latter article quoted from the Jackson, Mississippi, *Clarion* as evidence that many white-run local papers in Mississippi also condemned the actions.

[64] "Political Review," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 1, 1886. See also, "Political Review," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 8, 1886.; "The Carrollton Tragedy," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 22, 1886. This last article quoted the *Atlanta Constitution*'s condemnation of the Carrollton massacre.

[65] "Political Review" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 22, 1888.

Insisting that a "silver lining" remained in their present challenges, the editors quoted from a psalm that while "Sorrow is for a night, joy cometh in the morning."[66]

Faced with the complete absence of prosecution for white lynchers, African American Christians cautiously began to recommend self-defense in the face of rising reports of lynching. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* wrote that because even white "clergy say nothing in condemnation of these barbarous acts" that "disgrace the South," African Americans needed to protect themselves. Since preventing a lynching appeared impossible, "a Negro… had better prepare to fix a price upon his manhood, and see that at least one of his captors shall die before his own life shall be taken." Because he could hope for no other protection, "a Negro is justified in defending himself by all means in his power, under the circumstances."[67] Even the often cautious *Christian Index* suggested that for African Americans facing lynching "patience has about ceased to be a virtue. … LYNCH LAW MUST GO."[68] The paper pointed out the bitter irony that those who lynched African Americans under any pretense were never charged, but when an African American father and his neighbors responded to the brutal rape and murder of his daughter by killing the white alleged perpetrator, the African American men were arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. The editors lamented: "As we said in our last issue, patience has almost ceased to be a virtue, and since so many Negroes have been lynched by 'unknown parties,' and for nothing … it is at least a reasonable to

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[66] "These Clouds Have Silver Linings" *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* April 22, 1888. Gad was one of the sons that Jacob conceived with Zilpah, the servant of his first wife Leah, with whom Leah encouraged Jacob to have additional children. Leah named the son Gad which could mean "troop" or "good fortune." See Genesis 30: 9-11 (King James Version). In the Hebrew Bible, there are plays on the name Gad as a term meaning troop and good fortune, and as a term that sounds like the word for raiders or enemies, such as the final patriarchal blessing that Jacob gives before his death. See Genesis 49:19 (King James Version). The final biblical quote comes from Psalm 30:5 (King James Version). The quote was not attributed, but the use of the archaic verb form "cometh" would have indicated to the reader that it was a quote from the King James Version of the Bible.

[67] "Untitled Editorial," *Christian Index*, May 24, 1888.

[68] "Lynch Law," *Christian Index*, January 21, 1888.

suppose they will feel the necessity of taking a hand in the game." African Americans faced death, and patience, nonviolence, and humility ceased to be Christian virtues.[69]

African Americans repeatedly disrupted the associations that whites made between lynching and allegations of sexual violence against white women. Lynching, African Americans insisted, represented a tool of white supremacist racial terror, not an effort to combat sexual violence or sex across the color line. Nevertheless, combatting whites' fears of "social equality" became a necessary task for African American Christians seeking to defend their civil and political rights and to avoid death by lynching. Repeatedly, when protesting many forms of discrimination, African American Christians insisted "the question of social equality is not involved" but only "that spirit of manhood which is inseparable from a God-fearing American citizen."[70] The "prattle of social equality" served only to distract from pressing issues.[71] Indeed, African Americans sought to "respectfully inform our white friends that the Negroes are not begging for social equality." Contrary to whites' fears, "the Negroes of this country are asking for social equality about as much as they asked to be brought to this country." However, African American Christians did want "some of our white colleges [to] warn their students against attempting to form criminal association with the young colored women who are struggling against a thousand tides to build for themselves a character worthy of a woman." White men's harassment meant that "our wives and daughters cannot walk the streets of a southern city without being insulted."[72] If white southern Christians wanted to argue that sexual discipline and

[69] "Here It Comes Again," *Christian Index*, January 28, 1888.; See also, "Southern Justice," *Christian Index*, March 9, 1889.; [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, March 30, 1889.

[70] "A Talk with a Man Who Laughs," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 20, 1882.

[71] "Color and Christ," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 31, 1882.

[72] [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, January 28, 1888.

chastity formed vital aspects of Christian identity, then white men should give African American women the respect that they often gave white women.[73]

Conclusion

As African American Christians condemned lynching in strident religious arguments, they recognized the importance of biblical claims in the construction of the future of the Mississippi River Valley in the 1880s. Yet the momentum of social and political change was accelerating in the opposite direction. The final decade of the nineteenth century would bring greater violence and fewer political options for African Americans across the region. The difficult situation of the 1880s would soon be dire. Yet in this moment, African Americans' access to Christian arguments would become even more important as their recourse to civil and political rights would nearly disappear.

White southerners' narratives of historical continuity from the antebellum period to the 1880s adapted proslavery theology into a defense of segregation and white supremacy. The historical narratives that they created in these years transformed religious defenses of slavery into historical facts. The imagined antebellum past on which white southern Christians drew in their new claims of ongoing paternalism was the fictive past that proslavery theology had invented of slave societies filled with dutiful slaves, content to submit to the benevolent paternalism of their white masters. Theological defenses of slavery insisted that white slaveholders were following the dictates of the Bible and of Christianity more faithfully than their northern antislavery opponents, just as white southern Christians condemned northern Christians' meddling in African American religious life. As

[73] Both the *Christian Index* and *Southwestern Christian Advocate* published marriage announcements. Some listed only the names of the couple, but others described elegant ceremonies attended by guests bearing fine gifts from the newly married couple. For the latter style of announcement, see, among others: "Social," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 22, 1886.; "Wedding Bells," Chri*stian Index*, September 3, 1887.; "A Fashionable Wedding," *Christian Index,* July 7, 1888.; [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, June 8, 1889.

they prepared to legislate segregation and to deny African Americans' civil and political rights, white southern Christians showed that they were finally free to structure their society on biblical principles of racial hierarchy, free from the interference of the federal government or of northern Christians. Because they had retained much of their proslavery theological commitments, white southerners were well equipped to create the Jim Crow South and to justify it as a system of Christian benevolence.

CHAPTER FIVE

Churches, Race, and Politics under Jim Crow, 1890-1900

On May 8, 1898, the front-page story of the *Christian Index* announced the publication of *Autobiography, Sermons, Essays, and Addresses of Bishop L. H. Holsey* as "the crowning gem in [the] literary efforts" of one of the most prominent leaders of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. The CME Church paper in Jackson, Tennessee, championed Bishop Lucius Henry Holsey's new book as exemplary of the achievement possible for African Americans in the decades after the Civil War. Holsey's autobiography proved a model piece of life-writing for the impossible position in which African Americans found themselves by the 1890s. In contrast to earlier African American Christians' claims, Holsey made no demands for political or civil rights. When reflecting on his childhood as a slave, he wrote, "I have no complaint against American slavery. It was a blessing in disguise to me and to many." Rather than demanding political equality, he described his disciplined personal morality and his efforts to educate himself. At the close of the nineteenth century, Holsey adeptly navigated a dangerous, white supremacist environment.[1]

Beginning with his birth as a slave, Holsey's autobiography narrated the story of his "rise from a position of obscurity and unfavorable environment" until "by dint of courage and indomitable will, he has become one of the greatest men of the race." He served as a delegate to the founding General Conference of the CME Church in 1870 and became a Bishop in 1873. His life story showed how, despite being "deprived of school advantages," Holsey "made the woods his

[1] "Bishop Holsey's New Book," *Christian Index,* May 8, 1898.; Lucius Henry Holsey, *Autobiography, Sermons, Addresses and Essays of Bishop L. H. Holsey, D.D.* (Atlanta: Franklin Publishing and Printing, 1898), 10. docsouth.unc.edu/neh/holsey/holsey.html.

school-room and … studied to make himself a man."[2] The autobiography earned praise from competing denominations, such as the Methodist Episcopal Church, whose *Southwestern Christian Advocate* in New Orleans, praised the book for being "as interesting as romance" in its account of "a pioneer … [who] richly deserves the many honors which have been accorded him." Holsey's story revealed that the road from the "slave cabin to the Episcopal bench was … rougher by far than it is ordinarily thought to have been."[3]

The sermons that constituted the bulk of the book demonstrated Holsey's ability to engage a range of significant theological issues through biblical exegesis. He exhibited his extensive reading through literary references that would impress the most refined ministers' sensibilities.[4] The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* praised them as "strong and spiritual" works that "mark[ed] the Bishop as a man of vigorous thought and no little research."[5] The *Christian Index* proved more effusive, praising the sermons as beyond description. Through fifteen printed sermons, "he soars away into the regions of sublimity like Milton" and "is eloquent like Beecher." "But," the review maintained, "he is Holsey, the only inimitable Holsey." The reviewers, grasping for metaphors to express the book's strength, drew upon biblical comparisons for the sermons that "flow forth, clear as the crystal spring of Siloa [sic], and strong as the flood of Jordan, descending from Lebanon to the borders of the Holy Land." Despite his lack of formal education, Holsey "dives into the arts and

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[2] "Bishop Holsey's New Book," *Christian Index,* May 28, 1898.

[3] "Literary Notes," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 7, 1898.

[4] While most scholars would not consider Holsey a significant American theologian, Christopher Hobson has positioned him among prophetic African Americans looking with eschatological hope to a better day. Christopher Z. Hobson, *The Mount of Vision: African American Prophetic Tradition, 1800-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 117-148. Typical of work on Holsey is a 1965 biography by a CME Church minister that extolled Holsey as the type of moderate African American leader needed in the Civil Rights Movement. John Brother Cade, *Holsey – The Incomparable* (New York: Pageant Press, 1965).

[5] Ibid.

sciences, then leads us forth into nature as into a vault of mirrors from which the image of God everywhere shines forth."[6]

Holsey's book also earned strong praise from white southern Christians. Writing in the late 1890s as legalized segregation took hold and lynching continued to rise, Holsey's cautious, conciliatory approach earned white Christians' praise because it fit their narratives of antebellum paternalism. In a glowing introduction to the book, Southern Methodist Rev. George W. Walker lauded Holsey as a living testimony to white southern Christians' antebellum benevolent paternalism. Walker explained that Holsey "represents a faithful product of … the missions to the slaves." After emancipation, which Walker referred to as "the changed conditions that followed in the wake of the civil war," Holsey continued to find "in slavery a providential blessing to both white and black – a harsh measure to bring the ignorant Negro in contact with the educated Caucassian [sic]." As a CME Church Bishop, Holsey sought white Southern Methodist funding "for Christian education of… children" in the CME Church, showing his commitment to education, including that run by white southerners. In sum, Holsey represented an ideal, unthreatening African American Christian in the white southern Christian imagination.[7]

Holsey's autobiography illustrated one prominent African American's response to the pressures of legalized segregation. In order to raise funds for Paine Institute and other schools, he sidestepped questions of political and civil rights. Nowhere in his nearly three hundred pages did questions of franchise or mob violence appear. Holsey's most adept discussion of white supremacy emerged in his discussions of antebellum sexual and familial intimacies during slavery. His narrative

[6] "Bishop Holsey's New Book," *Christian Index,* May 8, 1898. The article recommended that "the student of theology" and "every family" purchase the book. Such encouragement for widespread purchase may have been motivated in part by Holsey's pledge to give a portion of the proceeds to fund Paine Institute. "Bishop Holsey's Book," *Christian Index*, July 9, 1898.; [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, July 9, 1898.; [Untitled Editorial] *Christian Index,* August 20, 1898.

[7] *Ibid*., 5-7.

opened with the statement: "I was born … the slave of James Holsey, who was also my father." As a member of "that old antebellum… Southern aristocracy," James Holsey was "a gentleman of classical education, dignified in appearance and manner of life." Still, "he never married, but mingled, to some extent, with those females of the African race that were his slaves – his personal property." Lucius Holsey's mother, Louisa, was one of those slaves and "an intensely religious woman, a most exemplary Christian." The bitter irony that a slaveholding "gentleman" who "mingled" among the women whose bodies he owned, including the "intensely religious" Louisa, was the father of an African American Christian leader remained silent in the text. Nevertheless, by emphasizing the piety of his mother who would have had no recourse against her owner's sexual advances, he reminded readers, particularly the white Christians who embraced Holsey as an exemplary African American, of the sexual vulnerability of enslaved women.[8]

When he was six years old, young Lucius Holsey was sold one hundred fifty miles away after James Holsey died. Without recounting the emotional impact of the experience, Holsey described his second slaveholder favorably. For this man, Lucius "served… as a body servant" from age six until fifteen, when the owner, on his deathbed, gave Lucius a choice between two of his friends to become his new master. The teenage Lucius chose one who "was a very kind man to his slaves," and this man owned him until emancipation. For that third master and his "interesting family of seven brilliant children and a brilliant wife," Holsey continued to profess "the best wishes and the highest esteem" four decades later.[9]

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[8] *Ibid.*, 9. Although he avoided any explicit critique of slavery as an institution, Holsey's narrative of his early life pointed to the sexual vulnerability of enslaved women and the separation of enslaved children from their mothers. Featuring these elements of slavery (rather than the deprivation of human and civil rights) echoed the romantic racialist elements of much northern Christian antislavery writing, like that of Harriet B. Stowe. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Or Life Among the Lowly* (Boston: J.P. Jewett, 1852).; Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*.

[9] Holsey, *Autobiography*, 9-10. Holsey's autobiography tended to jump forward and backward in time, with some details omitted. For instance, he claimed that he was the oldest of his mother's fourteen

In narrating his childhood, Holsey navigated a precarious terrain because the basic facts of his parentage and early years testified to the unhindered sexual power that white men had over the women whom they owned and over families whom they could separate. He contrasted these details to his own piety and moral discipline. Describing his father and owner as a "dignified" member of the "Southern aristocracy" underlined how unremarkable James Holsey's power was, yet it also reminded late nineteenth-century southern white Christians of elements of slavery's history that they would have preferred to forget. In contrast to his father and first owner, Holsey foregrounded his deep commitment to personal morality during his youth as a slave. He earned his owner's trust because he "made it a special point never to lie to him or deceive him in any way." Holsey committed to be "in all things… honest and true … even to those who appeared to be my enslavers and oppressors." In 1862, he married Harriett, a fifteen-year-old slave woman who had been raised as the slave of a white Methodist bishop. Holsey described their wedding in the bishop's home without noting that, as slaves, they could not legally marry. After emancipation, he and his wife rented a farm with their growing family. In his rented house with two rooms, his "humble palace," Holsey "felt as a king whose supreme commands were 'law and gospel' to my subjects."[10] His church-sanctioned marriage and his subsequent identity as "king" of his household allowed Holsey to perform an ideal of manhood that signaled his respectability and familial responsibility.[11]

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children, but as he also said that he was sold far away when he was six years old, it is unclear how he would have known about his mother's other children. If his mother was also sold to the same new owner, that detail was entirely absent from the narrative.

[10] Holsey's emphasis on being "king" of his "humble palace" resonated with the household paternalism that undergirded the antebellum theological defense of slavery. Stephanie McCurry described this ideology and its appeal to white men who could not afford to own slaves but sought to be "masters" of their households. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

[11] Holsey, *Autobiography*, 10-12. Holsey described his wedding at length and emphasized the generosity of the white women in the bishop's family, a move likely intended to please white Methodist readers: "We were married in the spacious hall of the Bishop's residence by him on the 8th day of November, 1862. The Bishop's wife and daughters had provided for the occasion a

Having established himself as a moral exemplar whose personal piety kept him from lying to his owner and led him to accept the sexual restraints of marital monogamy that his father and owner had rejected, Holsey turned to an account of his hard-won literacy. He sidestepped the fact that learning to read would have been illegal for a slave in order to emphasize education as a vital goal for African Americans. As a slave with "an insatiable craving for some knowledge of books, and especially … to read the Bible," he sold scraps, with the knowledge of his owner, to earn money to buy books, and then white children taught him the alphabet. Armed with his knowledge of the alphabet, two Webster spellers, a dictionary, a Bible, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, he studied well into the night by dim firelight and taught himself to read and write in only six months. His efforts to educate himself later expanded into work to increase the educational opportunities for members of the CME Church. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, he had approached numerous white southern churches to ask for donations to support Paine Institute, which remained controlled by white Southern Methodists. Describing these fundraising efforts in depth, including the names of white leaders who had helped him, Holsey defended his work to fundraise for an institution that remained in white control. Through his book sales, he continued to raise funds from white benefactors and from all purchasers of his book, a part of the proceeds of which he pledged to Paine Institute.[12]

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splendid repast of good things to eat. The table, richly spread, with turkey, ham, cake, and many other things, extended nearly the whole length of the spacious dining hall. 'The house girls' and 'the house boys' and the most prominent persons of color were invited to the wedding of the colored 'swells.' The ladies composing the Bishop's family, dressed my bride in the gayest and most artistic style, with red flowers and scarlet sashes predominating in the brilliant trail. As the gorgeous flashes of waving scarlet and white softly moved across the spacious hall and stood in the glare of the light, I thought I saw in my Harriett an angel in the dwarfed splendors of heaven as if ornamented with gems set upon a background of gold." *Ibid*., 11-12.

[12] Lucius Holsey may have read an abridged form of Milton. John Wesley abridged classic works to provide accessible educational materials for Methodist ministers who lacked Wesley's Oxford education. These abridged texts, including Milton's *Paradise Lost*, circulated fairly widely among Methodist preachers. See Chapter 2 of Carol Acree Cavalier, "Reading Literature with Prayer: The Uses of Milton and Bunyan in 18th-Century Anglo-American Devotional Practice." Ph.D. Diss.,

This chapter argues that in the final decade of the nineteenth century, African American Christians shifted their advocacy goals from arguing for equal political and civil rights to focusing inward on more modest, but still urgent, goals of improved educational access and freedom from mob violence. Class and educational status became important tools in arguments about religious respectability, particularly, as the chapter demonstrates, for women. In this inward turn, African American Christians argued that they were active participants in the cultivation of Christian civilization, and they deployed this concept of Christian civilization to argue against lynching and other forms of extralegal terror. Defending the idea that the United States should be a Christian civilization, African American Christians argued for just application of criminal law and for greater access to a "Christian education" for all residents.

In the 1890s, white southern Democrats developed the legal apparatus of segregation throughout the Mississippi River Valley. They justified their work with religious and historical claims intending to recreate antebellum proslavery Christian paternalism in the "New South." Crafted deliberately to disfranchise the state's African American voter majority, Mississippi's 1890 State Constitution offered a model for the rest of the South of African American disfranchisement through voter literacy tests and poll taxes. While organized threats of violence had kept many African Americans from voting since the 1870s, these new restrictions made legal obstacles, rather than extralegal intimidation, the principal mechanism for disfranchisement. Segregation in train cars and public accommodations spread across the South and the nation, and the 1896 Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* upheld segregation of public facilities through the principle of "separate but equal." Alongside these legal maneuvers, extralegal violence such as lynching continued to rise.

Cornell University, 2000. I am grateful to David D. Hall for making me aware of both Cavalier's dissertation and Wesley's abridgement of Milton.

As legalized segregation closed off any real possibilities for equal political and civil rights, African American Christians moved away from arguments, developed after emancipation, that their shared identity as fellow Christians and fellow citizens with whites entitled them to equal rights. African American Christians prioritized access to education rather than the franchise. Education proved a safer goal toward which to work in these precarious years, and it also represented an area where internal organization within African American communities could make progress despite white southerners' hostility. As political rights receded from view, a more cautious appeal to Christian civilization and, in some cases, to freedom from mob violence, took the place of claims of political equality. Nevertheless, African Americans' arguments about their place in the Mississippi River Valley continued to link their religious identity as Christians to their participation in civic life.

During these same years, white southern Christians congratulated themselves on having addressed "the Negro problem" so thoroughly that they had secured white Democratic political control for many years to come. Southern whites, after several years' efforts, believed they had finally undone the religious and political damage wrought by northern religious and political officials during Reconstruction. These two goals worked together, as African American men's right to vote had been, in southern whites' minds, a misguided plan of northern white radicals, not a political right that African Americans demanded as citizens. While some whites thought that lynching was an evil and uncivilized practice, these opponents launched no organized opposition, nor did they connect white supremacist violence to the increasing number of legal discriminatory practices. Instead, as white southerners reviewed their history and planned their future, they glorified the work of Confederate military and political leaders and articulated nostalgia for the antebellum past.

This chapter analyzes the 1890 Mississippi State Constitutional Convention, where white ministers prayed God's blessing on a Constitution designed to ensure that only white men could vote, and African American Christians criticized the process but could not halt it. Next, it turns to

African Americans' claims that education should override political equality as a goal of collective action. The chapter then focuses on defenses of African American women's religious and moral respectability and the ways these efforts revealed the growing class divides among African Americans. From their arguments about their role as educated, morally disciplined Christians, African Americans launched robust arguments against mob violence as a threat to Christian civilization. Some white Christians also criticized lynching while defending segregation policies, but much of whites' religious and civic work focused on Confederate memorial projects. The chapter concludes by exploring the implications of this final decade of the nineteenth century for Christian arguments about citizenship, race, and gender in the post-emancipation South.

Mississippi's 1890 Constitutional Convention

The decade opened on an ominous note. The early months of 1890 brought devastating flooding along the Mississippi River, displacing thousands of residents. White mobs continued to lynch African Americans with impunity, prompting African American Christians to lament: "How long, O Lord, how long? Is there absolutely no conscience, no sense of humanity in all this country, in all … its church and ministry, the press and the leaders of southern thought?" Not only did white religious and civic leaders ignore this terroristic violence, but the refusal of local government officials and courts to indict members of white mobs showed that the government also was complicit in these killings. African Americans were being "butchered all over this southern country by [mobs] … very often with the arms of the state, and absolutely nothing is done."[13] And the role of the state in restricting African Americans' civil, political, and human rights would only increase.

In August 1890, delegates from across Mississippi met in Jackson, the state capital, to craft a new Mississippi State Constitution to take the place of the 1868 Constitution developed during

[13] "Another Negro Butchered," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1890.

Reconstruction. Their primary goal was to develop new laws that would disfranchise African American men, who still constituted a technical electoral majority, although violent white supremacist intimidation meant that most African American men had not voted in more than a decade. Ensuring African American disfranchisement without explicitly making race the point of disqualification was the main challenge facing white delegates. While other issues, including flood control on the Mississippi River, occupied some effort of the Constitutional Convention, observers readily commented that African American disfranchisement was the Convention's chief goal.[14] On the first day of the Convention, Mississippi native and Southern Methodist Bishop Charles B. Galloway gave an opening prayer "to invoke the blessing of Almighty God" on the deliberations to follow. The fact that Galloway, a fairly moderate white Christian leader who often earned African Americans' praise as an ally, lent his religious blessing to the work of the Constitutional Convention suggested how committed white religious leaders were to white political power.[15]

Galloway's opening prayer invoked the ideas of Christian and political history that white southerners had been developing since emancipation. Before the assembled delegates, all but one of whom were white, in the State Capitol's House of Representatives, Galloway expressed his joy "in the inheritance of our fathers – in their sturdy virtues, their love of liberty, and their heroic history." He prayed that the Convention would "show ourselves worthy of such an ancestry and history, and may perpetuate and improve the heritage of virtue and liberty, they have bequeathed us, we pray, O

[14] "The Negroes," *New Mississippian* [Jackson, Mississippi], June 25, 1890.; "Suffrage Problem in Mississippi," *Daily Picayune* [New Orleans, Louisiana] August 23, 1890.; "Mississippi's Constitution," *New Mississippian*, September 10, 1890,; "The Suffrage Question and the Mississippi Convention," *Daily Picayune*, September 15, 1890.; "The Franchise," *New Mississippian*, October 8, 1890.

[15] *Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention, of the State of Mississippi: Begun at the City of Jackson on August 12, 1890, and Concluded November 1, 1890* (Jackson, MS: E.L. Martin, 1890), 3. Charles B. Galloway was seen as a moderate on issues of race and an advocate of African American education, for which he earned praise from disparate groups. He opposed lynching and worked with African American clergy to advance temperance and prohibition work. See Chapter 4 and below.

Lord, that a double portion of their spirit may descend upon us all to-day." After invoking the hallowed memory of white Mississippi statesmen of the past, Galloway asked divine blessing for "the solemn and weighty responsibilities of his hour – this crisis in the history of our beloved State." In particular, he invoked the "pure patriotism, high-born courage, clear discrimination" and "patriotic citizenship" that the delegates would need as they crafted a new state constitution.[16] On each of the subsequent days, ministers from white Protestant churches in Jackson opened the day's session with prayer, and these prayers likely invoked similar sacred narratives of the actions of Mississippi religious and political leaders of past generations.[17]

The delegates considered a variety of strategies for ensuring a white majority of voters, even briefly discussing enfranchising white women married to propertied men, before settling on the literacy test and poll tax that would form two principal tools for African American disfranchisement throughout the South.[18] As these debates began to coalesce into settled policy, the delegates paused

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[16] *Ibid.*, 3-4.

[17] On the second day, the Convention approved a resolution inviting "the clergymen of the city" to offer an opening prayer each day, on a schedule worked out among the ministers. While the record did not state this explicitly, only white Protestants would have been included in this cadre of ministers. *Ibid.*, 18. The subsequent prayers were not recorded in the Convention Journal, but the name of the minister who opened the proceedings in prayer appeared in each day's minutes. They were W. C. Black, J. E. Gore, John Hunter, D. A. Little, and Irvin Miller. Hunter was a Southern Presbyterian minister and Black was a Southern Methodist, but I have not been able to determine any biographical details for the other ministers.

[18] Article 12: Franchise, Sections 243 and 244 contained the primary tools that would be used to disfranchise African American voters, but other sections of the article also made registering to vote more difficult, particularly if one had moved from another state or another part of the state. "Sec. 243. A uniform poll tax of two dollars, to be used in aid of the common schools, and for no other purpose, is hereby imposed on every male inhabitant of this State between the ages of twenty-one and sixty years ….Sec. 244. On and after the first day of January, A. D., 1892, every elector shall, in addition to the foregoing qualifications, be able to read any section of the constitution of this State; or he shall be able to understand the same when read to him, or give a reasonable interpretation thereof. A new registration shall be made before the next ensuing election after January the first, A.D., 1892." *Constitution of the State of Mississippi, Adopted November 1, 1890* (Jackson, MS: E.L. Martin, Convention Printer, 1891), 37-38.

for a "day of special prayer" on Sunday, September 21, to seek "the direction of an All Wise Providence" in addressing "the magnitude of the race problem." They asked the local white Protestant ministers to "call the attention of their congregation to the subject," so that all white Jackson residents who attended church that day would also consider the important Christian duty of ensuring that white Mississippians could direct the political future of the state without interference from African American citizens and would-be voters.[19]

As the delegates at the Mississippi Constitution Convention were drafting the new state constitution, African Americans across the region decried their efforts. Reporting from New Orleans, Louisiana, the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* wrote that the Convention's "time is almost wholly taken up in devising some plan to insure white supremacy and the round-about disfranchisement of the Negro majority." In a rhetorical question, the paper asked, "Will the nation suffer the constitution of the United States to be thus presumptuously nullified?" The next week, the same column reported that "the Mississippi Constitutional Convention… as yet has not decided" "how to disfranchise its colored voters," and the paper warned that "its unconstitutional constitution" would likely mean fewer Congressional Representatives and thus less representation for Mississippi in national politics.[20]

While the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* criticized the work of the Convention, its articles lacked the force of earlier calls for African American civil and political rights. The discussion of Mississippi's Constitutional Convention appeared less prominently, nestled in the midst of a weekly column on national politics, not on the front page. While African American Christians could issue trenchant criticisms of the political import of the Convention's work and point out the ways that it

[19] *Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Mississippi*, 1890, 228.

[20] "Political Review," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 21, 1890.; "Political Review," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 28, 1890. The eventual resolution of this issue with poll taxes and literacy tests appeared in "Political Review," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* September 25, 1890.

violated the Reconstruction Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, without votes they no longer had any significant means to oppose these actions.

Education as the Primary Goal of Collective Organizing

With the legal instantiation of segregation, many African American Christians began to shift away from demanding equal political rights toward an inward focus on issues like education. Throughout the 1870s and into the 1880s, African American Christians had made strong religious and political claims for equal access to civil and political rights as fellow Christians and fellow citizens with white southerners. But by the 1890s, African American Christians shifted their public advocacy work inward, and their newspapers, as a public forum for exhorting change, praised education – a term that included a range of educational goals from basic literacy, to the higher education for teachers and ministers – as the best focus for communal organizing. Some private opportunities for political resistance may have remained, but the public face of African American Christian activism had turned decidedly inward. This internal focus on education and personal moral discipline worked to position African Americans as active participants in an American Christian civilization. These arguments for communal participation in a Christian civilization avoided discussion of political rights, but they would allow African Americans to denounce lynching as an affront to the Christian civilization of which white and African American southerners were members.

Alongside occasional laments that their deprivation of political rights was an unjust violation of the U.S. Constitution, many African American Christians adapted to the new hostile environment much as CME Church Bishop Lucius Holsey had by terming the pressures of white supremacy to be a blessing in disguise. Whether describing the legacy of slavery or the legal structures of segregation, African American Christians insisted that they could use these challenges to spark greater religious devotion and to motivate efforts for literacy and education. Such claims bent to governing white

supremacist pressures by minimizing African Americans' protest against the injustices of slavery or of legalized segregation, but they also sought to motivate African Americans to work to improve their education and economic position despite the legal and extralegal obstacles that they faced. The afflictions that African American Christians faced could ultimately bring about new motivation that would have been impossible without the blessings in disguise of white supremacist actions.

As the Mississippi Constitutional Convention opened in August 1890, the *Christian Index* in Jackson, Tennessee, suggested in an editorial on "The Negro in Politics" that African Americans should turn their focus from politics to education and property. While maintaining that "as a citizen every Negro has a right to cast his vote and have it counted," the article insisted, "our real happiness and success" depended on factors outside of politics. African Americans should "devote more time [to] the accumulation of homes, property, education and such things as… can speak … louder than any office." Without calling for "the Negro to quit politics altogether," the CME Church's paper encouraged African Americans to consider politics "subordinate to other matters of more importance" and to focus on demonstrating their fitness for full rights through greater economic and educational achievement.[21]

Newspaper articles advocated a shift inward, toward self-examination and internal community action. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* suggested that "we are too much more anxious about our rights than we are about our duties." While "American prejudice in church and state, in pulpit and pew, in the hall of legislation and in the courts of justice, asserts itself incessantly,"

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[21] "The Negro in Politics," *Christian Index,* August 16, 1890. A later article defended the Tennessee Republican Party's efforts to organize African American voters for the upcoming election. In doing so, the article avoided any broader defense of African Americans' political rights. "What is There Wrong About It?" *Christian Index*, October 25, 1890. When describing the work of Baptists ministers in Louisiana throughout the nineteenth century, slavery and freedom were mentioned repeatedly, but none of Hicks' many biographical portraits indicate that any minister had been involved in political activities. William Hicks, *History of Louisiana Negro Baptists, from 1804 to 1914* (Nashville, TN: National Baptist Publishing Co, [1915]). http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hicks/hicks.html

African Americans needed to attend more closely to "their own sins and folly" and to take greater responsibility for education and moral character. In a subsequent editorial, the paper admitted "the completeness of the elimination of the Negro as a political factor in the South," but expressed strong hopes that "as the Negro rises in intelligence, virtue and the acquisition of wealth, the barriers in the way of his progress will give way, and he will become a … political factor." These statements showed a new resignation in regional newspapers that had previously advocated strongly for African American rights. The denial of African Americans' political rights, the newspaper contended, did not signal any inferiority in "the moral and social and intellectual status of the Negro." Instead, African Americans' focus on moral and religious improvement demonstrated their patient virtue and their commitment to retire to churches to "formulate plans for the overthrow of the reign of immorality and the establishment of virtue" rather than to "throw the bomb of the anarchist." This reference to the Haymarket protests in 1886 gestured toward a shared Christian patience among African American and white Christians that northern anarchist labor activists lacked.[22]

Attempts to claim political rights appeared occasionally. A writer in the *Christian Index* asked that, "it be forgotten that he is a Negro and an ex-slave and remembered only that he is a man and a citizen."[23] But for every clear statement that "we deplore any and all legislation which aims to abridge and destroy the civil and political rights of the Negro as a class," there were many more that

[22] "Obstacles to Race Progress," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 11, 1891.; "Ex-Senator Ingalls on 'The Negro Question,'" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 20, 1893.

[23] O.C.R. Strayer, "A Letter From a Southerner to a Southerner: Proposed Solution of the Race Problem," *Christian Index*, February 6, 1892. Other defenses of African Americans' political rights or criticisms of their deprivation of rights include the following, a much smaller group than were found in these papers in the 1880s. "Our Political Leader," *Christian Index*, July 2, 1892.; "Mississippi Plan," *Christian Index*, August 20, 1892.; Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells, "To the Friends of Equal Rights," *Christian Index*, May 20, 1893.; R. T. Brown, "The Negroes' Equal Rights," *Christian Index*, April 21, 1894.; "In League with Evil," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, October 31, 1895.; "Our Thanksgiving," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 28, 1895.; H. M. Murphy, "Our Contributors: How Shall We Hold Our Ground?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 13, 1899.

insisted: "the Negro should pay less attention to politics and devote his attention to those things that appertain more directly to his educational and moral interests."[24] This shift in rhetoric reflected the increasingly dire state of African American political rights, further imperiled by the apathy of the federal government. It also demonstrated the priority given to minimizing the threat of white supremacist extralegal violence. Instead of fighting to restore political rights, African American Christians encouraged their communities to focus on issues over which they had more control, especially improving their education and that of their families and communities. Doing so would improve African Americans' intellectual and economic standing and enable them to show white residents their capacity to exercise political responsibilities judiciously. Still, these appeals focused internally within African American communities and lacked any clear attempt to change the white political or religious establishment.[25]

African American Christians extolled the virtues of education as a cure for many challenges facing their communities. Education promoted virtue and strengthened religious life; it promised African Americans independence from white control and promised to make whites respect African Americans; it was more valuable than wealth and the key to acquiring wealth. Education was the necessary first step for any major goal that African American Christians might have. AME minister and former U.S. Senator from Mississippi Hiram Revels wrote that "ignorance and whiskey" caused most race conflicts, and "education under the influence of Christianity" promised "the panacea for

[24] "A Halt is Called in Alabama," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, May 25, 1899.; "Race Gleanings" *Christian Index*, October 6, 1894.

[25] H. T. Moss, "Influence of Intellectual Pursuits on Christian Character," *Christian Index*, May 3, 1890.; "Less Politics," *Christian Index*, August 27, 1892.; W. D. Godman, "Education," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 24, 1893.

this evil." Education worked with Christian virtue to improve African Americans' moral, intellectual, and economic situation.[26]

Education, particularly efforts for widespread literacy, allowed African Americans to respond directly to the unjust legislation that whites enacted to disfranchise them through literacy tests, taxes, or property requirements. Where new voting restrictions represented "obstacles intentionally thrown in the path of the Negro by… his brother in white," "upon reflection… these would-be hindrances are blessings in disguise." Noting briefly that "every man should be allowed to cast his ballot untrammeled," the article dwelt at length on the ways that African Americans could use the new restrictive laws to "awaken in them a desire and determination to educate themselves and their children" and thus to "work to the best interest of the Negro." The injustice of disfranchisement, which "strike[s] at the manhood of the Negro," could prove "fruitful" if it could "excite him to shake himself like unto the mighty Samson." Samson, a supernaturally strong figure in the Hebrew Bible book of Judges, helped to defeat the ungodly Philistines who controlled the Israelites. Like Samson, who had to exercise personal discipline and never cut his hair in order to have such strength, African Americans, the article suggested, could focus on disciplined self-improvement and then thwart the schemes of their oppressors after they had gained an education and greater prosperity.

The suggestion that literacy would allow African Americans to overcome the new restrictions on their right to vote was idealistic, to be sure. Yet when faced with these new, restrictive laws, African American Christians argued that education and industry were the solution. Unjust legislation alone could not stop African Americans from improving their condition because "a man cannot be legislated into ignorance; he cannot be legislated out of it." "Despite the present darkness" of white supremacist efforts to "stigmatize our manhood and remand us to a position of inferiority

[26] H. R. Revels, "Race Problem," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 24, 1890.

… forever," African Americans could take charge of their own lives through education. Following "the momentum … [of] the last thirty odd years," renewed focus on education could bring African Americans "to higher planes, to loftier heights and to more responsible positions of affluence and honor." These lofty heights seemed to exist outside the realm of politics, thus not to depend on or expect whites Christians' support.[27]

Ministers and the next generation of children were the two central targets of educational efforts. Having an "educated ministry" was central to religious and racial development because ministers who were literate and trained in basic Christian theology and church structures could better shape their congregants for greater religious, moral, and intellectual attainment.[28] Additionally, greater focus from families, churches, and local governments together should ensure that young African Americans received the education they greatly needed. Parents needed to offer a moral and religious education at home, yet local white leaders owed African Americans a better public education system than existed at the time.[29] Any community aiming to be "peaceful and prosperous"

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[27] "Blessings to the Negro in Disguise," *Christian Index*, February 19, 1898.

[28] H. T. Moss, "The Educated Minister a Failure?" *Christian Index*, June 26, 1890.; C. H. Phillips, "The Signs of the Times," *Christian Index*, August 16, 1890.; W. S. Rollins, "The Minister, His Work and Popular Education," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 7, 1892.; M. C. Nisbet, "Education," *Christian Index*, April 1, 1893.; "Bishop Galloway and Lane Institute," *Christian Index*, August 25, 1894.

[29] Iola, "The Place for Training," *Christian Index*, February 1, 1890.; G. W. Spearman, "We Agree with Iola: The Place of Training, Character Building, etc.," *Christian Index,* February 22, 1890.; "Our Young People: A Few Hints to Parents and Guardians," *Christian Index*, March 15, 1890.; "Educate Your Children," *Christian Index*, March 22, 1890.; A. H. Campbell, "Home Education," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 25, 1890.; Mrs. W. H. Keller, "Shall We Educate?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 8, 1893.; G. W. Sprallman, "Educate Your Girls," *Christian Index*, January 6, 1894. [The last name of this author is somewhat obscured by damage to the page; I have recreated the name as best I could.] On the need for public education and thus white support of African American education, see: "The Needs of a More Thorough System of Public Education," *Christian Index*, July 26, 1890.; "Tired of Being Made a Catspaw," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 3, 1890.; T. A. Burkhalter, "Why is the Education of the Negro Impossible?" C*hristian Index*, January 24, 1891.; "Negro Education" *Christian Index*, January 27, 1894.; "Southern Education," *Southwestern*

needed to awaken "to the importance of religion and education" because "we need education more than we need gold or silver."[30] Education also promised to make people "better qualified to accumulate wealth." Accordingly, African American Christians should see that "if any race needs wealth it is our race. If we will educate ourselves we will soon be a wealthy people."[31]

While the power of education appeared universally heralded, the substance of that education varied significantly. The CME Church supported its own Lane Institute as well as Paine Institute, which was run by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to educate African American ministers and teachers. The Methodist Episcopal Church sponsored Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi, and the American Missionary Association continued to sponsor Straight Normal School in New Orleans, Louisiana; Tugaloo College near Jackson, Mississippi; and Fisk College in Nashville, Tennessee, among other institutions. Many prominent African Americans ministers and leaders attended these schools or worked to support them in various ways. Beyond these schools, Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute and its model of "industrial education" also earned praise from African American Christians. Recognizing that "there are some who believe he presses industrial education too far … at the expense of a more liberal education," the *Christian Index* noted that, "we have never said one word of criticism against his teachings" and "congratulate this distinguished educator upon his efforts and wish for him even greater success." The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* heralded Washington as "an apostle of industrial education."[32] This journal's support for both

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Christian Advocate, February 21, 1895.; "Education for the Negro," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 9, 1896.

[30] "Education," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, October 20, 1892.

[31] "The Importance of Education," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, May 4, 1893.

[32] "Booker T. Washington," *Christian Index*, January 29, 1898. See also: "Industrial Education," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 23, 1891,; "An Apostle of Industrial Education," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 18, 1895.; "The Tuskegee Negro Conference," *Southwestern Christian Advocate* March 12, 1896.; "Booker T. Washington," *Christian Index*, July 16, 1898.

industrial education and education in the liberal arts indicated the value placed on any form of education, but also signaled a class divide growing among African American Christians.

Gendering Christian Respectability

Elite African Americans' education, prosperity, and respectability came to the fore in celebrating African Americans' achievement since emancipation.[33] As class divisions emerged with the growth of a small group of more affluent African Americans, celebrating the prosperity of that fraction became an important strategy for denominational newspapers. These articles minimized class tensions in favor of celebrating elites' achievement as indicative of African Americans' capacity for intellectual and economic achievement. Celebrations of opulent weddings or criticism of segregated train cars, both topics that directly affected only the most prosperous African Americans, became grounds for demonstrating African Americans' capacities to succeed within a racist society and to build a Christian civilization through their focus on gendered and sexual discipline.

Annual Emancipation celebrations occurred on the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation's taking effect on January 1, 1863. African American newspapers republished the Proclamation with commentary on their economic, religious, and educational progress since emancipation. Numerous editorials celebrated the "Progress of the Race" or "The Progress and Ambition of the Negro Race." Careful attention to gendered norms of womanhood and manhood further defended the respectability of African American Christian families, particularly women. Women participated increasingly in this work of celebrating African American achievement, and

[33] African American Christian women's creation of a "politics of respectability" has been a major area of focus for histories of African American women and religion since the publication of Evelyn B. Higginbotham's influential work on women in the National Baptist Convention. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). Victoria Wolcott has built on these ideas in a later period. Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

they often used Christian imagery.[34] Mrs. M. L. Halle emphasized the duty of helping other members of the race by enjoining "Christians, one and all, be on your watch; trim up your lamps and let your little lights shine out." When Miss H. B. Hamilton described "Twenty Six Years of Progress" for African Americans from the end of the Civil War to 1891, she highlighted progress in education, character, and refinement. The growth and subsequent restriction of civil and political rights did not appear.[35]

The language of self-help and of an internal focus on education allowed better educated and more prosperous African Americans' desire to demonstrate their success. Changing norms for church services away from demonstrative, spontaneous styles appeared in an article praising an Easter service with a "carefully trained choir" accompanied by a pipe organ and a sermon "carefully prepared and eloquently spoken."[36] Christian refinement appeared in many articles that African American Christian women wrote outlining women's responsibilities. Alongside articles reprinted from national periodicals, these articles written by women (and occasionally men) across the Mississippi River Valley showed their concern for women's conduct. The "preacher's wife" earned special attention. She should be "a model of meekness, patience, godliness, temperance and

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[34] Laurie Maffly-Kipp has described African American women's work constructing race histories in this period through novels, church pageants, and children's literature. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past*, 234-275.

[35] Mrs. M. L. Halle, "Progress of the Race," *Christian Index*, July 2, 1892. The discussion of trimming lamps invokes a New Testament parable in which wise women kept their lamps ready, and foolish women let their lamps burn out, Matthew 25:1-13. A.E.P. Albert, "Emancipation Address," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 16, 1890.; "Echoes from the January 1 Emancipation Celebration," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 23*,* 1890.; "Whence and Whither? Emancipation Address, Delivered Before 7,000 People," *Christian Index*, February 10, 1894.; Miss H. B. Hamilton, "Twenty Six Years of Progress," *Christian Index*, October 24, 1891.; "The Progress and Ambition of the Negro Race," *Christian Index*, May 6, 1893.; [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, May 13, 1893.; "Two Southern Witnesses," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 16, 1898.

[36] A.D. Caldwell, "Letter to the Editor," *Christian Index*, May 3, 1890.

cleanliness," always "neat and clean but never … fancy appareled."[37] One minister's wife wrote, "the work of a Methodist preachers' [sic] wife is equally important … as that of her husband" and required that she be "a self-denying, sacrificing christian."[38] Her work in the Sunday School was vital, and she should follow the example of the valorized Susannah Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley, "a devoted Christian," full "of meekness and peaceableness." Identifying the mother of Methodism's founder as a model for African American women connected these ideals of womanhood in a cross-racial and transatlantic vision of Methodist female piety that implied that religious virtue transcended racial divisions and stretched from the late seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century.[39]

Nevertheless, all women, especially as wives and mothers, bore responsibility similar to that of the preacher's wife. Children's moral training was to begin at home, not in a Sunday School or public school setting.[40] Paralleling arguments that missionaries had made throughout the nineteenth century, articles on "The Influence of Woman" praised Christian civilization for valuing women

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[37] A. Brown, "The Preachers' Wife," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, October 8, 1891. This article was reprinted from a speech Rev. A. Brown delivered to his District Conference, making it one written by a minister for other ministers, rather than written by a woman.

[38] Mrs. L. A. Winbush, "The Preacher's Wife on the Work," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 22, 1892.

[39] Mrs. Laura Hamilton, "The Preacher's Wife in the Sunday School, and Her Duty," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 16, 1893.

[40] Iola, "The Place for Training," *Christian Index*, February 1, 1890.; G. W. Spearman, "We Agree with Iola: The Place of Training, Character Building, etc.," *Christian Index,* February 22, 1890.; "Our Young People: A Few Hints to Parents and Guardians," *Christian Index*, March 15, 1890. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* published a weekly "Woman's Dominion" column from 1897-1899 that included a variety of topics, often reprinted from national publications. Additionally, an "About Women" column appeared weekly through most of 1898 in the *Christian Index*. It reprinted discussions of national groups like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union as well as instructions for women's duties to their families and churches.

better than previous centuries or distant cultures had done.[41] These prescriptive discussions of women's duty as mothers and wives sought to elevate women's domestic labor. "A Mother's Work," wrote a mother from Lexington, Mississippi, began "at the cradle's side." Because a "mother has no time to idle," she "must be like Mary Magdalene, [and] rise early while it is yet dark" on Sundays to ensure that her children are clean and prepared for Sunday School.[42] For women in the growing number of Woman's Missionary Societies that had been praised by male clergy and denominational leaders, their work raising funds for their churches, leading Sunday Schools, and engaging in temperance activity increasingly earned the support and recognition of church organizational structures and of the male clergy.[43]

Central to mothers' Christian duty lay keeping "their entire life…clean, for cleanliness is next to Godliness."[44] Within women's domestic and religious duty, cleanliness implied moral and sexual purity as well as the responsibility for keeping a home clean. Joining the theological valences of

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[41] "Influence of Woman," *Christian Index*, April 26, 1890.; "Womanhood," *Christian Index*, July 18, 1891.; Mary M. Jackson, "Women's Work and Worth," *Christian Index*, January 6, 1894.; Clara A. Teague, "Woman's Dominion: The True Woman and Her Work," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 11, 1897. By including African American women in this elevated, modern Christian womanhood, these articles sought to expand this concept of womanhood. In doing so, women's role as men's "helpmeet" and women's duty of wifely submission emphasized the traditional Christian interpretations of women's subordination. "Man's Helpmeet," *Christian Index*, February 12, 1898.; H.W. Madison, "Marriage Relations," *Christian Index*, September 15, 1894.

[42] Mary B. Mullin, "A Mother's Work," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 15, 1894. The reference to Mary Magdalene recalls the New Testament accounts of Mary Magdalene going before dawn to visit the tomb of the crucified Jesus together with other women to anoint the dead body. There she became the first witness of the resurrected Christ. Connecting the work of a mother getting her children ready for Sunday School to this biblical story lent particular value to women's labor as mothers. Additionally, praising Mary Magdalene as an exemplary woman departed from centuries of extra-biblical Christian tradition that described Mary Magdalene as a prostitute. See Mark 16: 1-8 and John 20: 1-18 (King James Version).

[43] E. M. Carter, "Woman's Missionary Society of the C. M. E. Church," *Christian Index*, July 5, 1890.; "To the Woman's Missionary Society," *Christian Index*, February 26, 1898.

[44] Mary B. Mullin, "A Mother's Work," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 15, 1894.

moral cleanliness to the duties of the home, an article insisted: "Find a godly person and you have a clean person, for godliness is cleanliness, no person is godly who is not also cleaned."[45] Cleanliness, "that virtue that lies next to godliness," meant more than "dish-washing," extending to "cleanliness of the tongue" in avoiding coarse language or impure stories. "Every young couple" setting up their own home should "build there an altar to purity" where their children would learn "high views of morality and honor."[46] Sexual propriety – premarital celibacy and marital monogamy – remained central to this moral cleanliness and to the defense of African American Christians' respectability. As women worked to care for their children and home, their sexual behavior, and their shaping children's sexual behavior proved an essential aspect of their religious duty.[47]

Celebrating elaborate wedding ceremonies allowed denominational newspapers to highlight the value that their members placed on marital sexual propriety and to emphasize the growing affluence of a small group of African American Christians. Regular notices of marriages appeared in earlier decades, but during the 1890s, marriage announcements increasingly showcased the conspicuous consumption of the event through discussions of flower arrangements and the many "valuable and useful presents" that the couple received.[48] For a winter wedding, "the church was beautifully lighted up" in the dark evening, and the minister preached "a noble sermon on the marriage relation," allowing one couple's wedding to extol marriage broadly. At the wedding of a

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[45] "Cleanliness and Godliness," *Christian Index*, March 4, 1893.

[46] "Clean Topics in the Home," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 7, 1897.

[47] This focus on household and religious cleanliness resonates with Anthea Butler's work on white and African American Baptist and Holiness a similar period. Anthea D. Butler, "'Only a Woman Would Do': Bible Reading and African American Women's Organizing Work," In *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power, and Performance*, Ed. by R. Marie Griffith and Barbara Dianne Savage (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006): 155-178.

[48] J. C. "The Hepler-Mebane Wedding," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 8, 1897. See also, "Marriage in High Circles," *Christian Index*, October 3, 1891.; "Marriages," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 1, 1894.

minister, "the bride was handsomely dressed in a white silk dress and the groom wore a clerical diagonal suit."[49] At a wedding officiated "with dignity and grace," the "bride and groom looked as two angels."[50] A wedding in a small West Tennessee town of a couple, who "looked very handsome… both of them wearing graceful smiles of delight," drew both white and African American guests to enjoy "an abundance of refreshments of all kinds." The narrative adapted a biblical reference from the psalms to make it relate to marriage: "How pleasant it is for them to dwell together in holy matrimony. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down on the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion."[51] Weddings like these gave "a proof positive of the progress the people of the colored race have made in social and intellectual matters."[52] While only a small group of African Americans could afford white silk wedding gowns, luxurious presents, or lavish feasts, celebrating those who could allowed a broader group of African American Christians to celebrate the respectability and affluence of this group.

This growing prosperity of a fraction of African Americans and their focus on decorum and refinement helped to strengthen opposition to legalized segregation of train cars. The creation of "Jim Crow Cars" drew more focused opposition from African American Christians than most other aspects of legal racial discrimination. Unlike disfranchisement, which applied to African Americans more broadly, these laws primarily affected those who could afford to buy first class train tickets or

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[49] F. Parker, "Lewis-Jones Wedding," *Christian Index*, July 2, 1898.

[50] "Marriages," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 19, 1890. See also: "Marriages," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 22, 1892.; "Marriages," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 12, 1894.

[51] "The Wedding Bells," *Christian Index*, May 28, 1898. The adapted biblical passage came from Psalm 133, which began "Behold! How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The remainder of the psalm was quoted verbatim in the article from the King James Version.

[52] "Hymenial," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 5, 1894.

sleeping car berths. Thus, they struck at the consumption and dignity of respectable, affluent African Americans, and in decrying them, this elite group was defending itself, more than the whole race. Where denominational papers rarely protested disfranchisement, train car segregation earned condemnation as "rotten to the core." The new laws made "travel in the South, for Colored people… more and more intolerable," because African Americans who would have purchased first class tickets could no longer ride in those more comfortable train cars. Numerous articles collected funds for legal challenges and expressed support for the effort to challenge the new laws before the Supreme Court, in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. Because the laws did not pertain strictly to political rights, African American Christians could oppose them principally as a legal affront to the respectability of more elite African Americans, rather than as a demand for all African Americans to have equal political rights with white citizens. At the same time, denominational newspapers' decision that opposing train car segregation was less dangerous than opposing disfranchisement allowed them to publish striking condemnations of legal segregation.[53]

Like efforts to promote education, African American Christians' instructions for women's respectability and celebration of marriages showed a shifting focus toward internal issues. Recognizing the achievements of elite African Americans and encouraging others to strive for these goals offered internal community goals within African American communities. The opposition to Jim Crow train cars stretched outward to a broader legislative goal, yet the articles that denounced these laws avoided connecting the issue to African Americans' broader civil and political rights.

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[53] "Untitled Editorial," *Christian Index*, March 14, 1891.; "Travel in the South," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 19, 1891. See also: "Our People Protest Against the 'Jim Crow' Car," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1890.; "The Jim Crow Car Must Go," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* October 29, 1891.; W. H. Strickland, and I. E. Stearnes, "The 'Jim Crow' Car Must Go," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 7, 1892.; C. H. Phillips, "Fighting The Separate Coach System," *Christian Index*, February 13, 1892.; "Untitled Editorial," *Christian Index*, May 14, 1892.; "Separate Coach Law," *Christian Index*, January 15, 1898.; "Race Discrimination on Railroads," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* November 14, 1889.

Lynching as an Affront to Christian Civilization

Throughout the 1890s, white vigilante mobs lynched African Americans with increasing frequency. While popular belief held that lynching victims had at least been accused of the rape of a white woman or perhaps of murder, the majority of victims were killed without even these accusations.[54] Almost never did members of a lynch mob face indictment, much less conviction.[55] During these years, African American Christians denounced lynching with vehemence. Lynchings occurred so frequently that denominational newspapers could not keep up with reporting them. As one weekly paper noted, "if this paper should chronicle all the hellish crimes committed against the colored people of the South, it would have to be a daily and of greatly enlarged size." Nevertheless, the article listed a number of recent killings. If their citizenship did not necessarily give them equal political and civil rights with white southerners, African Americans insisted that freedom from such terroristic violence must be "a constitutional and God-given right … [of] the Negro citizen." However, African Americans saw their deprivation of political and civil rights as a major barrier for any organized opposition to lynching, which was the "legitimate fruit of the cry for white

[54] There is a large body of work on the growth of lynching and its racial terror into the 1930s. The first major study of lynching came from Ida B. Wells' 1892 work, which demonstrated that most victims of lynching had not been accused of raping a white woman. Jacquelyn Hall chronicled the movement of white women, led by Jesse Daniel Ames, who worked to end lynching in the 1930s. More recent historians of lynching have emphasized the modernity of these public displays of racial terror, including the consumer trade in photographs of lynched bodies and even body parts from those killed. Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (New York: New York Age Press, 1892).; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jesse Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).; Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 199-240.; William D. Carrigan Ed., *Lynching Reconsidered: New Perspectives in the Study of Mob Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2008).; Crystal Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).; Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, (2011).; Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, *American Lynching* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

[55] "A Courageous Judge," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, May 11, 1892.

supremacy." Because they had almost no recourse for legal or political efforts to halt the violence, African American Christians adopted the language of Christian civilization, against which this extralegal violence was an affront, and they looked to divine justice for intervention in their increasingly dire situations.[56]

African Americans changed their rhetoric about citizenship in the 1890s to advocate for a much narrower freedom from violence, in contrast to earlier claims for equal civil and political rights. In doing so, they argued that the United States' future hung in the balance. "Can the great American nation afford to tolerate one of the greatest horrors of civilization – the crime of lynching?" they asked. Lest that question fail to rouse white Americans to action, another more pointed rhetorical question followed: "Has the game of American forests become so scarce that the poor unprotected Negro will have to answer as a substitute?" The gross inhumanity of lynching emerged forcefully.[57]

When reminding white observers that they were citizens, African Americans maintained that they were thoroughly virtuous, humble citizens. They focused internally on education and gendered respectability rather than claiming equal civil and political rights. Invoking southern whites idyllic, but false, memories of contented slaves, African American Christians quoted Jefferson Davis' wife's praise of slaves' loyalty to the Confederate cause. "Surely" such loyal slaves, "who so faithfully guarded the homes and families of their masters during the war… and who in every trying hour since have shown heroic devotion to their country" deserve "as citizens" to be free of such violence.[58] As citizens, they claimed, "we are industrious, patient, law-abiding, eager to conceed [sic]

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[56] E. S. Foreman, "Shall Lynching Be Stopped?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 20, 1894.; [Untitled Editorial], *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 7, 1892.

[57] J.C. Lewis, "The Crime of Lynching," S*outhwestern Christian Advocate*, April 20, 1899.

[58] "Brutalizing a Race," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 28, 1893. For efforts to oppose lynching by quoting Mrs. Jeff Davis, see: L.J.S. Bell, "The Negro and His Late Master," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 22, 1893.

and willing to submit." Unlike labor activists in northern cities, "we are not anarchists or dynamiters." Accordingly, "the wholesale lynching of individuals of the race," who maintained this posture of humble citizenship "savors of cowardice." Lynching was "an atrocious crime, in which no life is secured, no man is exempt" when mobs could "murder their victims without … remorse of conscience."[59]

In these passionate, yet submissive, appeals for justice, African American Christians pleaded for the rule of law to be restored. The law increasingly sided against African Americans by restricting suffrage and segregating public spaces, but it presented the only hope of stemming the "barbarism and … attack on the rule of law" that threatened lives and terrorized communities.[60] Appeals to national and local laws connected these legal codes to a prior, universal divine law articulated in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. This divine law was supreme. Any "solution of the race problem in the South" depended "upon the moral law and our Lord's Sermon on the Mount." Following that law would "give stability to our government… [and] unadulterated Christianity in our churches and homes." As they appealed to law and stable government as forces that needed to oppose lynching, African American Christians bolstered their claims by incorporating religious arguments.[61]

By eschewing rights-based political rhetoric in favor of religious claims, African American Christians employed the dwindling number of tools available to them to reason with white supremacist community leaders. Calls "in the name of Christianity, civilization and humanity" demanded that the "government … stop this wholesale murder of men."[62] These more conservative

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[59] "Looking Backward," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 26, 1893.

[60] "Lynch Law in the South," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 28, 1892.

[61] J.B. Middleton, "The Present Aspects of the Race Question as Seen by a Negro," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 8, 1893. See also: "In Our Defense," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* December 12, 1895.; H. M. Murphy, "How Shall We Hold On?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 13, 1899.

[62] "Horrible Crimes!" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 21, 1893.

strategies made a great deal of sense in the climate that African Americans in the South faced. In condemning "this diabolical lawlessness" in which "lynching of negroes is becoming more and more a habit," the often conservative *Christian Index* explained why it "counsel[ed] peace and submission to the laws of the land" for outraged African Americans. The editorial explained, "to rise up against the whites would be useless. They have the Army and the Navy and the ammunitions of war behind them." Against the military power of the state, African American Christians could but "appeal to the patriotism of the South, to her press, to her pulpit, to her Christianity, to her sense of justice, and to all that is dear to human life to help us in our helplessness, … to do [a]way with the midnight mob and let the law which is supreme have its course."[63]

African Americans argued that both Christianity and the U.S. legal system recoiled in horror at lynching and that action must be taken lest America's Christian civilization devolve into lawless terror. They lamented that white southern Christians' self-centered hypocrisy denied this obvious evil. And they continued to insist that white fellow Christians join in the thorough condemnation of lynching because of the moral and cultural authority that white Christians held in the late nineteenth-century South. "If Southern pulpits, and the Southern presses should speak out frequently against … lynchings," they claimed, "then in a short time lynching of Negroes will be impossible, and mob rule and mob law will reign no more."[64] The "barbarity" of lynching revealed that there was "great work for Christians to do in this country" to reform uncivilized practices, in much the same way that western Christian missionaries worked to reform cultural practices in Africa or Asia as part of spreading Christian civilization abroad.[65] White Christians needed to recognize African Americans as their fellow Christians and to see that their own country needed the same reforming work they

[63] "That Great Lynching Near Memphis," *Christian Index*, September 15, 1894.

[64] "That Lynching Again," *Christian Index*, September 22, 1894.

[65] [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, July 4, 1891.

eagerly prescribed for distant lands. If white Christians would remove "the cruel barriers which prevent him [any African American] from becoming a member of the same spiritual family of the followers of Christ; [and] treat him as one for whom our blessed savior made the sacrifice of his own precious life," then Christianity could rid the nation of lynching.[66]

The future of the nation rested on these issues because "no civilization can be enduring which permits lawlessness to go unpunished, or which fails to enforce justice in the spirit of absolute impartiality." True Christianity contained all that was needed to end lynching:

> If the white pulpits throughout the entire Southland would teach the Siniatic [sic] law, 'thou shalt not kill'; and the golden rule, and teach the unity of the human race according to the leveling and transforming power of Christianity, all mob violence, the harrowing, sickening reports of lynching, burning and drag[g]ing of lifeless bodies of human beings through the streets of a Christian city, town or village, would cease at once.[67]

Their "southern white fellow citizens" needed to aid African Americans and "espouse the cause of these most defenseless citizens."[68] Indeed, "the good men, the Christians and patriots of the South, must combine" with "the great ecclesiastical bodies, the conferences and presbyteries, as well as the political conventions" so that white southern Christians, as individuals and as denominational bodies, could bring an end to lynching.[69]

Yet lynchings did not end. They became more frequent. African American Christians

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[66] "'Is It Just'?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 23, 1894.

[67] "The Jefferson Parish Lynching," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 28, 1893.

[68] "The Growth of a Better Sentiment in Favor of the Negro," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 27, 1893.

[69] "Southern View of the Lynch Code," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 7, 1893. For other calls for white Christians to reject lynching as incompatible with Christianity and to use their significant influence to end the practice, see: "Report of Committee on State of the Church" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, July 14, 1892.; N. H. Speight, "Race Pride" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, October 19, 1893.; John Braden, "Thou Shalt Not Kill," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 20, 1894.

insisted that this could only be the case because many white "best citizens," who were "members of the Christian churches," continued to allow it.[70] Invoking the memory of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, as the first major religious leader to criticize slavery, exposed the hypocrisy of "these really good (?) [sic] people" who "have consciously or otherwise condoned the great evil" of lynching.[71] Just as southern whites had ignored Christian critiques of slavery from lauded religious figures, they continued to refuse to make "any progress in the line of humanity or respect for law." They showed "the same disregard for the rights of others, the same brutal, domineering disposition, which prevailed in the days when the Legrees cracked their whips over the bruised and scarred backs of their human chattels."[72] White supremacist support of lynching in the 1890s represented the current form of the same cruelty that drove the violence and inhumanity of the most infamous slave owners of the antebellum period.

African Americans had rejected whites' narratives of continuous benevolent paternalism from the antebellum period to the late nineteenth century, and they created their own narratives of ongoing white supremacist violence that rejected African Americans' most basic rights. White Christians' brutal hypocrisy appeared vividly when "the leader of a lynching party… stopped the proceedings long enough to offer a fervent prayer that heaven's choicest blessings might descend upon the helpless wretch who was about to be launched into eternity."[73] The cruel hypocrisy of a white man who would pray for an African American man's eternal soul while killing his body

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[70] "The Half Not Told," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 31, 1893.

[71] "A Clerical Slanderer," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* August 16, 1894. See also "In League with Evil," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, October 31, 1895.

[72] "The Jefferson Parish Lynching," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* September 28, 1893. These sentences in the article were quoted from the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* and included with additional editorial comments in the *Southwestern*. Simon Legree was an especially cruel slave owner in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

[73] "Race Gleanings: Prayer at a Lynching," *Christian Index*, August 25, 1894.

showed that white Christians believed that African Americans could have equal access to heaven after death, but did not deserve equal rights during their lives. When a Southern Methodist bishop expressed support for a lynch mob, African American Christians criticized him for having "disgraced himself and his church by making a speech in defense of lynchers of colored men in the South." A "minister who defends murder, no matter on what ground" was reprehensible because no "man claiming to be a christian should resort to deliberate misrepresentation in order to make a defense of the barbarism that exists in the South to-day."[74]

Publishing accounts of lynchings amongst church news and devotional material demonstrated that Christian opposition to these practices formed an important goal for African American Christians. An article meant for children explained the martyrdom of St. Luke, one of the New Testament authors, as being like a lynching, showing that lynching had become a touchstone for unjust executions in sacred history.[75] The frequency of these brutal acts suggested that "it almost seems that an avenging God has turned his all-seeing eye from such scenes. But God *does* witness them, and in his own time and way will stretch forth *his* strong arm to defend. Pitying, loving Christ also sits at his right hand to plead." Because God could defend African Americans in ways that they could not defend themselves, the editorial called upon "our people to cry mightily to him for help day and night – to live righteously, deal justly with themselves and neighbors, and by good conduct command the respect of friends and foes." Alongside praying for divine intervention, African American Christians should live deeply pious and disciplined lives; stronger protest against lynching appeared impossible.[76]

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[74] "A Bishop Disgraces Himself," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 9, 1892.

[75] "Children's Watch Tower: What Have We Borne for Christ?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 21, 1893.

[76] "Crimes Against a Race," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 15, 1892. Numerous articles listed details of mob violence that occurred around the region: "Negro Lynching" Christian Index,

Deeply embedded in the religious language of African Americans' attacks on southern white Christians' hypocrisy were appeals to divine judgment. Believing that God would judge whites' evil actions and that God could intervene in human affairs motivated African Americans' religious activism. At the same time, calling for collective prayer as a strategy for opposing extralegal violence revealed how few options African Americans had to attempt to stem this rising tide of mob killings. When white southerners continued in such cruel and unjust behavior, they could only expect God's judgment because "as slavery cursed and brought a terrible visitation from Almighty God upon the white people, so will the p[r]actice of allowing mobs to overrule just and equal law." Devastation like that of the Civil War would await white southerners who continued to sanction and participate in the killing of African Americans.[77] With the growing violence, "the people who are committing these outrages are 'piling up wrath against the day of wrath,' and 'more terrible than an army with banners' will be the visitation of God's vengeance," assured African Americans' warnings.[78]

A large group of African American Christians in Louisiana called for a day of fasting and

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July 9, 1892.; "Mob Violence: A Representative of the Colored Man and Minister Deals with the Momentous Problem," *Christian Index*, July 16, 1892.; "Another Burning," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* April 20, 1893.; "White Caps Sentenced," *Christian Index*, May 13, 1893.; "As to the So-Called Investigation in Jefferson Parish," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, October 26, 1893.; "The Gallant March of the Posse," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 9, 1893.; "White Caps Murder a Negro in Tennessee," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 5, 1894.; "A Fearful Arraignment," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 28, 1894.; "Race Gleanings," *Christian Index*, July 7, 1894.; "Oh, Lord! How Long?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 2, 1894.; "Race Gleanings: Marshall Boston Lynched at Frankford, Ky.," *Christian Index*, August 25, 1894.; "Lynchings Must Stop," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* September 13, 1894.; W. R. Patterson, "Appeals to the Manhood of Southern White People," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 13, 1894.; "Lynching Redivivus," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* October 25, 1894.; "Our Nation's Disgrace," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 17, 1895.; "More Lynching," *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* June 13, 1895.; "Lynchings North and South," *Christian Index*, June 19, 1897.; [Untitled Editorial], *Christian Index*, January 22, 1898.

[77] "Brutalizing a Race," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 28, 1893.

[78] "Sowing to the Whirlwind," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 5, 1893. The internal quotations were from Romans 2:5 and Song of Solomon 6:10, respectively (King James Version). See also: J.C. Lewis, "The Crime of Lynching," S*outhwestern Christian Advocate*, April 20, 1899.

prayer, "that we may thereby invoke God's continued help and favor until the last vestige of oppression and wrong" should end.[79] They gathered in a number of churches so that they could "solemnly and earnestly offer up thanksgiving to Almighty God for the mercies of the past, [and] implore his divine protection and guidance in the midst of the crisis through which we are passing."[80] Praying that "the public sentiment of this Christian nation might be roused on behalf of their brethren in the great South-land," the day of prayer sought to remind white Americans that white and African American Christians were "descendants of one Father, the redeemed children of one God, citizens of one nation, neighbors with common interests." Afterward, African American Christians resolved "to continue to exercise that patience and forbearance which has already won many friends to our cause, and which in the good providence of God will surely bring deliverance." In other words, they resolved to employ those limited resources at their disposal and to hope that whites would join the fight against lynching.[81]

African American Christians had few practical means to awaken southern whites to the urgent need to oppose lynching, but they could find in the Bible many models for their prayers for change and for lamentation. Biblical language offered many resources for crafting meaning from the suffering that African American communities faced. Through weeks and months that brought much "time of outrage, lamentation, and sorrow," African American Christians asked, in the words of psalmists, "Oh Lord! How long?"[82] Together with the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible, they

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[79] J. W. Hudson and W. S. Harris, "Resolutions Passed by the New Orleans Preachers' Meeting," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, May 4, 1893.

[80] "The Proposed Day of Fasting, Thanksgiving, and Prayer," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, May 11, 1893. See also: "Thanksgiving and Invocation Day," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, May 25, 1893.; "The Lord Reigneth!" *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 1, 1893.

[81] "Lesson from the Day of Prayer," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 16, 1892. There were similar days of prayer called in 1892 and 1893.

[82] "Sowing to the Whirlwind," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 5, 1893.; "Oh, Lord! How

cried: "O God! Open the eyes of the people that they may see; that they may turn from evil-doing and deal justly with all mankind."[83] On Thanksgiving Day 1895, African American communities struggled against many challenges, as the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* recognized:

> With the threatening and continued apathy of our professed friends; with the consummation of legislative enactments, depriving thousands of our brethren of their political rights; with the continued and easy enactments of odious and discriminating laws, designed to strike down the manhood of the race; with the indifference, if not the downright opposition, of many professing Christian people… ; with lawless desparadoes [sic], their aiders and abettors seizing suspected Negroes and hurrying them to the most horrible deaths without even the semblance of a trial, it might be asked, "Why should we be thankful?"

Yet, despite "this baptism of blood, this unparalleled… race hatred," African Americans should indeed be thankful. Invoking the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, African American Christians insisted "we should be thankful for the privilege of being persecuted for righteousness sake, and for the proud honor of contributing the blood of martyrs as a libation upon the altar of outraged justice."[84] Being thankful for these hardships, the article insisted, could cultivate a deep religious piety in African Americans.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, African American Christians had few sources of comfort or hope in their lives in the American South. The promises of emancipation and Reconstruction had dwindled as local, state, and national leaders curtailed African Americans' civil

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Long?" *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* August 2, 1894. For similar biblical cries of lamentation, see Psalm 6:3; Psalm 13:1, Psalm 35:17, and Psalm 80:4 (King James Version).

[83] "Brutalizing a Race," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, September 28, 1893. This final sentence is not a quotation from the Hebrew Bible, but it resonates strongly with those texts.

[84] "Our Thanksgiving," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 28, 1895. The Beatitudes in Matthew 5 contain the verse: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:10 (King James Version). The second century Christian writer, Tertullian, is credited with the statement that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The Protestant embrace of the idea dates back to the Reformation, and could be seen in the legacy of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. On the translation of these ideas across the Atlantic in seventeenth-century New England, see Weimer, *The Martyr's Mirror*.

and political rights. The danger of extralegal violence continued to rise. Yet, in Christian promises of divine justice and in biblical models lamenting the persecution of the righteous, African American Christians found some refuge as they entered the nadir of segregation. Through churches' increasingly internal work on education and similar goals, African American Christians withdrew arguments for political equality and instead focused on a much more modest agenda.

White Southerners Reflect on the Century's End

White southern Christians congratulated themselves for having so thoroughly solved the so-called "Negro Problem." They continued to deploy historical narratives that celebrated antebellum benevolent paternalism as a model for the late nineteenth-century South. While they glorified the alleged harmony that had existed between slaves and slave owners in the antebellum South, white southerners in the 1890s simultaneously emphasized the supposedly natural separation of races. Their earlier attacks on African American churches as undisciplined or as too political faded into a general disinterest toward African American Christians. They too turned inward, but for different reasons. As Democratic political control spread, white Christians turned their energies to celebrating the glorious history of the Confederacy and to addressing what they considered urgent moral and religious issues facing their communities, especially temperance and prohibition.

At the century's end, white southern Christians worked to memorialize their newly constructed history, both within their various churches and denominations and especially in the creation of Confederate memorials and benevolent groups. White Christians situated their specific denominational histories within the narrative frameworks established by white southerners of antebellum prosperity, followed by the parallel disasters of the Civil War and Reconstruction, and finally a new, hopeful present in which African Americans had been forced to the margins. When two ministers wrote a history of Mississippi Baptists, they noted "the disturbed condition of our

land" during "the years of the Civil War," but spoke more strongly about the damage wrought by Reconstruction when "strong churches seemed then to be on the decline." For Baptists and other Christians, "reconstruction was ominous " and "disastrous to spirituality all over our State." A history of Methodists in Arkansas took pride in their avoidance of all political questions, unlike their northern counterparts who had been deeply involved in opposing slavery, yet the author praised antebellum missions to slaves, where white ministers had been "held in great esteem by the negroes." African American Methodists in Arkansas appeared an unthreatening, marginal group with whom white Methodists had very little interaction. Where white Christians had lambasted African American churches' political activism and impiety before segregation, they now nearly ignored African American Christians.[85]

Many white Christians ignored or perhaps aided the growing number of lynchings executed by white mobs. Some white Christian newspapers published short condemnations of particularly widely known lynchings, but in doing so, they presumed that their readers and church members could not have been involved in such events. But by the turn of the twentieth century, a few prominent white ministers began to denounce lynching. Methodist Bishop Charles B. Galloway, who had offered the opening prayer at the 1890 Mississippi Constitutional Convention, occupied a position as a prominent moderate on questions of race. He had urged Mississippi's state legislature to keep open a public college for African Americans when its closure had been threatened. In a

[85] Z. T. Leavell and T. J. Bailey, *A Complete History of Mississippi Baptists, from the Earliest Times, Volume 1* (Jackson, MS: Mississippi Baptist Publishing, 1904), 61, 618. Horace Jewell, *History of Methodism in Arkansas* (Little Rock: Press Printing Company, 1892), 382. Both works abound with the minutiae typical of local denominational histories. The authors recount persecutions that their denomination faced from other Christian groups, celebrated individual prominent ministers, and underlined the importance of seemingly minor theological disputes. African American Baptists appeared only in a brief appendix near the end of Volume II of Leavell and Bailey's work. Z. T. Leavell and T. J. Bailey, *A Complete History of Mississippi Baptists, from the Earliest Times, Volume II* (Jackson, MS: Mississippi Baptist Publishing, 1904), 1449-1458. African American Methodists similarly appeared in a concluding chapter of Jewell's work.

1904 speech on "The South and the Negro" to a conference gathered to discuss education, he insisted that lynching must end and that African Americans, like "every American citizen," must have access to "the equal protection of the law." In an unusually bold statement for a white Christian leader, Galloway insisted "I give it as my deliberate judgment that there is never an occasion when the resort to lynch law can be justified" no matter how "dark and dreadful the crime," such as the alleged rape of a white woman. As proof that a "better day" had arrived, he cited a gathering of Confederate veterans who had condemned mob violence as proof that the tide of public opinion on lynching was changing among southern whites. When these former Confederates, "who feared not the wild shock of battle in contending for what they believed to be right," condemned lynching, they were, Galloway argued, "loving justice, hating wrong and despising unfairness." For these white Confederates, promoting justice and opposing unfairness meant speaking out against lynching, but not supporting African Americans' civil and political rights.[86]

Galloway singled out lynching as an injustice to be opposed while he upheld the legal structures of segregation as essential for social order. His condemnation of lynching insisted that white supremacist political structures were so firmly in place that there was no need for terroristic violence to keep white Democrats in power. "The old cry that 'white supremacy' may be imperiled is a travesty," Galloway maintained, because "with every executive, judicial and legislative office of the State in the hands of white people" white supremacy rested on a sure foundation. The "suffrage qualifications that have practically eliminated the negro from political affairs" would continue indefinitely, but lynching must end. Recognizing, as African American Christians had done, that lynching's terror strengthened white supremacy, Galloway argued that white political control, especially in his native Mississippi, was secure without extralegal violence. Segregation was naturally

[86] Charles Betts Galloway, *The South and the Negro: An Address Delivered at the Seventh Annual Conference for Education in the South, Birmingham, Ala., April 26th, 1904* (New York: Southern Education Board, 1904), 6, 9.

a permanent condition because "in the South there will never be any social mingling of the races." Ending lynching would not weaken whites' political control.[87]

Opposing lynching while upholding segregation positioned Galloway in line with African American Christians' limited public activism, but he ignored a central element of African Americans' arguments against lynching: that lynching was deeply antithetical to Christianity. However, Episcopal minister Rev. Quincy Ewell in the Mississippi delta town of Greenville addressed precisely this point. He preached a sermon condemning lynching and suggesting legislative steps to end the practice. When excepts from his sermon were published widely, he followed with an editorial that warned: "Not much longer can the Christian preachers of the Southern States afford to keep silent on the crime of negro lynching; they must speak out" to be "true to the spirit of Jesus Christ." He repeated "they must speak out" or face charges, "that their ministry is a mockery of the spirit of Jesus Christ." Ewell insisted that southern Christians, particularly ministers, could not ignore lynching without being deeply hypocritical. In his claims, he echoed African American Christians' laments that lynching was a serious affront to America's Christian civilization. Still, Ewell's claims were sufficiently rare that they attracted the attention of a northern Christian periodical, which reprinted his remarks with much praise. Amid efforts to protect white women against the alleged dangers of African American rapists, criticism of lynching would remain rare among southern whites until Jessie Daniel Ames' twentieth-century leadership of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. Denouncing lynching as evil and unchristian remained a provocative claim at the close of the nineteenth century.[88]

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[87] *Ibid*., 7-8.

[88] Quincy Ewing, "How Can Lynching be Checked in the South?" *The Outlook*, October 12, 1901. *The Outlook* was a New York-based Christian periodical published by the American Sabbath Tract Society. Ewing prefaced these statements with lengthy arguments for why northern whites' were also implicated in the evil of lynching, showing that he did not want to give northern whites any opportunity to feel morally superior to southern whites. His earlier sermon had been quoted in a

Conclusion

By the turn of the twentieth century, white southern Protestants expressed pride in the New South that they had created. From the chaos of emancipation and the misguided interference of Reconstruction, they had restored a white supremacist religious, social, and racial order to the South. In doing so, they deployed the proslavery theology that had defended the antebellum social order. These antebellum arguments had relied strongly on gendered and household hierarchies, which helped them to persist beyond the end of slavery. After emancipation, white southerners only slightly modified the biblical defenses of orderly hierarchies headed by white men that undergirded proslavery tracts. In this celebration of white southern identity, white southerners at the close of the century presented the segregated South as a peaceful, harmonious region. This portrait of the allegedly tranquil New South hid the growing terror of lynching, just as the pastoral descriptions of benevolent Christian paternalism in the proslavery theology of the antebellum South obscured the violence endemic to slavery. From the accounts of a peaceful, orderly antebellum South that defenders of slavery and later white Christians in the 1880s had crafted, white southern Christians found models for describing the orderliness of segregation without mentioning racialized violence. Segregation, like slavery, presented violent inequality and systematic discrimination as a benevolent, orderly paternalistic structure.

The vital links from antebellum proslavery theology to celebrations of the Confederate past in the Jim Crow South stand out in southerners' use of biblical and theological claims and in the ways that gender and race operated throughout these decades. As white southerners narrated their past at the close of the century, they celebrated the history of the Confederacy and of the Civil War.

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previous editorial in *The Outlook* against lynching. In the sermon, he called for the state legislature to levy a tax on the county government of any county where a lynching occurred and for any sheriff who surrendered a prisoner to a mob to be removed from office. "The Epidemic of Savagery" *The Outlook*, September 7, 1901. On Ames' work, Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry*.

But these celebrations of the Lost Cause did not emerge de novo in the 1880s and 1890s as historians have often posited.[89] They had a longer, deeper history stretching back to the arguments that white southerners made to validate their belief in God's support for the Confederate cause in the months and years after Confederate defeat.

When Confederate veteran and Cumberland Presbyterian minister, Fontaine Richard Earle delivered a speech in 1897 at Park's Grove, an Arkansas site that had been a Confederate camp, he defended the Confederate cause. He recognized that "African Slavery was the cause," but maintained that "the northern people opposed slavery and thus were the aggressors." Along with former Confederates, Fontaine insisted, "we do not confess a wrong. We retract nothing." As he outlined the history of the Civil War, he reiterated common narratives of Confederate bravery despite limited resources and claimed that the Confederate army had very few deserters, even near the end of the war. These often repeated narratives were false, just as claims of antebellum tranquility had been; the Confederate army had high rates of desertion, prompted in part by the pleas of soldiers' wives who faced hunger and deprivation. Yet Earle's repeating these claims as a Presbyterian minister, then in his late sixties, showed his commitment to preserving a history of Confederate honor and valor.[90]

This speech, which echoed similar points as many speeches given during these years, must be seen in light of Earle's earlier work to give a theological defense of the white supremacist political takeover in the 1870s. Then, in a sermon giving thanks to God for white Democratic political power, Earle had compared ousted Republicans to the biblical villain Haman, who appeared as a representation of evil in the Hebrew Bible book of Esther. Haman had tried to kill all of the Jews in

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[89] Among others, see Wilson, *Baptized in Blood.*; Hale, *Making Whiteness.*; Brundage*, The Southern Past.*

[90] "Speech at Park's Grove, August 28, 1897," Fontaine Richard Earle Papers, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville. See Chapter 3.

the Persian kingdom, but had ended up being executed on the gallows where he had planned to kill God's chosen people. By linking Haman to his Republican political opponents in Arkansas, he helped to vindicate the often violent Democratic takeover of state governments as a process ordained by God to vindicate the just cause of white southern Christians. Earle's giving thanks to God for Arkansas's white Democratic political takeover laid the groundwork necessary for the celebratory gatherings at Confederate camp sites such as the one at Park's Grove in 1897.[91]

White women were central to the work of crafting religious arguments to link the antebellum past with the segregated South. The growth of the United Daughters of the Confederacy out of local ladies' memorial associations has been well documented, but these groups have largely been seen as products of the final years of the nineteenth century.[92] However, looking more closely at the earlier religious lives of women active in the UDC in the 1890s shows that the core beliefs that powered these memorial groups had developed earlier amid slavery and the Civil War. Kate Foster, as a young woman in Natchez, Mississippi, during the Civil War, had encountered numerous challenges to her religious understanding of her world. One was in 1863, when an African American man entered her church in the middle of the church service to demand a seat among the white members of the congregation, and Foster reflected on the event, not as a sign that emancipation had come to her area since Union occupation, but as a transitory trial from God before his ultimate vindication of the Confederate cause. When the war ended two years later and both of her brothers had died fighting for the Confederacy, Foster in her grief clung to her conviction that the Confederate South's cause, crafted to preserve biblically-supported slavery, had been righteous. When Foster later began her

[91] Ibid.

[92] Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters.*; Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past.*

work with the United Daughters of the Confederacy, she put this conviction into action to shape the history of the South well into the twentieth century.[93]

African American and white southerners had many opportunities to reflect upon grief and suffering in the decades following the Civil War. Whether in Kate Foster's loss of her brothers or African Americans' horror at the rising number of lynchings in the 1890s, Christian theology and biblical texts offered language through which to mourn and to draw upon an eschatological hope for better times. The use of Christian discourse to express suffering also charted a path forward. Biblical categories of affliction or lamentation allowed African American and white Christians in the Mississippi River Valley to position themselves alongside biblical figures who had suffered through no fault of their own.

Methodist minister Rev. John G. Jones had been the only white minister in Port Gibson, Mississippi willing to preach a sermon on a national day of Thanksgiving in 1865 for the end of the Civil War, and he encouraged his congregation to give thanks to God for their afflictions. He explained that these afflictions, like his own loss of a young child, were not punishments for sin, but like the biblical trials of Job, they were opportunities to have one's faith refined and purified. By grouping the deaths of young men in war and the affliction of emancipation together as afflictions of the Civil War, Jones argued that emancipation was an affliction to both whites and African Americans, who alike suffered when slavery was dissolved. In doing so, he preserved the idea that slavery had been blessed by God even after Confederate defeat, and he removed African American Christians' goals from the Christian meaning of Confederate defeat and emancipation.[94]

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[93] See Chapter 1. On Foster's work with the Natchez, Mississippi, chapter of the UDC, see the Foster, Catherine (Kate) Olivia Finding Aid. Catherine (Kate) Foster Diary, MDAH.

[94] See Chapter 1.

Three decades later, at Thanksgiving in 1895, African American Christians struggled to find anything for which to give thanks in the midst of the violent trials through which they were passing. As they sought to cultivate thankfulness for their persecution for righteousness' sake, they shaped communal responses to lynching into the twentieth century. African American Christians gave thanks to God for the ability to suffer and the promise of eternal rewards, but these responses also represented a retreat from the religious activism of earlier decades. The deep conservatism that many ministers and churches, particularly in the rural South, developed in these years would persist into the Civil Rights Movement. Nevertheless, arguments about the sinfulness of racial prejudice and the hypocrisy of southern whites would continue, advanced more cautiously and primarily by women, in the early twentieth century.

Christianity did not simply supply tools with which to understand suffering and loss; it also provided strategies for political engagement. In the post-emancipation South, Christian discourse was the language of political negotiation. African Americans argued that they deserved civil and political rights as fellow Christians as well fellow citizens with southern whites, and although these arguments faded after the creation of segregation, African Americans continued to argue that as active participants in a Christian civilization, they deserved greater respect from white southern Christians. African Americans' condemnation of racial prejudice as deeply unchristian and hypocritical would reemerge strongly in twentieth-century battles for racial equality. White southern Christians, by the turn of the twentieth century, recognized African Americans as citizens and as Christians, but not as equals. Exploiting the ambiguity in both categories, white southerners insisted that African Americans were second-class citizens as well as second-class Christians. In their ongoing commitment to hierarchy and inequality, white southern Christians claimed that they followed the Bible more faithfully than those who imposed liberal political ideas of equal rights onto

their readings of scripture. This supposedly strict Biblicism that had supported theological defenses of slavery would undergird the fundamentalist movement of the twentieth century.

When African Americans' argued that they deserved civil and political rights as fellow Christians and fellow citizens with southern whites, or when white southerners prayed for divine guidance to craft policies for disfranchisement, both sides recognized the Bible and Christian theology as shared cultural touchstones through which to debate the best path toward a better society. The history of the post-emancipation Mississippi River Valley exemplifies the pervasive social, cultural, and political power of Protestant Christianity, but as this project has shown, Christianity was not a hegemonic force for the ruling order but a multifaceted assortment of tools that African American and white women and men could employ for competing goals.

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