

Summer 8-2019

Broken Households: Black and White Baptists and Methodists in Transition in Post-Emancipation Texas

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BROKEN HOUSEHOLDS:
BLACK AND WHITE BAPTISTS AND METHODISTS IN TRANSITION IN
POST-EMANCIPATION TEXAS

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BROKEN HOUSEHOLDS:
BLACK AND WHITE BAPTISTS AND METHODISTS IN TRANSITION
IN POST-EMANCIPATION TEXAS

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

with a

Major in History

by

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August 6, 2019

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Broken Households:
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In Post-Emancipation Texas

Advisor: Professor Kate Carte

Master of Arts conferred August 6, 2019

Master of Arts Completed May 1, 2019

The end of slavery in Texas and the South undercut more than just the economic, labor, and social foundations in Texas. It undercut doctrinal certainty for white Baptists and Methodists and called into question two of their most valued beliefs: the biblical legitimacy of slavery and the divine appointment of white (and male) supremacy. This thesis asks and attempts to answer the question of how white Baptists and Methodists reacted when they were no longer able to practice slavery as a legally sanctioned religiously underpinned institution. By examining denominational documents, church minute books, writings by influential Baptist and Methodist figures, and late Nineteenth Century social examinations of freedmen, this project concludes that white Baptists and Methodists readjusted their beliefs to preserve inequality while further separating black from white society which laid the religious, social, and psychological foundations among whites for the foundation and perpetration of Jim Crow.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MEC-S - Methodist Episcopal Church – South

MEC –MEC – Methodist Episcopal Church (North)

MSMEC – Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North)

CME – Colored Methodist Episcopal Church

AME – African Methodist Episcopal Church

AMEZ – African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

SBC – Southern Baptist Convention

FBC – First Baptist Church

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

M.F. Jamison.....70
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This is dedicated to the Glory of God for Ellasyn, Brighton, Delainey, and my beloved wife Rachael, whose sacrifice and time away from Daddy was borne with love and patience.

CHAPTER 1

In June of 1865, Methodist preacher John H. Caldwell described the Civil War as “a horrible war, a war of desolation, misery, and wickedness.”¹ His realization, shared by many others, was that slavery “more than anything else” brought about the war.² This was not a surprising or unusual thought as the Civil War came to an end. Northern military might made freedpeople of the slaves. Soon constitutional amendments enshrined freedom and rights for those slaves. Methodist churches across the North celebrated the end of slavery, which vindicated once and for all the truth that slavery was a corrupting evil. What is surprising is that John H Caldwell was not a northern preacher. He was not an abolitionist before or during the war. John H Caldwell was the preacher of Newnan Methodist Church, in Newnan, Georgia just 40 miles from Atlanta.

Secession, as a policy, he wrote in 1865 was “rashness and madness unparalleled” according to Caldwell. When secession took place, however, Caldwell took upon the defense of his new country, contending for the “abstract of slavery.”³ Caldwell had done his patriotic duty as a minister when he preached his Fast Day Sermon of repentance and contrition in 1863 and proclaimed that “every cruel tyrant” who refuses to allow their slaves “what is ‘just and equal’”

¹ Caldwell, John H. *Reminiscences of the Reconstructed Church and State in Georgia*. Wilmington: J.M. Thomas, 1895, p3.

² Ibid.

³ Caldwell, John H. 1865. *Prelude to Slavery and southern methodism: Two sermons preached in the Methodist Church in Newman, Georgia*. (Newman, Ga.: Printed for the author), ix. Accessed 10/20/15, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t6445s72k;view=1up;seq=17>

was the source of God's displeasure with the Confederacy and the wrath He at the present time poured out on their "guilty land."⁴ In keeping with the theme of repentance, which denoted Fast Day Sermons, Caldwell declared the only way to satiate God's wrath and save their country was to repent of the ways they treat their slaves. Caldwell's preaching went beyond the individual slave owner to the Southern slave society as a communal whole. Indeed, many of his hearers would have recalled the three times previously Caldwell had preached against, not slavery, but the "wickedness of our laws" on slavery.⁵ By June of 1865, however, Caldwell's listeners were in no mood to hear that slavery, upon which their rebellion had been built, was why God withdrew His blessing from the South.

This paper will address the evolution of the slave debate among Baptist and Methodist, particularly in the South, by tracing the thoughts and ideals regarding slavery of various Baptist and Methodist ministers across the late colonial and early republic period to the end of major hostilities in the Civil War. Though many of these ministers had no direct connection with each other, their writings on this subject are representative of the overall evolution of both anti-slavery and pro-slavery Baptists and Methodists. Finally we will see the fluidity of these argument as pro-slavery Methodists and Baptists during the Civil War adopt for their own purposes some of the anti-slavery Methodist and Baptist arguments they rejected in earlier times. This set up the ability to maintain, in white Methodist and Baptist hearts and theology, racially based systems of white supremacy without the everyday visual symbolism of black enslavement in the post-emancipation era.

⁴ Caldwell, Prelude, vii-viii.

⁵ Ibid, vii.

I

Nineteenth-century Southern Baptists and Methodists, upon which this paper will focus, grew up steeped in the belief that slavery was inherently opposed to the gospel. In the 1790's, there was little intra-denominational debate among Baptists and Methodists over the morality of slavery. By the 1850's both Baptists and Methodists had split, North and South over the issue of slavery. It should be noted it was not the fundamental components of the debate over slavery that shifted over time, rather the perspective shifted. The anti-slavery arguments John Wesley made in 1774 are the same arguments pro-slavery advocate Richard Fuller responded to in 1844 and 1845, which seemingly landed with conviction upon John H. Caldwell's soul in June of 1865. Caldwell's career provides an excellent framework for the examination of the progression of the slave debate among Evangelicals in the early American Republic. His personal journey through the debate over slavery is illustrative of the progressive nature of that debate as moderates on both sides were forced to the edges, of how arguments twisted and subsumed to maintain position, and of how outside forces, particularly in the South, exerted control on the debate and on religious conviction.

Baptists and Methodists are useful to the examination of the slavery debate within Evangelical denominations because they represent two distinctly different polities, but with similar low-church denominational ethos and soteriology. Denominational polities affected how slavery was discussed and acted upon within those denominations. Baptist churches held to a congregational polity. Congregationalism is a doctrine of church structure that prescribes a church is "formed and held together by mutual agreement of all its members" such that each

congregation is not beholden to any priest or set of elders for either legitimacy or authority.⁶ In this view, the local church, or individual congregation, holds primacy over all matters of church faith, doctrine, and leadership. Individual congregations may join with other churches in missions organizations or local, state, and national associations, but they are in no way subject to the decisions made by any group outside the local church. Equally important, the local congregation retained the full right to remove itself from any outside association.⁷

“Denomination” in the Baptist sense is a descriptor of doctrine and distinctiveness, rather than of association. A “Baptist” church was defined by its assent to certain common ideals, not its relationship with other congregations. In other words, there was no inherent communion with another church needed to be “Baptist.” Thus, a Baptist congregation was by its nature local, and free to associate with whatever convention, association, missions organization, or other congregation it wanted, or with none at all. Furthermore, no Baptist congregation in the South was in any way, ecclesiastically or legally, bound to remain in association with any group with which it had previously formed a relationship. Reduced to its least complex components, the conventions and associations that joined together Southern Baptists were dependent on, and receive authority, from the local congregation.⁸

Early nineteenth-century Methodism, by contrast, maintained a hierarchical polity whereby authority and legitimacy of the local congregation flowed down from the denomination itself. Methodists were divided into geographical annual conferences led by elected bishops,

⁶ Holmes, Stephen R., and Ebooks Corporation. 2012. *Baptist theology*. New York;London;: T & T Clark, 96.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Good resources for general early Baptist history are: H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*, David Bebbington and *Baptists through the Century: A History of a Global People*.

who in turn serve as spiritual and administrative leaders appointing ministers to their work. Every four years a starting in 1773 a general conference met, comprised of representatives elected from annual conferences, and set forth the official policies of the denomination.⁹ A Methodist congregation was tied to the denomination via cords of authority that were binding upon the life and action of the local church.

To examine the debate over slavery among Baptists and Methodists, it is important to examine the Biblical arguments for Slavery.¹⁰ The first argument, which gained a lot of traction among slavery apologists, was the “Curse of Ham.” Genesis Chapter Nine describes an episode where Noah got drunk and fell asleep in his tent naked. One of his sons, Ham, saw him naked and did nothing to cover his father. For this, Noah cursed Ham by stating, “*Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.*”¹¹ In spite of however popular, of the Biblical arguments for African Slavery insofar as Ham is in no way identified with Africans.¹² In spite of its weakness, this argument served two purposes: first, it justified racial slavery. Second, it gave slavery an early place in the Genesis account of the origins of humanity.¹³

The Ten Commandments also held a justification for slavery for pro-slavery Baptists and Methodists. One of possessions listed in the Tenth Commandment’s prohibition of covetousness is your neighbor’s slave. Mosaic Law, moreover, prescribes a biblical system of slavery.¹⁴ For

⁹ Melton, J. Gordon. 2003. *Encyclopedia of American religions*. 7th ed. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 443.

¹⁰ A good resource for general early Methodist history is: Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*.

¹¹ Genesis 9:25 (English Standard Version)

¹² Oshatz, Molly, and Ebooks Corporation. 2012. *Slavery and sin: The fight against slavery and the rise of liberal protestantism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 5.//To put the “Curse of Ham” into context, read “Benjamin Braude, The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54/1 (1997): 103-142

¹³ Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin*, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 6.

example, it was sinful to kidnap a person to make them a slave.¹⁵ Hebrews were reminded not to wrong their slaves as the Hebrews were wronged when they were slaves in Egypt.¹⁶ Protections of the Mosaic law, however, did not extend to heathen slaves captured in war or purchased from the nations surrounding Israel. Molly Oshatz points out how this gave “early American slaveholders an all-too-convenient analogy: indentured servants, most of whom were baptized, were Hebrew slaves as African slaves were to heathen slaves.”¹⁷ Oshatz, with good reason, holds that the Biblical text seems to support, if not sanction, slavery as a part of human society. Indeed, passages from the New Testament continue this biblical theme by including slaves as member of family households. This understanding of slaves as part of the household pattern prescribed by God in Ephesians Chapter Five will be shown to useful to white Methodists and Baptists, indeed to wider white Southern society, to justify viewing and treating blacks as subordinate epistemologically to whites. Because of this, anti-slavery Evangelicals’ arguments against slavery had to rest on issues of translation: what was the real meaning of the word “slave” as used in the Bible? This required more qualification of the context in which the word “slave” was used, resulting in an unwieldy argument that failed to gain traction with pro-slavery Baptist and Methodists.¹⁸ And, yet, the success of Baptist and Methodist anti-slavery arguments rested on a formula of interpretation, empathy, and reason. The more biblical argument for slavery, on the other hand, ended up requiring outside force to hold it up. To understand the motivations and thought-processes of post-Emancipation black and white Methodists and Baptists, first we must understand how arguments for black slavery among white Methodists and Baptists were allowed room to spark and evolve to the point of becoming foundational doctrines

¹⁵ Exodus 21.

¹⁶ Exodus 22.

¹⁷ Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin*, 6-7.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 63-64.

among Southern Methodists and Baptists. And, while at the same time the pro-slavery argument among Methodists and Baptists grew to sanctify rebellion, ultimately the anti-slavery argument was forced to set reason and appeal to Christian fraternal bonds aside and wield the sword of vengeance and righteousness instead.

II

Methodists and Baptists in the 1790's had strong anti-slavery leanings due to a couple of factors: the teachings of influential denominational leaders in these fledgling movements in the United States, and the proximity of white Baptists and Methodists to the black slaves they evangelized and with whom they worshiped. These two factors produced denominational positions with surprisingly strong anti-slavery commitments. This can be seen in an examination of the General Convention (Methodist) of 1796, resolutions passed by the Philadelphia Baptist Association of 1789, and General Committee of Virginia's 1790 statement on slavery. John H. Caldwell the minister demonstrates, moreover, how this fact whispered in the consciences Southern ministers during the buildup to the Civil War.

John Wesley, widely considered the founder of Methodism, held manifest anti-slavery views.¹⁹ In his *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, published in 1774, Wesley expressed a depth of thought regarding the issue of slavery. Before his examination of the justifiability of slavery, he recounted a brief history of the resurgence of slavery in Europe and America, the cultural distinctions of the different African peoples who Europeans and Americans enslaved, and the practice of procuring (mostly by kidnapping) and transporting slaves to the Americas. At this

¹⁹ Wesley, John, and William Warburton. 1774. *Thoughts upon slavery*. Philadelphia: London, printed: reprinted in Philadelphia, with notes, and sold by Joseph Crukshank.

point, Wesley deferred theological examination by first asking if slavery can even be justified apart from the Bible? That is, can it be justified by reason?

Wesley posited that a Human Law cannot set aside the *a priori* order of nature. Laws upon laws cannot change what is fundamentally right and wrong, and can in no way bridge the essential gap between “justice and injustice, cruelty and mercy.”²⁰ Slavery, by its nature, cannot be consistent with justice.²¹ Additionally, Slavery is inconsistent with mercy.²² No justification, even one codified in law, can “turn darkness into light.”²³ This point by Wesley is important. As will be seen, to justify slavery and to preserve denominational unity, the argument was made by some Baptists and Methodists starting in the early nineteenth century that slavery is public, legal issue to be decided not amongst the faithful, but in the halls of legislatures.

Wesley responded to those who said slavery was necessary for the glory and wealth of the nation.²⁴ Wesley argued that the ends did not justify the means. No amount of benefit derived by slavery could impute moral value into an institution which was, by Natural Law, morally bankrupt. In Wesley’s economy, it was “wisdom, virtue, justice, mercy, generosity, public spirit, and love for country,” not wealth, that is the glory of a nation. “Honest poverty is better than all the riches bought” at the expense of fellow human beings.²⁵ Wesley warned of the danger of placing profit in a place that eroded moral imperatives. This key argument of Wesley ironically was echoed, in a modified form, by pro-slavery ministers when the Confederacy began to falter during the Civil War.

²⁰ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 33-34

²¹ *Ibid*, 31.

²² *Ibid*, 33.

²³ *Ibid*, 31.

²⁴ Here he refers specifically to England, but the argument held true for the colonies as well.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 45-46.

After he established the evil of the slave trade, Wesley held slave owners on American Plantations guiltier than the merchants, slave ship captains, and “African Butchers” by whom slaves came to America. The reason: their money and desire for slaves was the essential underpinning of the slave trade.²⁶ Wesley implicitly referred to slaves when he quotes Genesis 4:10 depicting slaves’ blood, slaves who had died due to the practice of the slave trade, testifying to the murder, fraud, and robberies perpetrated upon them.²⁷ Further, Wesley anticipated the rejoinder of those who simply inherit their slaves arguing they did not participate in the actual purchase of slaves. He again invokes the Law of Nature answering, “Liberty is the right of every human creature as soon as he breathes the vital air.”²⁸ Slavery, regardless of attempts to codify excuses in law or necessity, deprived the slave of their right under Natural Law.

Finally, Wesley elucidated his theological understanding on the issue of slavery in the benediction concluding his thoughts. All people from all nations are ultimately of one blood, and God is the Father of all. His mercy, therefore, is for all. He prays that God, the Savior of All, would set free the slaves.²⁸ This is in line with the doctrine of equality of souls that was strongly associated with early evangelical denominations. It begs the question of the Christian. If two people are both children of God, how can one person hold the other as their slave? Wesley’s examination of the subject of slavery was meant to force a negative answer to the question: one cannot.

An important theme in Wesley’s *Thoughts on Slavery* is an inherent component of slavery: violence. Violence in the form of murder, robbery, rape, and forced separation of

²⁶ Ibid, 55.

²⁷ “And, the Lord said, ‘What have you don’t? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.’ Genesis 4:10 (ESV)

²⁸ Ibid, 57.

families was part and parcel of the slave trade and ensuing bondage. The violence of slavery underpinned the debate over slavery until 1865, not simply as the source of outrage on the part of anti-slavery evangelicals, but as an inconvenient fact for moderate pro-slavery Baptists and Methodists. Moderate anti-slavery Baptists and Methodists used the propensity of slave masters to abuse their slaves as an example of the “great evil” of slavery, and which forced moderate pro-slavery Baptists and Methodists away from their scriptural arguments, unto rationalistic arguments of their own. If biblical anti-slavery arguments were weak, rational moderate pro-slavery arguments were eventually shown to be more so, something Caldwell embodied in 1865.

Denominational documents among Methodists and Baptist from the early years of the American Republic are stridently anti-slavery in tone and content. Wesley’s *Thoughts on Slavery* is not directly cited in many important denominational documents regarding slavery, but the impact of his views on the subject are nonetheless apparent. For example, the General Conference of 1796, the body setting forth policy for all Methodists, declared African slavery to be a “great evil.”²⁹ Under that understanding the Convention developed several policies to restrict the practice of slavery among Methodists.³⁰

These policies were meant to insulate Methodists from the temptation of owning slaves. First, the Convention recommended all annual conferences be “exceedingly cautious” in who was prescribed for leadership positions within the church.³¹ It directed annual conferences to secure assurance that those considered for official positions would emancipate their slaves, either

²⁹ Christy, David. 1969. *Pulpit politics: Or, ecclesiastical legislation on slavery, in its disturbing influences on the american union*. New York: Negro Universities Press, 383.

³⁰ For more reading on the subject of anti-slavery teachings among early American Methodists see Christine Heyrman, *Southern cross: the beginnings of the Bible Belt*, Charles Irons, *The Origins of pro-slavery Christianity: white and black evangelicals in colonial and antebellum Virginia*.

³¹ *Ibid.*

immediately or gradually, as the laws of the State they reside in allowed.³² Furthermore, the Convention directed that no slave-owner be allowed into the “Society” unless a preacher with oversight over the circuit, spoke with him “freely and faithfully” on the subject of Slavery.³³ Thereafter, the Convention also instructed that anyone determined to have sold a slave should be excluded from membership in the church, after careful investigation resulting in complete proof.³⁴ Finally, the Convention requested preachers and other members spend the intervening years until the next meeting of the General Convention considering effective methods to best “take further steps toward the eradication of this enormous evil from that part of the Church of God to which they are united.”³⁵ In doing so the Convention made clear their intention was to continue and expand anti-slavery policies.

The language of the Methodist General Convention of 1796 is unambiguous. Its directives, clear. Slavery is an undeniable evil. Furthermore, to the greatest extent possible, it has no place in the life of the “Society,” particularly among its preachers and officials. While owning slaves did not exclude a person from basic membership in the church, to participate in the domestic slave trade, thereby perpetuating slavery and directly profiting from it, was to forfeit membership in the church.

As Baptists are congregational in their polity, no overarching document existed prescribing an anti-slavery course to the entire denomination. Such decisions were left up to the individual congregations, which might receive non-binding considerations from associations. Two examples are the Philadelphia Baptist Association of 1789, and the General Committee of

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. A circuit was a geographical division of congregations.

³⁴ Ibid, 384.

³⁵ Ibid.

Virginia of 1780. On October 7, 1789, the Philadelphia Baptist Association passed a resolution calling for the gradual abolition of slavery of Africans.³⁶ The association went on to recommend that the churches it represented form their own abolitionist societies and “exert themselves to obtain this important object.”³⁷ Baptist churches were encouraged to actively engage the wider society on the part of abolition by forming their own groups with the effect of firmly connecting Baptist churches to the abolition movement.

It is important to note that this was not the immediatist form of abolition that would arise later. As the term implies, Immediatist Abolitionists argued for an immediate emancipation of slaves. Jonathan Edwards Jr. in 1791 argued for immediatist abolition on religious grounds due to the man-stealing nature of African slavery, thus in practice called for abolition of slavery in the United States as all slaves were of African origin. Though Edwards was a New England congregationalist, he shared the view that slavery was incompatible with Christian expression. He, however, refrained from calling slavery an outright sin.³⁸ For Edwards Jr., and others it was not slavery itself which was evil, rather the system that provided for and perpetuated slavery in America was evil. The slave trade depended on the unbiblical practice of kidnapping slaves from Africa, thus slavery in America was built on an evil, and needed to be ended without delay. Edward’s argument it was the system of slavery practice, not slavery itself, which was sinful was again modified and adapted by Confederate Methodists and Baptists during the Civil War.

While the Philadelphia Baptist Association only advocated for gradual abolition of slavery, rather than the immediatist abolition position that would eventually rise among some antislavery Evangelicals, it nonetheless strongly encouraged action against slavery. Without a

³⁶ Allison, Burgiss, and Philadelphia Baptist Association. 1789. *Minutes of the baptist association: Held at philadelphia, october 6, 1789*. Philadelphia: Printed by Dobson & Lang, in Second Street, Philadelphia, 4.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin*, 35.

doubt, the Association was prescribing not just assent to emancipationist ideas, but to put those ideas into action.

III

The egalitarian nature of the practices of Methodists and Baptists challenged the social and interpersonal norms of slave owning states. In contravention of the established Anglican Church's practice (the Church of England), Methodists and Baptists radically believed that all deserved to hear the Gospel regardless of ethnic background.³⁹ This is not to say that in principle Anglican Church did not believe in the practice of evangelism, but in practice it showed none of the radical passion for evangelism which casted social stratification aside. This "equality of the soul" shattered, at least from a spiritual standpoint, the divisions between white and black.⁴⁰ Or, as Winthrop Jordan put it, the "central theme of religious egalitarianism," held that "Negroes were 'by nature' the equals of white men because they possessed immortal souls."⁴¹ The radical nature of this doctrine in the place and time of the South immediately before and after the American Revolution cannot be overstated. Christine Heyrman points out that when Evangelicalism arrived in the South, whites were instilled with "nearly a century's worth of law and custom designed to protect slavery." Thus, Whites were instilled with the belief that blacks

³⁹ Charles F. Irons, Charles F. 2008. *The origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 42.

⁴⁰ Najar, Monica. 2005. "meddling with emancipation": Baptists, authority, and the rift over slavery in the upper south. *Journal of the Early Republic* 25 (2): 162.

⁴¹ Jordan, Winthrop D., and Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg, Va.). 1968. *White over black: American attitudes toward the negro, 1550-1812*. Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 215.

were simply “bereft of the capacity for elevated thought or feeling.”⁴² Now, particularly for Whites who had converted under Baptist or Methodism, they were confronted with the unaccustomed (Heyrman goes so far as to describe it as “disturbing” to whites) practice of intimacy with blacks who had also joined or worshiped with Baptists or Methodist Churches.⁴³ Baptists and Methodist efforts among slaves ensured that Negroes had an avenue to walk down into “an important sector of the white man’s community” forcing Whites upon the fact that “Negroes were going to participate in their American experience.”⁴⁴ There is some debate over quantifying slave’s involvement in the Evangelical movement, Irons and Heyrman argue the numbers were minimal, while Jordan and Najar argue the numbers were significant. Disputes on numbers aside, all agree the close proximity to blacks by white Baptists and Methodist forced deep personal introspection about the issue of slavery.

Equality of the soul and missionary fervor aside, there was another reason for evangelism among blacks: ecclesial politics. Charles Irons argues that in the eighteenth century Methodists and Baptists saw their evangelism among black as a “spiritual critique of the established church.”⁴⁵ Slaves, as the lowest of the low, enabled Methodists and Baptists “to claim that they, like Christ, identified with the poor and the downtrodden of world, while the apostate Anglicans catered to the rich and proud.”⁴⁶ According to Irons, dissenters like Baptists and Methodists found a more useful avenue of attack on the established Anglican Church upon the breakout of hostilities in 1775 whereby they began to associate the Anglican Church with “abuses of the Crown.”⁴⁷ This is important because it should be understood that the debate over slavery, and

⁴² Christine Leight Heyrman *Southern cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*. (New York: Knopf), 46.

⁴³ Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 46.

⁴⁴ Jordan, 214

⁴⁵ Irons, 43.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

the treatment of freedpersons in the post-Emancipation age, was always entangled with other political, economic, and nationalistic causes and purposes.

Whatever the primary motivation for evangelism that included blacks, the effects stuck. The Baptist and Methodist experience of the late eighteenth century was biracial. Personal contact became the motivating factor for some whites to begin to advocate for emancipation. Mechal Sobel points out that, “it was not ideology but the reality of contact and shared spiritual lives that brought whites to this changed perception.”⁴⁸ Theology, ideology, even Biblical interpretation tend to reside in the abstract, ethereal halls of the mind. Personal, intimate interaction by its nature is not abstract and requires action.

Baptists understood this well. Free, unforced consensus and unity between believers and churches were paramount in their tradition. Baptist in the early republic often did not take pro-slavery stances, but also avoided taking institutional emancipationist stances, instead directing churches to outside groups for abolition.⁴⁹ Baptist polity, as has been discussed, precluded any statement made, or policy recommended by an association from being binding on the individual congregation, no matter how strong the recommendation.⁵⁰ The statement on slavery accepted by the baptist General Committee of Virginia in 1790 is illustrative of this.

“Resolved, That Slavery, is a violent deprivation of the rights of nature, and inconsistent with republican government; and therefore recommend it to our Brethren to make use of every legal measure, to extirpate the horrid evil from the land, and pray almighty God, that our Honourable Legislature may have it in their power, to proclaim the general Jubilee, consistent with the principles of good policy.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Michel Sobel, *The world they made together: Black and white values in eighteenth-century Virginia*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 197.

⁴⁹ Irons, 72.

⁵⁰ Najar, 164.

⁵¹ Baptist General Committee (Va.). 1790. *Minutes of the baptist general committee: At their yearly meeting, held in the city of richmond, may 8th, 1790*. Richmond: Printed by T. Nicolson, 7.

The wording against slavery is strong: violent deprivation. The action recommended urgent and final: extirpate. At the same time, however, the statement suggested that slavery's destruction come through legal means, via government, and should be done moderately. Not only is the statement not binding, but it suggests a course of action that, theoretically, provides a structure for maintaining harmony within and among the churches. Slavery, while evil (what constitutes the nature of that "evil" and the extent to which it applies to slavery would be something Caldwell and other moderate pro-slavery Evangelicals would struggle with), did not reside within the sphere the church inhabits: the private sphere. Slavery resided within the public sphere, therefore its abolition was a legislative issue, not an ecclesial one. In Virginia, however, there was a minister whose unwillingness to relegate his emancipationist views to the public sphere would destabilize the harmony of consensus.

David Barrow was a codifying force behind more radical anti-slavery Baptists. Barrow was involved in seven years of acrimonious fighting over the place of slavery in the Baptist denomination while he was the pastor of Black Creek Baptist Church, where in February of 1786 he asked the congregation, "is it a ritious (sic) thing for a Christian to hold or cause any of the Humane Race to be held in Slavery?"⁵² After the congregation voted that it was unrighteous, "foes of slavery" made a move to distance the congregation yet further from slavery by asking if anyone who hired a slave from a slave owner be considered as someone who caused persons to be held in slavery. The question simmered for five months before it was withdrawn without answer.⁵³

As white members of Black Creek Baptist Church debated the more abstract question of slavery, African American members of the church "kept moral challenges of slaveholding at the

⁵² Irons, 70.

⁵³ Ibid.

fore,” by doing their part to ensure charges against the Tynes family for “using barbarity toward their slaves.”⁵⁴ The Tyne’s were excluded after a yearlong investigation.⁵⁵ Irons notes this event highlights a recurring theme of violence that is found on both sides throughout the slavery debate, from anti-slavery admonitions to fast day sermons.

There was a movement in the church that one’s stance on slavery ought to be a private one without the strength of conviction to cause division in the church. Church unity became more important than an individual’s stance on slavery or status as a slaveholder. Pressure was thus brought to bear on church members to make slavery a morally ambiguous issue, at least to the point that it was to somehow escape the need for the church to risk itself taking a stance one way or the other. It is unclear exactly what precipitated the charges, but in 1791 the battle over slavery ramped up again when a Brother Jones charged five members, including David Barrow, of injuring his character. More than likely his anger stemmed from his Christian character coming under attack on the basis he was a slaveholder.⁵⁶ “White harmony” was further threatened when another anti-slavery member of the church, Norvel Vick, refused to participate in the Lord’s Supper because in doing so he would be partaking in the ultimate act of fellowship with slave-owners.⁵⁷ Perhaps Vick’s purpose was to hold the church to its 1786 ruling that slavery was unrighteous. Instead, Irons writes the church “valued white harmony more than their antislavery legacy” pressing Vick to “suppress his personal feelings about slavery, rejoin the church.”⁵⁸ Presciently, Vick chose consensus and unity over the issue of slavery, but left the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 71.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Refusing to take communion at a church is tantamount to quitting the church.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

church for good in 1802. The desire for church unity only stemmed the tide of schism for so long.⁵⁹

In the late 1790's the argument over slavery began to move west into what would become the State of Kentucky, along with Barrow. A combination of financial opportunities and personal convictions led Barrow to leave Virginia and move to Kentucky.⁶⁰ Barrow had a Jeffersonian vision of what Kentucky could be; a place of fertile land where settlers could provide for themselves and their families without the "horride (sic) course of negro slavery."⁶¹ The attraction of the west also was that it offered the possibility to create, "pure, covenanted communities in a region unfettered by a church establishment or a society hostile" to Baptists and Methodists.⁶² It was an inherent opportunity to set the tenor of society in Kentucky by virtue of the church and faith preceding civil government. As such, a society free from such moral evils as theatres, gaming, and dancing . . . let alone slavery, could be established.⁶³ With little or no social infrastructure, Kentucky was no better place to buy into the idea that the issue of slavery could indeed be solved in the public sphere and pose no threat to the peaceful coequality of the private sphere, the church.

For these reasons Barrow and many other anti-slavery evangelicals emigrated west with the effect of consolidating the anti-slavery faction in Kentucky and essentially ending the debate over slavery in Virginia by virtue of separation.⁶⁴ If, moreover, the anti-slavery faction thought consolidation in Kentucky would make their path easier, they were quickly disposed of that idea.

⁵⁹ Societies influence on churches is demonstrated here insofar as even among anti-slavery Baptists like Vick, blacks are relegated to a "less-than" status among supposed equals in Baptist churches of the time.

⁶⁰ Najjar, 171.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

The same opportunities, fertile land and lack of established society, drew pro-slavery people (religious and not) to Kentucky. This set the stage for explosive conflict civically and ecclesiastically.⁶⁵

The issue of slavery ended up being determinant in all aspects of major aspects of what Kentucky would be from economic development, to political representation, to class and many issues in between.⁶⁶ Emancipationists' hope for a slavery free Kentucky were dashed when an article protecting slave property was ratified in the new Kentucky Constitution.⁶⁷

As political paths for emancipation closed in Kentucky, the pressure turned back into the religious realm as some anti-slavery Baptist ministers grew weary by what they saw as “foot-dragging” on the part of other members of their sect.⁶⁸ The “moderate consensus” model was thrown out as anti-slavery Baptists began to openly preach for outright, immediatist emancipation, and refused fellowship with churches and associations who allowed, not just slave-owners, but those who tolerated slave-owners as they determined “quiet coexistence with slavery was itself a sin.”⁶⁹ Anti-emancipationist Baptists lost their patience with their emancipationist brethren, who by their actions functionally acted in a schismatic way. No longer seeking to simply keep the discussion out of the church sphere, Anti-emancipationist Baptists in Kentucky sought to reframe the argument over slavery by making the anti-slavery stance an “actionable offense that required church discipline.”⁷⁰ They further took aim at emancipationist leaders, notably David Barrow who was expelled for his emancipationist actions from the North District Association in 1805.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 172-173.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 173.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 174.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 175.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 176.

In the midst of this schismatic episode, Barrow published *Involuntary, Unmerited, Perpetual, Hereditary Slavery Examined: On Principles of Nature, Reason, Justice, Policy and Scripture*. Like Wesley, and many other anti-slavery Baptist and Methodist leaders, Barrow's argument against slavery was holistic, appealing not only to scripture but to reason and theology as well. This perhaps stems from anti-slavery proponents' difficulty in creating a biblical argument in the abstract, as the biblical record on slavery made it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Bible condoned, and even sanctioned slavery.⁷¹ Anti-slave Evangelical writers had to deal with the fact that when the Bible dealt with slavery specifically, it does so in an affirmative, if not prescriptive, sense. Scripture was not abandoned, but it required a different hermeneutic heavily focused through reason.

If Wesley's attack on slavery was underpinned by the theme of violence, Barrow's was underpinned by the theme of right order and allegiance. Barrow's argument began from the premise that anything that breaks laws imposed on nature by the Creator, "must in itself be a great evil" as it spreads disorder in all creation.⁷² Barrow pointed to the passage in Genesis where God surveys His creation and declares it "very good," because it was full of "peace, love, joy, order, and harmony."⁷³ By drawing from Genesis 1:31 (Old Testament),

*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*⁷⁴

and Galatians 5:22-23 (NT),

⁷¹ Oshatz, 5.

⁷² Barrow, David. 1808. *Involuntary, unmerited, perpetual, absolute, hereditary slavery, examined: On the principles of nature, reason, justice, policy, and scripture*. Lexington [Ky.]: Printed by D. & C. Bradford, 10.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ All scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

But, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Barrow set up a praxis, drawn from opposite ends of the Bible, New Testament and Old Testament, by which to judge the morality of an action or institution. Whatsoever works outside the natural order, the intended order of Creation as ordered by God, was sin. Whatever works within that intended order, is not sin and is beneficial to man. Thus, conformity to the intended order diffuses good fruits to “all parts of our world.”⁷⁵

Where did humanity learn to enslave their brother if it was not part of the original natural law? On his way to a greater indictment, Barrow implied slavery was a result of the fall,

...it appears to me, that we have not learned to enslave our fellow-creatures, from any principles discoverable in the inanimate or brutal parts of our creation; nor from the first dictates of our own nature; nor from anything we learn from the conduct of holy angels, one to another, nor from Jesus Christ, for he preached ‘Deliverance (emancipation) to the captives. Luke iv. 18.’”⁷⁶

According to Barrow, the principle of slavery is not observable from any part of creation. It is not found in the animal world. Slavery was not found in the *imago dei* of humanities initial, pre-fall creation. There is no slavery among the angels. Finally, Jesus came preaching deliverance for those held against their will. According to Barrow, slavery is found only in one place within the *current* state of the natural order: “Satan’s conduct toward ourselves” in enslaving the human race to sin.⁷⁷ Regardless of his stated intention that he did not mean to be offensive to slave-owners, Barrow, by insisting that slavery was learned from Satan, implicitly argues those who support slavery are disciples of Satan.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Barrow represents the almost inherent defensive nature of anti-slavery's Biblical argument. Rather than presenting scripture specifically prohibiting slavery, Barrow and other Baptist and Methodist abolitionists instead took the tack that American Negro Slavery did not fit the Biblical prescriptions for slavery. It was, therefore, immoral. In this case, Barrow builds his argument around three contradictory aspects inherent in American Negro slavery. It is by its nature perpetual, which contravenes the temporal enslavement of a person who has fallen into poverty. It is incumbent on the master to release the slave after six years.⁷⁸ The same applies to the unmerited nature of slavery in America, as there should be a reason for someone entering into slavery. Moreover, the Biblical prescription of slavery precludes perpetual slavery without assent of the slave.⁷⁹

In late 1844 and 1845, decades after Barrow's work, two Baptist leaders exchanged a series of letters on the issue of slavery. Francis Wayland represented the anti-slavery position and Richard Fuller the pro-slavery position.⁸⁰ This remarkably respectful exchange of views, theology, and interpretation regarding slavery is an useful tool for understanding the slave debate outside the rhetorical storm of the day.⁸¹

Wayland made a statement early in his letter examining the biblical argument for slavery that is important to keep in mind. Moderate pro-slavery and conservative anti-slavery evangelicals in the debate over slavery operated under the shared belief that the Bible was a

⁷⁸ Exodus 21:2 (All scripture references taken from English Standard Version)

⁷⁹ Exodus 21:4-6; this verse explains how a Hebrew Slave must be set free after seven years, but proscribes the process by which a slave may become a perpetual slave by virtue of the *slaves* desire.

⁸⁰ Fuller, Richard, and Francis Wayland. *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2008, xi.

⁸¹ A good article viewing Fuller and Wayland debate in light of the primary importance of Christian unity over and above the issued of slavery, even after the demise of the Triennial Convention is: Dilbeck, D.H. "'Calm yet earnest attention'--the Richard Fuller-Francis Wayland slavery Debate of 1844-45, Baptist denominational division, and the coming of the Civil War." *Baptist History and Heritage* 48, no. 2 (2013): 61+.

“perfect rule of duty,” which provided them with the possibility this common ground could give reasonable “hope” their opinions might eventually match.⁸² To that end, the debate was over interpretation of a shared source of authority. Ironically, there was no disagreement between anti-slavery and pro-slavery evangelicals that there was a single and unimpeachable authority; the disagreement lay in what was being said by the single and unimpeachable authority. Wayland, for example, argued that God has seen fit to enlighten humanity “progressively” having enlightened “different portions in different degrees.”⁸³ As the human race progressed beyond the patriarchal dispensation of enlightenment, it was inappropriate to interpret scripture as though current people lived in that time, under those circumstances. At the time it made sense for the Hebrews to enslave (perpetually) the Canaanites: God had given them a situationally specific commandment to do so. According to Wayland, it would not do for Jews of the 1840s to return to Palestine and start enslaving the current inhabitants.⁸⁴ Fuller responded to this type of thinking as an “expansion” view of interpreting scripture.⁸⁵ He nationalistically referred to this principle as an imported European “mature philosophy” that has “outgrown the childish ignorance and simplicity of the apostles.”⁸⁶ For Fuller, this “prudent and accommodating elasticity” when it comes to Biblical interpretation was dangerous because detaches interpretation from the exact and literal meaning of the text. It opens the door for every innovator to “contend that he had just discovered ‘the true principle’ of a text.”⁸⁷

⁸² Ibid, 30.

⁸³ Ibid, 41.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 39.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 126.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 127.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Wayland's original article for the *Reflector*, which was the genesis for the exchange, covers expounds a three-pillar set of complaints against slavery which bears examination due to its re-occurrence throughout the slavery debates. The pillars were set forth via a question: "Has God imposed obligations upon men which are inconsistent with the existence of domestic slavery?"⁸⁸ Wayland responds with three obligations: the duty to proclaim the gospel to all people, marriage, and the parent/child relationship. Proclamation of the Gospel to all people must mean "without respect to circumstance or condition." The Marriage contract was for life and cannot be put asunder for any reason except unfaithfulness. Finally, the order of filial and parental relations established by God necessitates children honor and obey their parents as parents support and educate their children while they raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Slavery, Wayland argued, was a system which holds the authority to "sever these relations, and to annihilate these obligations."⁸⁹ In essence, these obligations are higher obligations established by the Christian religion in all places to all people. Slavery's obligations threatened the free and faithful practice of these obligations by placing the master's will, needs, and wants over and above them. Slavery, therefore, was indirectly forbidden, which was just as forbidden if it were directly forbidden.⁹⁰

Fuller's response to this line of objection, in January of 1844, was to pars Wayland's argument by arguing that enslavement in and of itself does not restrict or violate Christian obligations. Slavery necessarily only interferes with "*personal* freedom (emphasis added)."⁹¹ Slavery is acceptable *because* a person held in bondage can be "treated in every respect as

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 192.

⁸⁹ *ibid*.

⁹⁰ *ibid*, 192-193.

⁹¹ *ibid*, 108.

immortal, intelligent, moral, fallen, ransomed being... a Christian” whose conjugal and parental relations are sacrosanct. This, after all, is the “exact precept of the Gospel” according to Fuller.⁹² Fuller’s point is: the possibility a master may abuse his slave does not make slavery sinful, because slavery as an institution is not in and of itself inherently wrong. Fuller believed that Wayland confused “right” with “power.”⁹³ While it was true that slavery conferred power...including power to abuse...upon the master, it did not confer the right to be abusive.⁹⁴ Though Fuller admitted there was enough abuse of authority on the part of masters to make him “regret its general existence,” he placed the sin of abuse against slaves squarely on the heads of masters, not on the system that provided the opportunity for abuse.⁹⁵ The evils that accompanied slavery was the individual sin of certain slave masters, not the communal sin of all involved in holding other human beings in servitude. Later developments in pro-slavery apologetics gave Fuller’s position the sense that it was a head-in-the-sand view of the problem over slavery.

In 1863, I.T. Tichenor delivered a Fast Day sermon before the State Legislature of Alabama a theme of which was the abuse and neglect perpetrated on slaves by masters. Tichenor a native of Kentucky, was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Montgomery from 1852-1860.⁹⁶ He spent some time with the Seventeenth Alabama Regiment where he earned the nickname, “The Fighting Pastor” for a sermon he delivered at Shiloh, as well as for the skill he displayed as a sniper in that battle. By 1863, in contrast to Fuller in 1844, Tichenor approached the behavior toward slaves by masters with urgency and contrition. This is not to say that

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid, 106.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Williams, Sr., Michael E. "Issac Taylor Tichenor's Fast Day Sermon - Laying the Foundations for a blend of Old South myth and New South advocacy." *Baptist History and Heritage* 48, no. 2 (2013). Accessed November 30, 2015.

Tichenor had a soft stance on slavery. Indeed, he did not “doubt for a moment that slavery is right,” but the abuses of it needed to be corrected.⁹⁷ The urgency of the Civil War gave rise to introspection on the part of Southern slave-owners. Tichenor’s sermon shifted the responsibility for the abuses against slaves from the shoulders of individual masters to society. Rather than treating such abuses as regrettably regular occurrences, he indicted the whole society stating, “we have failed to discharge our duties to our slaves.”⁹⁸ Fuller’s tone was defensive, arguing for the rightness of slavery yet taking no responsibility for abuses, Tichenor confronted his listeners with their sins, seemingly comfortable with the razor edge between his stance and the indictment of the slave system. Tichenor particularly took the Confederacy to task for not respecting the sacred nature of marriage and the parental/child relationships and lack of attention to slaves’ spiritual well-being. Slave families were allowed to be split up to pay their owners debts, which was “an evil of no minor magnitude” requiring an immediate remedy.⁹⁹ In arguing for slavery, Tichenor actually made use of Barrow’s argument against slavery. The fundamentals of the issue are the same, but the view is decidedly different. While Barrow used such evils as proof that slavery was in and of itself a sin, Tichenor indicts as sin the behavior of those practicing an allowed and sanctioned institution.

Here we see the closing of a circle. Tichenor exhorted his audience, the Legislature of Alabama, to remedy the laws that allows for the rending asunder of man and wife, and the separation of slave families. At the turn of the century, while the abstract issue of slavery was being moved into the public sphere, the concrete actions of masters against their slaves still

⁹⁷ Tichenor, Isaac Taylor. 1863. *Fast-day sermon .. delivered before the general assembly of the state of alabama (filmed from the holdings of The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia)*, 11.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

resided in the private sphere of the church, as was seen in the Tynes episode at Black Creek Baptist Church. Now that slavery was not just the law of the land, but the very foundation for the Confederacy's existence and purposes, and with the war effort faltering, Baptists and Methodists were willing to cede private responsibility to the public sphere in order to ensure God's favor upon the Confederacy, in order to preserve their cherished institution while ensuring the success of their rebellion. Tichenor's Fast Day sermon also intimates that slave abuse was a far wider problem than Fuller had been willing to admit during his exchange with Francis Wayland. What it also tells us, moreover, in spite of evangelical defenders' best arguments, the slavery enshrined in the laws of the South was not biblical slavery. If it had been, why did Tichenor call upon his Legislative congregation to change the laws to reflect the more biblical slavery Fuller had defended twenty years before. To be sure, Tichenor was still making a defense of slavery, but perhaps we see a hint of guilt regarding at least the way it was practiced. More likely, we see desperation theology attempting to stay one step ahead of impending wrath.

IV

Contrary to criticisms leveled at Caldwell by some hearers of his 11 June 1865 sermon in Newsom, Georgia, Caldwell was not an abolitionist. But neither, did he present himself as pro-slavery in the sense of Tichenor, if we are to take him at his word. He was a critic of the "great evil of slavery" insofar as there were many wrong things in the institution.¹⁰⁰ These were the same evils accompanying slavery we have seen first as criticism of slavery by anti-slavery

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, vi.

evangelicals, and then as instruments of confession by pro-slavery evangelicals as the War began to go against the Confederacy. In his preface to the published version of his 1865 sermon, Caldwell describes his progression of thought on slavery. When the Methodist Church South struck all anti-slavery language from its Disciplines (including any provisions requiring proper and Biblical slave/master relations), Caldwell had been greatly disheartened. Two years before his sermon in Newsom, Caldwell came to the conclusion that the only way to secure independence for the South was to fundamentally change the whole system of slavery and thereby became a “warm advocate of gradual emancipation.”¹⁰¹

Finally, the full force of his present convictions, combined with the inescapable fact that slavery had been abolished through war, produced what was truly offensive to the ears of that June 1865 congregation: slavery was not just dead, God had destroyed it because of “the moral evils inherent in the system” which they would not remove.¹⁰² Perhaps this was Caldwell’s way of making the best of what had to be endured. But, the wounds of Appomattox were not even beginning to heal, the federal occupation forces roamed at will, and the congregation’s pastor...best friend to some of them...rather than providing a soothing balm, had the nerve to suggest that slavery was not an institution sanctioned by God and that it was the slave-owning South’s own sin which killed slavery once and for all in America.

What is equally amazing is that Caldwell actually gave the sermon. Reminiscing thirty years later, Caldwell recalled how, after dedicating his birthday to self-reflection and prayer, he spent a wakeful night thinking about the lost war and its beneficial outcome, the end of slavery. Using the Evangelical language of conversion, Caldwell describes how he received “new light

¹⁰¹ Ibid, vii.

¹⁰² Ibid, xii.

and life from above” and with “agony and penitence” committed to share in plain terms the evils of slavery.¹⁰³ Some of the agony must have been derived from the understanding his course of action could cost him prestige, ostracism, and even quite possibly his life. Indeed, he was the subject of a “torrent of abuse.”¹⁰⁴ Caldwell described a sort of second conversion, replete with enmity from the world for his friendship with the truth revealed to him.

Using no specific scripture verse, no literal exegesis, but rather a reasoned theological argument, Caldwell attempted to make sense of the South’s loss and the Church’s role in it. For decades the gospel of slavery was preached from evangelical pulpits. Now slavery was dead, and it was clear pro-slavery evangelicals had obviously got it wrong. As much as Caldwell’s June of 1865 sermon was a crafted around a confessional call to repentance theme, we are remiss if we accept it entirely in that vein. It was a sermon looking for someone to blame.

In Caldwell’s sermon he never came out and says that slavery is inherently evil, only that the system of slavery as practiced in America was hopelessly flawed, giving precedence to evil ways of practicing slavery. American slavery did not respect the humanity of those in servitude, treating them as mules and horses, insisting slaves had no souls.¹⁰⁵ Slavery in America was only a tool for accumulating wealth.¹⁰⁶ If, then, it was well known that these abuses were occurring, that they were out of line with God’s will, and that the current system enticed God’s wrath, why was no one willing to call the slave power, as Caldwell refers to them, to account?

¹⁰³ Caldwell, *Reminiscences*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 3-4.

¹⁰⁵ Caldwell, John H., *Slavery and southern methodism: Two sermons preached in the methodist church in Newman, Georgia*. (Newman, Ga.: Printed for the author, 1865), ix. Accessed 10/20/15, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t6445s72k;view=1up;seq=17>

¹⁰⁶ Caldwell, *Slavery*, 38-39.

Caldwell describes the slave power, the relatively small group of families who owned most of the slaves in the South, as the as “the mightiest power for near a century that existed on this continent.”¹⁰⁷ The slave power’s plan for protecting its chattel view of slavery was simple: crush possible opposition and leverage its power to put a limit on free expression, speech, and religious practice as it related to slavery. Caldwell began by examining how the slave power, with a little help from abolitionist wing of the national denomination, worked to force conservative anti-slavery elements and moderate pro-slavery elements away from the middle ground into the extremes. Caldwell blamed the slave power for the schism in the church whereby the church in the south, by the nature of the schism was wholly pro-slavery, and expunged all rules regarding slavery from its discipline.¹⁰⁸ The church thus conquered, the slave power brought moral obligation derived from God’s Law, “into subordination to the legal right, established by the civil law.”¹⁰⁹ Fuller, a moderate pro-slavery evangelical, had his delineation between “power” and “right” eliminated by the slave powers shrewd silencing – or appropriation – of the church’s moral authority. The slave-owners’ right was absolute, his power to do what they wanted with their slaves was above reproach. The Church’s mission and independence was essentially coopted and it allowed to preach only what the slave power, who stood in opposition to the church, desired. Eight million southern Whites came under the ideological sway of the slave power, but the leaders of the church did nothing because they were “overawed by the slave power.”¹¹⁰ Free speech and free press? No such thing existed in the South, and the belief that liberty was what had been fought for was pure rhetoric. Everything was dependent on the slave

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 33-34.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 35.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

power. From pulpit to conscience, all was dictated at the pleasure of slave power.¹¹¹ It was fitting, then, that God saw fit to overthrow the institution of slavery.¹¹² More so, that it was overthrown through a war the slave power itself promulgated.¹¹³

By laying blame on the slave power, Caldwell also makes an attempt to absolve the Methodist Episcopal Church - South of blame for the great evil of slavery. If the MEC-S had not been silenced by the slave power, it could have ensured a more “biblical” version of slavery had been adhered to. Perhaps more southern Evangelicals would have become “warm advocates of gradual emancipation” themselves. It can be seen how, even without doubting Caldwell’s sincerity regarding his conviction over slavery, he carved out room for Methodists to abdicate responsibility for slavery. Pro-slavery Methodists were wrong, but they were wrong because an irresistible, stronger, over-arching power denied them the ability to do right. God was powerful enough to destroy slavery along with the Southern way of life, but not powerful enough to have enabled men like Caldwell to speak and do what they should have done in regard to the slave debate before the Civil War. While they were wrong, they were still victims.

V

It is ironic that, though pro-slavery Methodists and Baptists had the preponderance of scripture relating to slavery on their side while anti-slavery evangelicals were forced to combine theology, reason, and an “elastic” interpretation of scripture to argue their point, it was pro-

¹¹¹ Ibid, 37.

¹¹² Ibid, 21.

¹¹³ Ibid, 39.

slavery evangelicals who were drawn further into a system that used totalitarianism, oppression, and subterfuge to ensure the system's survival. Between 1790 and the beginning of the Civil War moderate ground on slavery eroded until the large body of moderates, pro and anti-slavery, were forced to the edges, or into silence. As abolitionists argued for immediatist emancipation, radical pro-slavery responded by blurring the lines between the power inherent to the master and the rights of the master. In other words, poor treatment of slaves became codified in the slave owning society. Pro-slavery moderates found their faction subsumed and relegated to a support role for the slave power. We see in Caldwell's example and writings an evangelical who never allowed himself to be pulled to the ideological extreme. He is also an example of how harshly ideas and expressions contrary to the slave power's wishes were inhibited by the slave power, as Caldwell only felt safe to express his convictions after the bayonets of 20,000 Federal troops occupied Georgia.¹¹⁴ Caldwell's essential argument was that God's providence in the destruction of slavery proved the anti-slavery argument right. Within the text of Caldwell's sermon, the functional weakness of the pro-slavery argument was illustrated: no convincing argument required heavy handed oppression of dissenting voices. Methodist and Baptist arguments for slavery, at best, could not escape the evil that followed so close behind slavery, even if it was given that slavery in all forms was not inherently wrong. At worse, slaver was unable to avoid being coopted into an unholy, captialistic version of the pro-slavery argument.

But, Caldwell's arguments ultimately did not carry the day in the South. Not long into Reconstruction it was clear that I.T. Tichenor's concern for the black family was over-stated. If the outcome of the Civil War and abolition had answered the question of the righteousness of slavery, it did nothing to warm the hearts of Southern Baptists and Methodist to their Northern

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 37.

brethren. Contrary to Caldwell's hopes, there would be no deep soul searching among Baptist and Methodists about slavery that would cause them to jettison all the sinful beliefs that came with it. Southern White Baptist and Methodist, instead, got right to work reformulating their doctrines to justify inequality suited to a new economic, political, and racial reality.

CHAPTER 2

“As I do not expect to appear often in print, I will take occasion to say...that white men established and have maintained this Government, that it is a white man’s country, which is entitled to, and must have, a white man’s Government, under the control of white voters, and officers elected by them, and that I am utterly opposed to negro suffrage in any form, as it must lead ultimately to negro equality, to which I never will quietly submit.”¹¹⁵

These words were written by Texas Ranger, Mexican-American War veteran, U.S. Marshall, Confederate General, and Texas Legislator H.E. McColloch in response to the so-called Millican Riot of 1868. A black minister and Registrar of Voters for Brazos County, George Brooks, led a contingent of approximately 75 freedmen from around the town of Millican, Texas, to locate the body of another local black leader, Miles Brown, who was rumored to have been lynched. Though they were unable to find the body of Miles Brown, he reappeared alive and well a few weeks later living in neighboring Washington Country, according to news reports a white man named William Halliday had sufficient reason to be concerned Brooks’ militia of freedmen were coming for him. He fled to the safety of white authorities in Millican and informed them of his fears he was to be hanged by Brooks militia.¹¹⁶

At three that afternoon a group of thirty or forty white men led by the town’s mayor and a deputy sheriff left Millican to track down Brooks’ and his followers. As they came around a

¹¹⁵ “Letter from Gen. H.E. McCulloch” (August 15, 1868),” *Millican “Riot,” 1868*, accessed August 22, 2018, <https://millican.omeka.net/items/show/5>

¹¹⁶ G.A. Wheat, “The Riot at Millican: Statement by the Mayor of the City (July 30, 1868),” *Millican “Riot,” 1868*, accessed August 27, 2018, <https://millican.omeka.net/items/show/8>; The Texas Countryman “Riot at Millican (July 22, 1868),” *Millican “Riot,” 1868*, accessed August 27, 2018, <https://millican.omeka.net/items/show/174>

bend in the road the whites and a contingent of Brook's militia collided head-on into each other. According to the mayor's account, he and deputy sheriff dismounted from their horses and approached one of Brooks' lieutenants with the hopes of diffusing the situation. Before much could be discussed, according to white-dominated accounts, a young member of Brooks' militia discharged his weapon.¹¹⁷ The whites then? fired their weapons in force, killing Brooks' lieutenant and two other freedmen outright, and wounding three or four more. Immediately the freedmen rode away for safety.¹¹⁸

After the violent collision of the groups on the road, the white mob returned to Millican where they placed pickets around the town for defense. The remaining freedmen regrouped with Brooks in Freedmantown just outside Millican.¹¹⁹ In his statement on the event, the mayor of Millican, G.A. Wheat, claimed to have gone to Brooks' headquarters in Freedmantown, where he unsuccessfully parlayed for peace and was rewarded with an Enfield rifle to his head for his trouble. Only the strict adherence to Brooks' orders by the freedmen militiamen saved his life. Wheat was miffed at being held at gunpoint and refused to continue the conversation under those circumstances. He urged Brooks to meet with a group of white men in order to come to an agreement to end the affair. After his failed parlay, Wheat returned to the white mob in Millican where he declared a "fight it was!"¹²⁰

Around eight that evening Brooks reconsidered Wheat's proposal and sent a delegation who met with a group of "citizens." The freedmen accepted Wheat's proposal that they quit

¹¹⁷ In reviewing other so-called "race riots" in the post-Emancipation period and during Reconstruction, the occurrence of a "small young black male" accidentally discharging his weapon causing the whites to fire volleys into the black group is a common element to the event surrounding these occasions of racial violence. A good examination of racial violence during Reconstruction is Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

¹¹⁸ Wheat, "Riot."

¹¹⁹ Some documents refer to it as "Freedmanville"

¹²⁰ Wheat, "Riot."

drilling as a militia, lay their weapons down, and no longer carry their weapons on their person when in public. For that, the whites promised there would be no more Klan parades through Freedman town, or as Wheat euphemistically put it, there would be “no further demonstrations on the part of the whites.”¹²¹ Three hours later, at ten o’clock, however, a train with the county sheriff and between one hundred and one hundred twenty-five armed white men arrived from Bryan, Texas. When the sheriff arrived he was informed of the agreement reached with Brooks. The white men returned Bryan, but the sheriff remained in Millican to ensure the conflict had come to an end.¹²²

At his headquarters in Freedman’s town Brooks had a change of heart about how to settle the conflict. Maybe everything had simply spun up into something greater than he ever anticipated. Perhaps word got back to him the sheriff and reinforcements from Bryan had arrived at the Millican train platform. It is not hard to imagine that Brooks, as he paced about his headquarters on that hot humid night, struggled to figure out the next step.¹²³ The work black frontline political workers performed threatened southern white society at every level. Political power in the hands of blacks had the possibility meant they could stamp unfair labor practices by whites, hold whites accountable for violating the due process and human dignity of freedpersons, and permanently deconstruct the South’s society built on inherent beliefs of white supremacy and the inability of blacks to do what they were proving they could – successfully participate in a democratic society.¹²⁴ In Millican, Texas, in the Summer of 1868, Brooks was more than just a

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ "Negro Riot at Millican" July 25, 1868," *Millican "Riot," 1868*, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://millican.omeka.net/items/show/171>

¹²⁴ Some good sources for early Reconstruction are Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* and Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. For Reconstruction see Dale Baum, *Counterfeit Justice: The Judicial Odyssey of Texas Freedwoman Azeline Heare.*, Ira C. Colby, *The Freedmen’s Bureau in Texas and its Impact on the*

threat to white hegemony. While being a Northern Black Republican office holder directly involved in who was registered to vote and who was not – with an obvious predisposition to register as many former slaves to vote against the interests of their un-Reconstructed former masters, and the leader of a black militia was threatening enough, it was his role as minister of a black congregation that made him dangerous.

After the Civil War religious groups in the north jumped at the chance to evangelize the South (both religiously and politically) by exploiting their status on the winning side of the sectional conflict. The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church - North felt that to preach the gospel was to “help Congress and the President to pacificate” the South.¹²⁵ One speaker at the MSMEC annual meeting of 1866, at which Brooks was ordained, stated that in order to attain the “blessed result” of unifying the nation, the MEC needed to go into the South not just bearing the gospel of peace, love, and charity, but to “stop murderers, bloodshed, the Ku Klux Klans, vigilance committees, and all those enormities and excrescences of that false and vicious civilization.”¹²⁶ While their mission was peace and salvation, it is clear from the speakers at the MSMEC had no qualms with using violence if needed to protect the needy and further their goals.

It is not hard to miss the colonial and missional tone of these words. Northern Methodists viewed Southern white society as savage and uncultured, lumping Southerners into the same category and missions to the frontier and foreign countries. The Methodists who gathered in New York that year to discuss strategy, pray for guidance, and ordain new ministers for the mission field of the South saw Southern civilization as diseased and dark. It was the

Emerging Social Welfare System and Black-White Social Relations, 1865-1885, and Merline Pitre, *Through Many Dangers, Toils, and Snares: Black Leadership in Texas*, Texas A&M Press, 2016.

¹²⁵ Annual Report 1866, p 77.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

greed of white men that made is so. With Reconstruction not a year old, the MSMEC, like other northern denominations, saw places in the South, like Texas, as a verdant field “white for the harvest”.¹²⁷ On the whole they saw not just the newly accessible freedmen ripe for evangelism, but all the former slave-masters, slave-holders, slave-breeders, and those who once traded in slaves. The MSMEC saw the ashes of the South’s pre-Civil War social, economic, and economic order as the very nutrients needed to produce an abundant crop in their missionary harvest. All that was needed was wise, judicious, praying men of moral courage to go into the field and preach a gospel of love, friendship, and brotherhood; which incidentally was also a gospel of reverence and obedience to constituted authority and power.¹²⁸

As the violent events in Millican, Texas in July of 1868 unfolded, on one hand it must have been tempting for Brooks and his militia to hold their own and engage in an armed stand to demarcate just how far blacks were willing to let the whites’ bitterness go. On the other hand, as a minister ordained by the Methodist Episcopal Church – North, his pastoral instincts for protection of his flock must have been strained at the loss of at least three members of his militia.¹²⁹

I

Black suffrage and the availability of blacks to hold elected and appointed office was one of the more threatening and offensive results of the Southern rebellions failure. The first and

¹²⁷ Ibid, 78.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 77.

¹²⁹ Ibid.; “Negro Riot at Millican’ July 25, 1868,” accessed September 17, 2018 <https://millican.omeka.net/itmes/show/171>; Methodist Episcopal Church, *Forty-Eighth Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the year 1866* (New York: Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1867), p 130.

most obvious threat was political. Blacks voters had overwhelming reasons and desire to vote against the interests of their former oppressors. I also argue there was another factor to the offense whites took at black suffrage, that of the concept of masculinity. Black suffrage was restricted to males, just as white suffrage was also restricted to men. Suffrage unlocked the path to public life, responsibility, and duty. These were the very things white Southern males associated with masculinity.

Another thought may have begun to crystalize in Brooks' mind that rendered the agreement with the whites untenable: the whole affair was created by white authorities to do away with Brooks while also dealing a destructive blow to his militia and blacks asserting their rights in general. Brooks was a highly unpopular person among whites in Brazos County, Texas in 1868. First, he was black. Second, he was active in politics and held the office of Registrar of Voters for Brazos County. Third, he was a minister ordained and sent as a missionary by a northern denomination.

Brooks position as Register of Voters did not put him among the higher pantheon of black ministers who held office following Emancipation. As he was not a member of the State House or Senate, he did not have direct input in forming state laws that attempted to benefit blacks living in post-Emancipation Texas. But, if black men occupying desks in the legislature symbolized the end of the pre-War status quo, it was men like Brooks who held lower county and municipal offices that drove that point home with a bitter strike.¹³⁰ According to Steven Hahn, these men became the "petty sovereignties of masters destroyed by the abolition of

¹³⁰ Good sources about black leadership is Michael W. Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction*, Elizabeth Regosin, *Freedom's Promise: Ex-Slave Families and Citizenship in the Age of Emancipation*, and Barry A. Crouch, *The Freedman's Bureau and Black Texans*.

slavery” who enforced new social realities and power structures that were still being determined.¹³¹ The notion of black suffrage was noxious to whites. Aside from the power implications, the basic right to vote put black men on par with white men. Black male suffrage undercut the notion that Texas white man’s country that not only needed a white government, but *deserved* a white government.¹³²

Brooks and registrars like him were on the front line of exploiting the weaknesses in Southern white male hegemony created by military occupation and exclusion of former rebels from political office and the voter rolls.¹³³ Registrars had to be energetic, true believers, and devoted completely to the cause. The weaknesses they had to exploit were not without challenges. Aside from logistical and bureaucratic responsibilities, they were often responsible for massive geographic areas, challenged with enrolling perspective voters who may not have taken surnames and often could not establish their age, and finally had to beware of whites who falsely swore past loyalty to the United States.

Military Districts set up in the South after the Civil War were often understaffed, which complicated the already hefty list of duties registrars carried. First, commanders faced great difficulty to secure the number of registrars needed to efficiently accomplish the goals of enrolling freedmen to vote. Second, district commanders were unable to provide necessary manpower to fully protect registrars. Thus, particularly in isolated areas without a government presence, registrars had to contend with white landowners who courted upheaval as they

¹³¹ Steve Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles In The Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 220.

¹³² H.E. McCulloch, “Letter.”

¹³³ It is interesting to note that in spite of widespread violence and intimidation against black voters throughout the South, white’s present themselves as committed to the idea of democracy. Their tactics were designed to keep blacks from exercising their right to vote, but not so much to over throwing, or in most cases, sitting out the democratic process. Democracy for white’s was reserved for Jeffersonian white men.

struggled to maintain the political ignorance of newly emancipated blacks even going so far as to attempt to cynically convince freedpeople registration to vote would actually lead to re-enslavement. To freedpeople who still contemplated attending political meetings or registering to vote, white landowners' options for retaliation included dismissal from employment and personal violence.¹³⁴

Black suffrage represented a basic and epistemological threat beyond white power hegemony. It was a threat to the white male's understanding of masculinity. H. E. McCulloch's argument against black suffrage in a letter inspired by the events at Millican to *The Weekly State Gazette* of Austin argued that blacks had no need of representation in government if the law were faithfully and efficiently administered "by *honest* men" who were selected by men who had the deep interest in the "public good."¹³⁵ By "honest," McCulloch meant white men. Similarly, the men who elect them should be white men. McCulloch, like many Southern men equated social responsibility to masculinity. To allow black males access to that kind of responsibility was to allow them access to the domain of masculinity that previously was the sole privileged domain of white males.

To understand this concept, it is helpful to examine pre-Emancipation bi-racial Methodist and Baptist understanding of family in Texas. In spite of their differences in polity, these denominations were similar in that their view of the church as a sacred and perfected family.¹³⁶ For them the church was a universal reflection of the individual family unit, or "household."¹³⁷ This biblical imagery of God (historically represented as male) as Master over His bride: The

¹³⁴ Hahn, *A Nation under*, 220.

¹³⁵ H.E. McCulloch, "Letter."

¹³⁶ Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) viii.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

Church, His children: Christians, and His domain: The Universe, was embraced and enforced by the white members of pre-Emancipation bi-racial churches. The male conception and expression of God's nature among pre-Emancipation Methodists and Baptists cannot be understated. As God was the Father and Master of the household of God, earthly fathers were imbued with representative authority over the microcosm of the heavenly household individual families represented. Thus, the concept of God's family was not just a "model of community most concrete and accessible, one rooted in their daily lives and reaffirmed in their experience of conversion and congregation."¹³⁸ It was also prescriptive to how family households should be ordered.

This promise of idealized fatherly love and intimacy that extended to all relations by professing evangelical Christians also codified dependent relationships by women, children, and slaves to fathers, which gave fathers "sacral status."¹³⁹ The act of accepting the love of God meant submitting one's life and obedience to the mastership of the Heavenly Father in turn meant that one accepted God's ordering of the familial household with its contingent – and sacred – hierarchies. Theoretically, the male father and master of the household was answerable to God and his church or congregation. His love for his wife was to be like Christ's sacrificial love for the church. Wives were supposed to submit to their husbands just like Christ was head of the Church. Children were to honor both their father and mother because that is the first commandment with a promise. Finally, slaves were to obey their masters in all things because in doing so they were serving God.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Ibid., 171.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 172.

¹⁴⁰ Ephesians 5:25; 28-29; 6:1-2; 6-7 KJV

At the same time, fathers had a list of obligations to their dependents. They were to think of their wives as themselves and remember to nourish and care for them just like they do for themselves. When it come to their children, Fathers were supposed to take care to nurture and admonish their children while not provoking them to wrath. Finally, when it came to slaves, father's (which was synonymous with master) were to take care to be slow to threaten punishment to them, because God shows no partiality to men.¹⁴¹

Each verse relating to father's responsibility to their household members introduces two important ingredients to the concept of manhood in the white South: duty and place. Fathers had sacred duties to fulfill to their wives, children, and slaves. Wives, children, and slaves in turn had an ordained place to remain relative to their position to the father in the prescribed family order. A father's dominion over his household was in theory checked by his duty to each subordinate household member. Conversely, wives, children and slaves' God given rights as believers were defined by their particular role within the household. What was, at least on one hand, meant to provide accountability within the household in fact had the effect of deepening the dependence of wives, children, and slaves on fathers and further expanded the father's power as master both at home and within the broader society.¹⁴²

In the South, duty and place easily transitioned from responsibilities incumbent upon the father of a household to justification for father's complete dominion over the lives of his dependents. His wife, children, and slaves were thereby trapped in a place of un-repayable debt to the father who in his duty provided for their needs and protection. Each member of the family had rights, but those rights were not identical. For Southern Methodists and Baptists, rights were

¹⁴¹ Ephesians 5:28-29; 6:4; 6:8-9 KJV

¹⁴² McCurry, *Masters*, 212, 172.

attached to the role each member of the family held in the household.¹⁴³ Each member's rights were limited by the rights of the member whose place was above them in the hierarchy of the household. Slave's rights were limited by the greater rights of (white) children. The rights of children were in turn limited by those of the mother. A mother's rights were limited by the dominant rights of fathers. Finally, a father's rights were limited only by his church, the wider society and representative government of whom he alone in the household had the full right of participation. In this, "duty was the Christian face of power, reciprocity the Christian face of inequality."¹⁴⁴

In the view of the white southern Methodists and Baptists, both before and after the Civil War, there was a direct connection between the how individual household units were organized and the government. Rufus Burleson was a Baptist missionary, pastor, and president of Waco University from 1861 until it became Baylor University in 1886, where he remained president until he was made president emeritus in 1897.¹⁴⁵ In his pamphlet, *Family Government*, Burleson wrote, "True family government, like all true government, is instituted for the sole benefit of the governed."¹⁴⁶ Burleson was careful to delineate the difference between proper family government and "family tyranny or family despotism." Whereas true family government is sure to bring the "brightness of noonday...the joys and harmony of heaven," family despotism is sure to bring the "darkness of midnight...the blackness and horrors of hell."¹⁴⁷ Burleson then showed how God poured wrath and destruction out on societies and nations whose family government

¹⁴³ Ibid., 212.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 179.

¹⁴⁵ *Handbook of Texas Online*, J.A. Reynolds, "BURLESON, RUFUS COLUMBUS," accessed Feb 24th, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fbu44>.

¹⁴⁶ Burleson, Rufus C. *Family Government*. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Burleson, *Family Government*, Ibid.

was either non-existent or deficient, focusing on the passages describing God's journey to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the poor job Eli did as father to his debauchery prone sons.¹⁴⁸

While Burleson wrote *Family Government* after the Civil War and Reconstruction, it stands to reason that as a pastor who was ordained in Mississippi in 1845, received his seminary degree from Western Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky in 1847, and from 1848 earned a generally positive reputation as a missionary, pastor, and professor in Texas, his basic doctrinal understanding of the family and household order was settled prior to emancipation.¹⁴⁹ Burleson gives a magisterial description of the family order that bridges the gap between the possible egalitarian understanding of the Household of God and the patriarchally dominated view that undergirded Southern political and social reality. He describes the father as kind to his family, exercising his authority in tenderness to show his children that good government is not the same things as oppression. The mother exercises a queenly duty by showing the children that her submission the husband is not slavish in nature, but graceful obedience required for familial harmony. Interestingly, in Burleson's understanding of the Christian household children learned reciprocal love in their interaction between older and younger children and not from their Father and Mother. Through the examples he gives of how a proper family should govern itself he shows that children are free to and should love their mother and father but does not stress that mothers and fathers are under obligation to return the same affectation. This is because the main concern and function of the family was not love and affection. Rather, the family was concerned with authority and obedience. The family is where children were taught the "cardinal virtues of a good citizen."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 5-9. Burleson is referencing Genesis 18 and 1 Samuel 3-4.

¹⁴⁹ Reynolds, "*Burleson, Rufus Columbus.*"

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 30.

Southern democracy was an alchemy of gradated levels of rights and freedoms protected by a representative form of government that drew its existence from a religiously entrenched, and secularly reinforced, notion of authoritarianism and obedience that defined society's most basic social unit. It is cruel irony that black slaves served as the very foundation upon which the South's inequitable system of familial and gender roles was built. Forced to labor against their will and without compensation, slaves were also unwillingly forced to play a crucial role of support in the very system, which barring an inevitably violent and overwhelming intervention by an outside entity, held them and their future generations in perpetual bondage.

White Baptist and Methodist masculinity therefore became an important structural support for the practice of slavery in the South. First, ministers used slavery to reinforce gender relations that were generally already customary in the South. Second, was an understanding by white men who were either small farmers or owned no slaves, that their freedom was secured by the slavery of black people.¹⁵¹ Even if a white man did not own slaves, he was nonetheless buttressed in his masculinity by the place that black slaves held in a society built upon a framework of gradating freedoms determined by a person's inherent place in the Southern household. White men were secured in their masculinity by the responsibilities available to them, whether or not they owned a slave or had a family. For white society in pre-Civil War South slavery was a necessary component to reinforcing their concept of masculinity. This would have serious ramifications on the concept of white masculinity when the component of slavery was taken away.

¹⁵¹ McCurry, *Small Masters*, 214, 225, 240.

II

When Emancipation and Reconstruction came to the South, they brought with them the right of public service and responsibility to African Americans. Freedmen and African Americans from the North, like George Brooks, suddenly had access to the responsibilities that brought with them secure masculinity. These were responsibilities that before the war were only available to white males. In the minds of white men from Charleston, South Carolina, to Millican, Texas, blacks' attainment of these responsibilities was tantamount to bestowing undue rights to masculinity on blacks by fiat in a deeply racial and paternalistic society. For white Methodists and Baptists, not only did black suffrage and political leadership threaten to upend the social order, it was heretical. The household order with blacks at the bottom had been taught as Biblical and doctrinal truth. It's very notions of gradating rights commensurate to the inherent abilities of each member was essential to the worldview held by white Southern Methodists and Baptists. Put another way: white Southerners believed that by divine law and desire blacks did not have the inherent mental and moral abilities white men possessed. Blacks, by their divinely ordained role of servitude could not, by definition and doctrine, be men.

Burleson's *Family Government* continues to be a useful tool in understanding the mindset of white's toward freedpersons, particularly when paired with the writings of Philip A. Bruce. Philip A. Bruce was the son of Charles Bruce who, prior to the Civil War, was one of the largest slave-owners in Virginia and continued to be one of the largest land owners in Virginia after the Civil War. Philip Bruce attended the University of Virginia and studied law at Harvard. After he completed his studies at Harvard, Bruce moved to Baltimore where he was so bored with the

practice of law, he took up writing a series of letters for the *New York Evening Post* about the then current status of freedpersons, based on his recollections and knowledge from growing up on his father's plantations. When Bruce expanded on his letters writing a book, he was unable to find a publisher for his manuscript because its views were at that time generally unpopular and unprofitable in the North. Two years later in he found that northern readers had "developed more liberality of thought...with respect to the problems involved in the problem of the negro in the South," and successfully found a northern publisher for *The Plantation Negro as A Freeman*.¹⁵²

When it was published, *The Plantation Negro as A Freeman* was received as, "a social study by a careful observer, a kindly but just critic," who drew his conclusions from many years of observation.¹⁵³ The general conclusion by reviewers across the country was that it was a carefully crafted book for the purposes of enlightening all Americans as to the actual reality of freedmen in the rural South.¹⁵⁴ Bruce's work received its highest praise in the form of a letter from none other than "Ex-President" Jefferson Davis who regarded the book as a remedy for a subject that was generally, "so misrepresented by writers having no exact knowledge of the subject." One of Davis' major concerns was how history presented to school children in their history books was "the grossest perversion of facts." Davis was gratified that "at last a southern writer, comprehending the true character of the negro (sic), has chosen to present a real portrait for the benefit of the uninitiated."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Papers regarding Philip Alexander Bruce's historical writings and personal correspondence, 1899-1940. Accession #2889. Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA. https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/slide_player?mets_filename=sld5125mets.xml.

¹⁵³ *Papers regarding*, *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Other reviewers echoed Davis' sentiment. While those who wrote the history books for school children, presumably the victors of the preceding sectional conflict, that had no real tangible interaction with freedmen, Bruce was a person who grew up in a household with many plantations and freedmen laborers and thus had the experience that made his conclusions incontrovertible. One review stated that Bruce's deductions were forced on his mind "by the facts he collates and by the incidents he cites."¹⁵⁶ They held that the objectionable and condemnatory nature of his propositions to some was not enough to override the incontrovertible veracity of his observations and analysis. However, in spite of his more objectionable and condemnatory propositions, other reviewers were quick to point out Bruce fair and balanced approach as they noted he, "writes from no prejudiced position, he sees the better points in the negro's character, and he has hope of the race."¹⁵⁷ Indeed, from time to time through the course of *The Plantation Negro as a Freeman* Bruce did attempt to approach certain aspects of freedpersons in a positive light. His attempts, however, were more than likely a rhetorical approach than the reflection of a genuine desire to show the better parts of his subject matter.

From the beginning Bruce was writing for a Northern audience. Bruce only sought northern publishers for his manuscript. As we see from Jefferson Davis' letter of congratulations to Bruce for the publication of his book, the message Bruce was delivering was not new or revelatory to readers in the South. For them, his book was simply confirmation of what they already believed. Like an evangelist willing to walk into a hostile crowd to enlighten souls, the audience Bruce was aiming for were the northern readers who in their ignorance of the real

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. Through my research I have concluded that the sentiment expressed here is the post-Emancipation/Jim Crow version of, "But some of my best friends are black." It is an attempt on the part of whites to cast themselves as un-embittered by the end of the pre-Civil War slave society while at the same time maintaining firm belief in rigid racial hierarchy. Their "hopes of the race" are never about equality or high achievement, but about freedpersons succeeding in their unalterable ideal social position as docile laborers.

abilities and accurate existence of former slaves were most likely to find his conclusions objectionable. We err in reading the relatively few areas Bruce positively deals with freedpersons as anything other than a way to soften his approach to an audience predisposed to discount his arguments. Thus, a careful reading of *The Plantation Negro as a Freedman* shows that Bruce was in fact in agreement with one of his reviewers who stated that on the whole blacks were, “shiftless, animal, good-for-nothing” whose existence was more of concern than hope.¹⁵⁸

At the heart of Bruce’s conclusions, which he claimed to have arrived at “impartially and dispassionately” through many years of examination since the Civil War, was a reoccurring theme which revolved around the morality of blacks. In the beginning he made a concession: that if he erred in his analysis it was to apply to freedpersons as a whole “the common ethical standard by which the members of white communities are judged.”¹⁵⁹ Motivated as he claimed to employ every means to reform and elevate freedpersons for their benefit and (more) the countries benefit, Bruce nonetheless painted a dark picture of the possibility of that outcome. In searching for solutions to solve this “problem of gravest importance,” he refused to consider the effects of slavery on freedpersons insofar as “an apology for his shortcomings on the score of slavery has no practical bearing now, except so far as it is calculated to diminish the discouragement which his moral deficiencies are apt to inspire.”¹⁶⁰ This passage is emblematic of Bruce’s style throughout his book as immediately after presenting an early version of,

¹⁵⁸ Bruce was impelled to re-submit his manuscript for publication upon the election of Benjamin Harrison as president. This also seemed to open up Northern publishers’ willingness to consider his manuscript. Benjamin Harrison was supportive of Radical Republican policies during Reconstruction and unsuccessfully campaigned for enforcement of African American civil rights during his presidency. There is not enough room to explore this in depth here. But, suffice it to say it is interesting that Bruce deduced that the North was in a better to receive his work after Harrison’s election than before.

¹⁵⁹ Philip A Bruce, *The Plantation Negro as a Freeman*, (New York, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1889), v-vi.

¹⁶⁰ Bruce, *The Plantation*, vii.

“slavery was a long time ago, it’s time to just move on and stop using it as an excuse,” he continues on to claim that “every decade withdraws him still further from the transmitted spirit of the former regime; every decade only removes a still greater number of the artificial props that have hitherto supported him.”¹⁶¹ Bruce insisted on judging freedmen by the white man’s standard apart from the undeniable influences of their previous enslavement while at the same time warning that freedpersons’ moral abilities would only degrade continuously as time took them further from the institutional supports necessary for appropriate moral conduct he believed the institution of slavery provided.

Freedpersons were no longer part of the household. Free of the household they no longer enjoyed familial understanding or protection. As free and independent people they were beholden to the same moral exactitudes white men were held to. But it seems only in order to prove a point: freedpersons were incapable of operating in any moral station that did not include servitude. Was Bruce arguing for a return to the former system of slavery? Perhaps his goal was to paint so dark a picture of the problem blacks presented, not just to the South, but the entire country that even his northern readers would consider a return to servitude to be the most humane solution. But, he does not explicitly or implicitly argue for the return to slavery.

A key component to the problem Bruce saw was the uncontrolled increase in the population of blacks in the south. While the outcome of the Civil War had ended slavery, it had not ended large scale agricultural operations. Blacks continued to work in these operations for wages. As black laborers were necessary for large plantation-style farms to work, blacks were ensured a living which afforded them the ability to procreate. As long as blacks were able to easily earn enough to get by on, Bruce saw unlimited potential for population growth among

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

them.¹⁶² At the same time he saw inestimable growth in the population of blacks, Bruce also saw an inherent turn towards barbarism as the civilizing and enlightening effects of slavery faded into the past, and new generations of blacks were born without its epistemological and instructional benefits.¹⁶³ In this light, the unlimited increase of blacks was “pregnant with innumerable calamities.”¹⁶⁴

First, without slavery to bind whites and blacks together the two races began to drift further and further apart. As freedpeople were separated from the household by emancipation, they more and more congregated to themselves. This was a trend Bruce saw becoming even more stark as freedmen who had known life in the old-system passed away. Bruce wrote, “As the extent of this separation increases, the sympathies that have held the whites and blacks together will weaken, the elements of difference between themselves only growing more radical, thus revealing very clearly how alien to each other the two peoples are, although dwelling in the same sections of county.”¹⁶⁵ Somehow, as Bruce’s logic held it, slavery obfuscated in the minds of blacks the fact that they were so very different from whites. It is a remarkable statement given that Bruce had spent the last two-hundred odd pages detailing, often to minutia, how different the two races were that he would include white’s in this statement. Again, a careful reading illustrates the reality of his statement: his concern is not whites moving away from blacks, but blacks moving further from whites. Continual intimate contact with white society in prescribed roles (beyond employee/employer roles) such as the ones represented by the Christian

¹⁶² It is important to consider Bruce’s conception of subsistence for blacks was directly connected to their lacking moral abilities.

¹⁶³ That is, as far as Bruce was possible and in light of their inherent place in a civilized society.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 242.

Household paradigm was the only thing that would keep blacks from devolving to the practice of the social customs of their African ancestors.¹⁶⁶

To point out just how dire the effect of racial separatism brought on by emancipation, Bruce points out how the alienation of the two races from each other led to an almost entire cessation of “illicit sexual commerce” between white men and black women.¹⁶⁷ Under the present conditions, Bruce saw no circumstance that would encourage the “renewal of improper intercourse” by whites and blacks.¹⁶⁸ Reduction of this illicit behavior between whites and blacks necessarily meant fewer white traits would be passed into the children of blacks. Additionally, Bruce claimed mulattos had no inclination for sexual activities with whites or desire to create their own social circle but preferred the sexual company of blacks. Thus, what white traits remained would be submerged beneath African traits. Within a few generations blacks would be completely “African” by social and physical realities.¹⁶⁹

Maybe it is illustrative of the almost despairing cyclone of musings by a man shaped by white society’s ritualistic mourning of the bygone slave-system and communal fears of the unknown future, or maybe it is indicative a person willing to see the positive in any situation, but Bruce held inter-racial sexual intercourse and its fruit to be simultaneously morally objectionable and socially necessary. Interracial intercourse prior to Emancipation was varied in its practice and reception. For elite white males, those who owned slaves and had complete dominion over them, sexual relations with blacks was a household matter outside the purview of general society.¹⁷⁰ Non-elite whites also participated in inter-racial sexual relations, but their position in

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 242.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 243.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., By “African” Bruce means savage, degraded, and unable to participate in enlightened society.

¹⁷⁰ Admittedly it is pretty weird that elite white males used their status as master of their household to protect them from the social ramifications of inter-racial sexual intercourse. But it highlights how limited the “limited rights” associated with the evangelical notion of patriarchal household was for slaves.

society was less protected. They had neither the social standing nor legal protection to act hypocritically to southern racial mores. Lower-class white men who chose to engage in sexual intercourse with black women risked social ostracism, and indictment and trial for committing a crime. White women who did the same and were caught essentially forfeited their racial privileges.¹⁷¹ Ironically, in light of Bruce's statement, in the pre-Civil War South relationships between non-slave owning whites and blacks were considered to be those that were considered most threatening to the social fabric of the South.¹⁷²

Yet, less than a generation after the Civil War, Bruce, a man of high social standing in Virginia, now sees this threat as a necessary component – however distasteful – to harmonious relations between blacks and whites. Interracial sexual activity, the wrecking ball of Southern society, this clear and present danger throughout the history of the slave-holding South from colonial times through the Civil War, a practice repulsive to society and transgressive to the law, suddenly was a crucial but no longer practiced ingredient to proper race relations in the South. If the post-war economic system of the South afforded blacks the ability to limit their contact with whites which reduced the degree to which they could pick up the social skills necessary for whites to relate to them, then the lack of illicit sexual activity between whites and blacks ended any possibility for an infusion of a predisposition to white social mores into the offspring of black women.¹⁷³

In the South as Bruce saw it, slavery with its civilizing influences on blacks was dead. So too was the scandalous but beneficial biologically civilizing influence of inter-racial

¹⁷¹ Timothy J. Lockley, "Crossing the Race Divide: Interracial Sex in Antebellum Savannah." *Slavery and Abolition* 18, no. 3 (December 1, 1997): 165

¹⁷² Lockley, "Crossing," 164.

¹⁷³ Bruce makes it clear throughout the burden of relationship rests squarely on the emancipated shoulders of freedmen and not whites.

procreative relations. What about religious commonality? Could Christian worship and devotion link the two races together in harmonious co-existence? For Bruce, the short answer is no. Because in reality, this is not a question of commonality in Christian religion, but a question of whether the practice of Christian religion by blacks could impart enough so-called civilizing influences on blacks to make interaction with them acceptable to whites. In spite of his belief that churches are the “only form of organization that the blacks have been able to sustain with a steady and unchanging concurrence of mind,” Bruce ultimately believed that whatever good comes from black churches is “so largely mixed with evil that there can be little doubt that the negroes of most communities would be in a better condition if they had no separate churches of their own at all.”¹⁷⁴

As far as blacks’ practice of Christianity was concerned, whites’ like Bruce were not particularly interested in what was inside the vessel, but the appearance of the outside of the vessel.¹⁷⁵ Bruce criticized black religion as “a code of belief, and not a code of morals, having no real connection with the practical side of his existence, and slight bearing on the common motives of his conduct.”¹⁷⁶ According to Bruce, black Christians were so unconcerned about “practical morality, that they are generally indifferent as to whether the preachers, elders, and deacons of the various congregations to which they belong are circumspect in their lives or not.”¹⁷⁷ On the whole ever venal, in Bruce’s estimation, black church leaders used their

¹⁷⁴ Bruce, *The Plantation*, 108-110; In Bruce’s comments regarding the organizing ability of black when it comes to churches: “for it is in the one matter of co-operation that they have always shown in their general affairs the greatest element of weakness, being unable, usually, to work soberly and persistently together for a common object.” Comments structured like this are peppered all through *The Plantation Negro as a Freeman*, which were perceived by Bruce contemporaries and reviewers as evidence of Bruce’s fair and non-prejudiced treatment of blacks.

¹⁷⁵ See Matthew 23:26 and Luke 13:9.

¹⁷⁶ Bruce, *The Plantation*, 99.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

influence only to further their “selfish purposes” and fulfill their immediate physical appetites. Bruce concludes that for blacks’ conversion did “not mean regeneration in the Christian sense - that is, such an alteration of character as will lead him to at least to try to repress his bad inclinations and passions.”¹⁷⁸ Why? Bruce states, “That the negro can be so full of religious faith at the very time that his conduct is so palpably opposed to true piety, is largely due to the fact that he has that extreme inability to appreciate and measure the practical relations of things that we observe *in children, as well as their lack of logical power* (italics mine).” Bruce did more here than just insult the spiritual, mental, and emotional intelligence of emancipated blacks and their offspring. He reminded his Southern readers, and informs his Northern readers, that from his observations and analysis blacks operate in a sphere of social existence that is outside even the most rudimentary abilities of the most ignorant, undeveloped, and unenlightened station of white society.

III

Though Bruce offered his observations with the benefit of a couple of decades to coalesce Southern sentiment about the real and existential existence of post-emancipation blacks, in truth he outlined a sentiment that was present very early on in the post-emancipation era. It was a sentiment that belied a raw nerve among whites individually and collectively. Beyond the lofty words of denominational bodies regarding their duties to their former slaves and acts of Christian commonism, was an abiding discomfort with the post-emancipation state of blacks.¹⁷⁹ Walter

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 103.

¹⁷⁹ I coin the word, “commonism” here to denote my historical understanding that while blacks and whites may have shared a religious tradition with common scriptures and creeds (at least for Methodists), the

South, a Methodist (South) minister working in Brazos County before and after Emancipation gives an early glimpse into the emotional status of white Christians in regard to emancipated and enfranchised blacks.

A little over a year before the violent events unfolded in Millican, a town that South frequented for both ministerial and business reasons, South made a diary revealing diary entry that was atypically emotional in its tone. He wrote:

“...attended Colored meeting in the P.M. saw some young ladies, two sisters engaged in teaching Colored school boarding with Colored man. base characters I fear. I find altogether the negroes are making a bad start. Marrieds a couple of darkies this morning.”¹⁸⁰

South’s diary entries were generally bland records of his daily work and ministerial duties. There are moments of reflection on current events, but for the most part it is a painting of day to day life. Even when reacting to the fall of the South, he is factual about where he stood before, during, and after secession.¹⁸¹

Here, however, there is a sudden infusion of raw emotion. At no point before this entry did Walter South record the names of the black Methodists for whom he officiated weddings (though he did record the amount of the gratuity they paid). In contrast, he always recorded the names of white Methodists, often with a note of hope or their suitability for marriage. For freedpersons his entries read like, “I married a couple at night. Freedmen of Color. \$2.50,” and “Married a Couple of Freed Colored folk,” and “joined in Marriage 25 Couples of Colored

underlying attitudes of paternalism, racism, and as shall be shown, familial betrayal prevent us from seeing inter-racial religious affiliations as anything near Christian “Unity.” Southern whites continually denigrate the worship practices and practical theological beliefs of black congregations and denominations.

¹⁸⁰ Walter South, *Diaries 1860-1890*, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, 469.

¹⁸¹ His comments regarding secession and the Confederacy are very similar to those of John H. Caldwell.

People. Got \$11.00 in Greenbacks and .80cts specie. Took supper and went home.”¹⁸²

Particularly for those in which he notates the amount of the gratuity, it reads more like the business transactions he notes for his farm or brickmaking business. Black Methodists, in comparison to white Methodists whose personhood was affirmed by the recording of their names in South’s diary, were blandly recorded by their racial characteristics and the amount South gained from performing the ceremony. A more honest reading of South’s record of black marriages when placed in context with the rest of South’s diary leads us to consider marriages of blacks as more of a transaction than a ceremony.¹⁸³ The records are cold, but neither respectful nor disparaging insofar as they are written in a genre that is devoid of moral or emotional value judgements.

But, his tone changes sharply in his May 6th, 1867 entry. He doesn’t transact a marriage between two “colored people” but between two “darkies.” This isn’t a bland record of a transaction, but the pejorative outburst of a minister whose detestation of his duties in light of his feelings bleeds through.¹⁸⁴ As a minister with the MEC-S, South must have shared the concern of his denomination that freedpersons were hemorrhaging out of southern white controlled denominations. Yet, as a Southern white male, he might well have been bothered by the exercise of masculine rights and entitlements by black males.¹⁸⁵ It is not hard to imagine the defensive anger he must have felt when he showed up to the service for freedpersons that evening and

¹⁸² South, *Diaries*, 455; 457; 464.

¹⁸³ South does eventually begin to record the names of freedpersons, which may correspond with the MEC-S attempt to retain black members in the face of mass defections of former slaves to the Methodist Episcopal Church, AME, AMEZ, and other black denominations and churches.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 469.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 470. Indeed, a week after the marriage ceremony recorded, he was arrested on the authority of the Freedman’s Bureau and taken to Millican to answer to the charges of defrauding a black man, Frank Dunlop. Lo and behold upon reaching Millican it was determined that in fact Dunlop owed South 15 dollars and 105 boards Dunlop had stolen from South. Regardless of how it turned out, Dunlop exercised the right to make a complaint against South, a right he only recently gained.

found two white women (sisters) school teachers who were residing with a black man. This was yet another affront to white masculinity.

When South mentioned two white women school teachers living with a black man, he more than make a mere note of living arrangements. Rather, he pointed out a scandalous situation that impugned the character and purity of the two white women and highlighted the destruction of the behavior limiting structures inherent to slavery.¹⁸⁶ Southern whites viewed black men as having absolutely no self-control because, biologically, the “procreative instinct” was “the most passionate that nature has implanted in his body, it is unscrupulous in proportion.”¹⁸⁷ So powerful was the black male’s sexual disposition that without the intervening barriers of white control, black male’s “had no power of thwarting his determination to gratify it.”¹⁸⁸ It is important to remember that Southern white Methodists and Baptists did not equate active religious participation with proper moral response when it came to blacks. Perhaps, South only heard about this scandalous living situation, but for the sake of imagery let’s assume that these two white women school teachers accompanied the black man to the Colored Person’s meeting for worship that night. We know that this point in time there were unmarried white women serving in Brazos County, Texas, as school teachers for freedpersons on behalf of Northern missionary organizations at the time South made his diary entry. We can imagine the burn of anxiety and anger that rose in South’s chest, perhaps even feel the flush that spread from

¹⁸⁶ Bruce, *Plantation*, 16.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Bruce actually echoes I.T. Tichenor, John H. Caldwell, and a host of other Southern white Methodists and Baptists in describing slaver’s disregard for marital sanctity and insolubility. Because of the slave master’s ability to sell one or both of the slaves comprising a couple off at any time, slavery was unable to transmit its beneficial influence to blacks, according to Bruce. The closest it was able to do was enforce a level of immediate fidelity between husband and wife insofar as infidelity stirred up drama that was detrimental to the efficient operation of the farm or plantation. Where slavery did help maintain a semblance of proper sexual order, from Bruce’s point of view, was to abrogate the privacy of slaves necessary for illicit sexual relationships.

his ears to his cheeks and over his head. On one hand, these white women acted as northern denominational interlopers. . .wolves among his flock trying to steal them away from the influence of the MEC-S.

On the other hand there must have been a baser concern. These women willingly lived with a black male. A male whose sexual impulses were stronger than even his own religion could restrain, if even he wanted them restrained. Either way, the black male was just what he was. There was no reason for South to consider anything else. But those northern women were something else. Perhaps at first, they could have been forgiven for their naivete. It would not take long, however, for them to realize the true nature of their host, thus it had to be assumed that these women willingly remained in his house in spite, or in light, of their hosts unquenchable sexual desires. Those base characters South refers to were the white women school teachers. And they were base because, by a white Southern man's logic, the fact that they continued to board with a black male meant that they willingly indulged in carnal activities with him.

Certainly, South was not personally jealous of the black freedman who cohabitated with the two white sisters engaged in teaching at a colored school. We know from other passages in his diary that he was not only devoted to his wife, but deeply in love with her.¹⁸⁹ He does however represent a general jealousy of black males on the part of white males that attained hyperbolic and hysterical levels in the post-emancipation period. Bruce's entire chapter on marriage among blacks entitled, "Husband & Wife," was nearly completely about sexual activity. According to Bruce, both black men and women were so driven by sexual lust they could not even begin to structure their marriage relationships in a traditional or orthodox understanding of what marriage was. Bruce felt that all the other vices he observed among

¹⁸⁹ South, *Diaries*, 458.

freedpersons and their offspring taken together paled in comparison to the “lasciviousness” in which blacks freely partook. Without the “systematic repression of slavery” there was no circumstance or reason for blacks’ wild sexual nature to not run rampant, according to Bruce.¹⁹⁰ Citizenship had invested blacks not with duty and responsibility, but with freedom to debauch themselves without any repercussion except to undercut the institution of marriage itself.¹⁹¹ Bruce wrote in reference to blacks in particular, but as a white minister what South must have seen in the two white women teachers and their black male host was an existential threat to the institution of marriage dominated by the white man insofar as white women were supposed to be exclusive to white men via the structure of the Christian Household. This threat, in turn, was a threat to white masculinity.

How then to stem the threat? I argue that Southern white Baptists and Methodist doubled down on the doctrine of the Household of God and modified it for the post-Emancipation age. As we have seen the inclusion of slaves into the household was essential to stratifying women and children under the patriarchy of the father, and ensuring non-slave owning white males their place at the top of Southern racial and gender structure. Free blacks were a threat to male white hegemony both before and after the Civil War. But, after the Civil War not only were blacks free, they were citizens. In theory, for a time, they shared all the rights and privileges due a citizen of the United States.¹⁹² There was, at the very least a perceived, threat that legal equality would lead to social equality. But, if we take the words of Bruce, H.E.

¹⁹⁰ Bruce, *Plantation*, 17.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² This, of course, really only applies to black men insofar as women were still denied the privilege to vote.

McCullough, and countless other white males, their concerns extended beyond social equality. Rather, the concern was that with social equality would come the forfeit of whites' advantage.

Inequality derives from exploitation of resources and the hoarding of opportunities.¹⁹³ For well over two centuries white men had exercised ultimate exploitation over blacks. Black slaves themselves were both the resource and the producer of the resources that fueled white hegemony, power, and wealth. In all that time blacks had very little opportunity to break free of their exploitation, in part because they were the resource that whites hoarded, but also because whites steadfastly resisted any situation that had the ability to chip at the monopoly whites had on resources that gave them advantage over other people groups residing in the United States. After the Civil War, Southern white males realized that maintenance of advantage required adaptation to evolving circumstances.¹⁹⁴ If the doctrine of the Christian Household had provided sanctification to mutually supportive secular gender and racial stratification during slavery, it could be adapted to continue the inequality necessary to maintain white male hegemony. On one hand this was a political act. On the other hand, it was an act of familial strife whereby blacks were cast off from the family.

First, key to understanding this shift is to realize that white Methodists and Baptists subtly but radically changed the definition of what constituted the household. Part of this redefinition arose out of reality...slavery no longer existed, thus slaves simply could no longer be part of the household. The laborers and sharecroppers who previously had been slave members of the household under the protection and provision of the white father became free, independent employees. As employees these freedpersons were no longer extended the honor of family status, indeed their very status as employees in relation to their employer implied,

¹⁹³ Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2003), 10.

¹⁹⁴ Tilly, *The Politics*, *Ibid.*

according to Bruce, “social isolation,” (ironically) because it was inherently a “relation of authority and subordination.”¹⁹⁵ The apparent Southern white delusion that slaves, as part of the household were somehow kept in bondage by virtue of a willful and grateful familial loyalty opposed to the post-Emancipation situation where freedpersons were disinterested and self-focused wage workers aside, illustrates how emancipation, and freedpersons enthusiastic embrace of emancipation, ended their connection to the Southern white household. It also explains why over and over church members lamented in almost heartbroken terms when black Christians chose to leave white dominated churches. In a horrible ironic way, whites viewed emancipation and its effects as a family issue with their prodigals running off for a better life apart from their white households. The household was thus condensed, and familial ties restricted to the immediate, white, nuclear? family.

Burleson, in his *Family Government*, viewed the household exclusively in terms of immediate family: husband, wife, and children.¹⁹⁶ Freedpersons were now a separate group subject to the white standard but without the grace familial inclusion. Just as Bruce had set the standard by which he judged former blacks to be the same by which he judged whites (with their centuries of privilege and resources), Burleson in *Family Government* laid down the standard by which races were considered civilized or uncivilized. Burleson wrote that if he were cast upon an island where he did not know either the name nor the language of the people, he would know whether or not they were “ascending or descending the scale of prosperity and civilization, and that single test should be family government. If I saw happy homes and family government, I

¹⁹⁵ Bruce, *Plantation*, 242.

¹⁹⁶ In an ironic twist, Burleson would be forced out of his position as president of Baylor when a Brazilian girl living in his house was found to be pregnant. Though it was never proved he was the father, his opponents used the incident to force him out. In the end, Burleson was held responsible for what went on not just within his immediate family, but to what went on with non-family members living under his roof. See: Rufus C. Burleson, Handbook of Texas Online.

should know that these people were on the ascending scale of greatness. But, if I saw no family government, no family homes, no reverence for parents...I should know these people were on the downward grade to anarchy, lawlessness, and destruction.”¹⁹⁷ Additionally, Burleson laid down the standard for masculinity stating that the chief duty of every father was to “bring his children to God.”¹⁹⁸ Another sign of masculinity was the degree to which the wife submitted to the husband “in the graceful obedience of the queenly mother to the father.”¹⁹⁹

Suppose then Burleson found himself traveling in Bruce’s Virginia and he happened to stop in at the house of a freedman.²⁰⁰ According to Bruce, Burleson would have experienced the very example of a lawless race on its way to anarchy. Bruce echoes Burleson when he wrote the way blacks raised their children to be the first and best barometer for the future of the race.²⁰¹ Black fathers, in general, were ambivalent to their duties as fathers, as Bruce understood it. What parenting they did do under slavery was only able to happen because of the ever-watchful eye and powerful hand of the slave master. The black father Burleson would have met on his hypothetical journey to post-Emancipation Virginia was a father who instilled no discipline in his children and did nothing to stop “their offspring from running wild, like so many young animals.”²⁰² Even if the black father had the desire to instill “a spirit of self-restraint into their children,” he himself was unable to provide due to his own “moral deficiencies,” with no way of enlisting the help of his former master – now his employer – because of the shift in relationship between the two.²⁰³ It was appropriate for a slave to approach the head of the household of

¹⁹⁷ Burleson, *Family Government*, 12.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁰⁰ From Bruce point of view, in describing the Virginia Freeperson, he is describing freedmen and black all across the former rebellious states because he believed blacks were “remarkable for the same unfortunate qualities and for equally dangerous tendencies (*Plantation*, 253).”

²⁰¹ Bruce, *The Plantation*, 1.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

which he was a part to assist in providing discipline to his children. Conversely, the employer, who may be the same white man who was once his master, was not appropriate for the employee to approach for help in raising his children because the employer was neither father nor friend to the black employee. At least as Bruce saw it, the white employer was little better than a stranger whose only relation to the black employee was to direct his work and compensate him only for the work the black employee did. Any other social interaction was inappropriate by virtue of the lack of familial bond. Indeed, Burleson supports this in his writings as he makes clear that each father is responsible only for his own family. In any situation it was unseemly for one father to ask another father to discipline his own children.

What Burleson next saw in his hypothetical journey to Bruce's Virginia was not the "queenly mother" demonstrating not "slavish submission," but obedience necessary for harmonious co-existence. Rather, what Burleson saw was a woman who, "while in many instances the husband roughly domineers over the wife...as a rule, the latter holds the reins of domestic power, and is fully able to defend herself, or even commit an assault when his bearing seems to justify it."²⁰⁴ According to Bruce, black wives demonstrated a "shrewish temper" and a "licentious tongue for which she is unfortunately too often distinguished."²⁰⁵ From the very basic expectations of a good wife, like keeping a clean house (or even her hygiene) to the higher expectations of supporting her husband in living a moral and decent life, Bruce writes that black wives failed, having either no inclination to attain these expectations, or in other instances actively did the opposite. Indeed, by Bruce's account the moral influence on their husband was often "pernicious" to the degree Bruce attributes much of the crime committed

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 26.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

by freedmen and their male offspring to the not-so-secret instigation of their wives.²⁰⁶ Perhaps worse, it was the wives who instigated their husbands to “be insolent to the whites, and to rebel against the authority which employers have the right to exercise under contract.”²⁰⁷

If all that were not enough, we must not forget Bruce’s seeming obsession with the sexual nature of blacks. Bruce made the claim that black men are unconcerned about the “ante-nuptial irregularities of their wives” when choosing a spouse. This undercut any reason black women – who should have been bulwarks of sobriety and conservatism to the society in which they moved – had to remain chaste prior to marriage.²⁰⁸ Thus, according to Bruce, given that neither sex look upon “lasciviousness as impurity, and, therefore, it is not ground of rebuke or a subject for gibes or sneers,” to the point that infidelity was generally accepted as a part of the marriage agreement.²⁰⁹ In Bruce’s eye this reduced marriage from a covenant of true devotion to an agreement only for the women to tend the house (which, according to him, she had no inclination to do) and the men to earn the living (which, according to him, he had no desire to industriously enter into).

It is no wonder blacks, based on Bruce’s personal observations, were wholly un-able to raise children to be moral actors whose desires were on a plain higher than the basest human desires. With things the way Bruce described, black men were reeds blown about by the winds of their uncontrollable sexual impulses and their “shrewder and more intelligent” wives.²¹⁰ Not only unable to serve as a figure of respect to whom his wife would naturally submit for the sake

²⁰⁶ Ibid. These crimes ranged from minor to major violations of the law. Interestingly, however, Bruce probably did not have murder in mind when he mentioned major violations of the law. Elsewhere Bruce makes the bold statement that black males did not have the constitution for murder, because it required too much personal investment.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 19.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 20

²¹⁰ Ibid., 27.

of harmony, but pushed around by his wife even to the point of committing crimes for her.

Bruce's description of black males throughout his book can be easily reduced to a genial empty shell of a person who is easily molded by any authority outside of himself. Before Emancipation it was the slave system. After Emancipation it was his sex drive and wife.

This is important because under doctrine of the Christian Household, both the pre-emancipation version and post-emancipation version like Burleson's, what made a male a man was the ability to exercise the duties of father and master. Obviously, race also played a role in this. It is easily seen in the pre-Emancipation system insofar as blacks who were slaves were without rights, and blacks who were not had severely truncated freedoms. In the post-Emancipation South race still played a role. But skin color alone was not deep enough a reason to deny freedpersons entry into civilized society with equal footing to whites. Particularly now when Northern influences allowed black men to assume political office, to exercise those duties and responsibilities which a man first demonstrates in the governance of his family. Reminiscent of Titus 1:5-9, to hold the office of responsibility – one who leads other people and has additional duties they are responsible for – must be in firm control of his family.²¹¹ Not only were black males viewed as unable to control their family, they were seen as the weakest and most easily influenced member of the family (such as black families were families in the white sense of the word).²¹²

This was not necessarily a departure from the white view of black males prior to Emancipation. But, with the threat of black en-masculation posed by radicals and northern

²¹¹ "For this cause I left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but love of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate..." Titus 1:5-8 (KJV)

²¹²

interlopers into Southern society, this view took on a different and vital meaning. When the forces of Reconstruction conferred masculinity by fiat (in the eyes of Southern whites), enabling blacks to hold local, state, and national office and be appointed to positions of governmental authority, whites adapted the basic structure of Southern society – the family – to counter what they saw as propped-up legitimacy and imagined masculinity. Though a reinforcing agent in a mutually reinforcing basis for inequality and white supremacy, the sanctification of the view that black males were inherently unable to be men was essential to the existential and spiritual foundations of what would become the Jim Crow South after Republicans and the Federal government abandoned freedmen at the end of Reconstruction.

V

For whites in Texas, the destruction of the rebellion by the Union did not change their epistemological understanding that blacks were incapable of expressing the traits necessary for manhood and those holding political office were puppets of irresponsible and dishonest white Radicals, northerners, and opportunists. White Southerners quickly pivoted to adapt pre-Emancipation doctrine's to underpin a new racial reality. At the same time, white's were more than willing to engage in violence and subterfuge to erase any black that questioned the new reality they were building.

The Brazos River, as it runs through Brazos County, is surrounded by high bluffs. Trees line the river, and every once in a while there is a tree that survived the ground it was rooted in falling toward the river due to erosion. In July the sound of insects and wildlife is deafening day and night. It is unclear when the whites caught up with George E. Brooks as he rode for help

from Austin. But a week after the violence in Millican had subsided, what was left of his body was found near the bottom of the eastern river bluff. He was identifiable only by a finger lost earlier in his life. In the end, Brooks laid down his life for his friends and cause and the whites who caught up to him left his body for the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field. Brooks very existence served as a tangible threat to white notions of black ability and character.

CHAPTER 3

On an evening in 1875 Monroe Franklin (M.F.) Jamison was ambushed by a white Methodist Episcopal Church (North) elder at an evening gathering of the various Methodist denominations working among blacks in Dallas, Texas.²¹³ M.F. Jamison was recently assigned to Dallas – as an experiment – to shore up the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church by securing a building upon which the struggling local congregation could coalesce. The African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church were already operating with great success in that area. The CME had struggled to gain ground against the AME according to Jamison, because CME ministers were unable to address the sophisticated AME charges against the CME insofar as CME ministers were "old homespun men" while AME ministers were "manufactured and imported men, finely dressed, who demanded respect from the intelligent people."²¹⁴ CME ministers were, as Jamison put it, "domestic men."²¹⁵

On this night Jamison was invited to the Methodist Episcopal Church to hear the MEC presiding elder Dr. Brush preach. When Jamison arrived, he was seated in a place of honor behind the pulpit of the church. Under the guise of preaching on the theme of "Jehovah-Jireh"

²¹³ "Sandbagged" is a colloquial term for being lulled into comfort by the flattery of a party when that party's intention is to use the opportunity to embarrass.

²¹⁴ M. F. Jamison, *Autobiography and Work of Bishop M.F. Jamison D.D. ("Uncle Joe") Editor, Publisher and Church Extension Secretary; A Narration of His Whole Career from the Cradle to the Bishopric of the Colored M.E. Church in America* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South), 84.

²¹⁵ Jamison, *Autobiography*, *Ibid.*

("God Provides"), Dr. Brush took the Disciplines of the four major Methodist denominations working with former slaves which he had laid out before him.²¹⁶ He praised the record and intentions of the MEC, describing how not only did the MEC know no man by his color or condition and every man was equal in the MEC, but that the MEC had spent millions of dollars for "its colored people, and therefore they all ought to join it and have only one Methodist Church."²¹⁷ Dr. Brush then took the Discipline of the African Methodist Church in his hand and recounted the deficiencies in that denomination. Jamison recalls how many in the congregation, even though they were themselves members of the AME said, "'Amen' as loud as any of the others, notwithstanding (*sic*) that the elder was simply tearing their Church into threads."²¹⁸ After treating the African Methodist Episcopal Church – Zion in the same way, the elder took up the Discipline of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church launched into a scathing denunciation of the CME, as their local minister sat just behind him.

He reminded the congregation how the Methodist Episcopal Church – South, who set up the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, came into existence through schism over the issue of slavery. He faulted the MEC-S for not retaining and educating their black members. Could they not see how the Methodist Episcopal Church had spent millions on their benefit while the MEC-S jettisoned them away so they would not have to be in fellowship with them? The CME was just a ruse, a cheap facade for unfriendly attitudes and behavior.²¹⁹

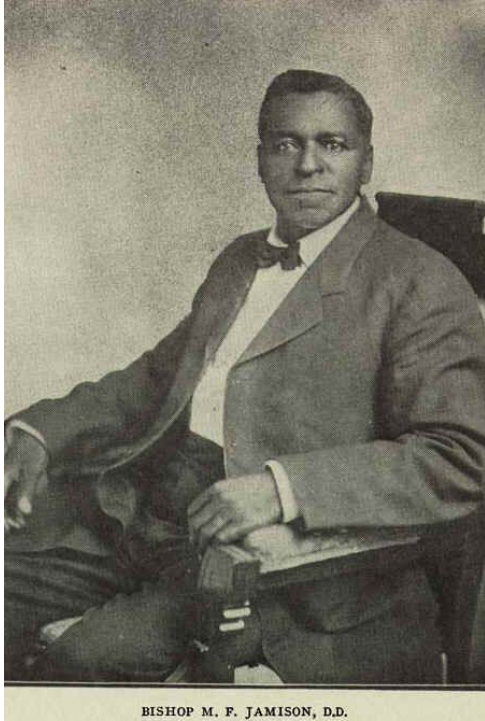
Jamison was too angry to let Dr. Brush finish. From his seat behind the pulpit, in full view of the congregation, Jamison stood up and confronted Dr. Brush. In fashion that was probably

²¹⁶ In Methodist parlance *Discipline* as is the book containing rules, regulations, and organizational guidelines by which a denomination operates. See: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/glossary-discipline> for a more in depth explanation of the term as it relates to Methodism.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 87.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 88.



less calm and collected sounding than he recalled them 37 years later, Jamison took Brush to task. First, Jamison made clear that he made no excuse for the behavior and treatment towards blacks by Southern Whites. In fact, he was opposed to "mixing with either of the white Churches; for both were avoiding the negroes as much as possible" and proceeded to show how even the Methodist Episcopal Church practiced relegating its black members to their own service in the afternoon after the whites had concluded their morning service.²²⁰ He ridiculed the MEC for just doing what whites did in slave times. Jamison further argued that for their safety, blacks did not need to mix themselves up with white churches because to do so engendered inter-racial strife. Jamison blames advice like Dr. Brush's for bringing on the Ku-Klux Klan which led to the murder of their sons, brothers, and husbands. Further undercutting Dr. Brush's claim that the Methodist Episcopal Church recognized no color-line, Jamison pointed out how the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church had its own legitimately ordained bishops, which was something the MEC had never allowed in its own denomination. At the same time Jamison was defended the CME against Dr. Brush's charges, he was also inviting the congregation to join the CME.

Then, as though Providence appointed it, Jamison's African Methodist Episcopal Church counterpart and nemesis, Reverend A. J. Burrus opened the door by which Jamison was able to undercut the AME's legitimacy, further enhancing the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church's stature in the hearing of those assembled. When Dr. Brush asked why Jamison was so opposed

²²⁰ Ibid, 89.

to the MEC (as though he had not already been quite clear on this point) Burrus answered saying Jamison was worried the MEC would get more of his members.²²¹ Jamison rejoined by informing the crowd that the nice suit Burrus wore was given to him by the whites of the MEC.²²² In doing so he depicted Burrus as a stooge for the Whites, easily bought off by a set of nice looking clothing. As Jamison tells it, after that he left the church having been the only one to stand up and expose the MEC for "their inconsistency with a boldness that dazzled and confused them no little."²²³

I

There is a curious similarity to the history pages of the websites of many southern evangelical churches that predate the Civil War. Often these histories, while brief by necessity, give fairly detailed chronological accounts of the congregation's existence. Yet, often there is a notable gap between 1865 and the mid to late 1870's. Sacrificial faithfulness in the face of immense hardship tends to characterize congregational histories during the Civil War. Renewal, reinvigorated purpose, a return to normalcy often connoted with relief, characterizes these same histories in the late 1870's and 1880's. Reconstruction, however, is often noticeably under examined if it is remarked on at all. When these histories do remark on the reconstruction period, congregations were faced with inconsistent pastoral oversight, financial difficulty, and denominational upheaval.

²²¹ Burrus had recently left the CME with seventeen members and joined themselves to the MEC.

²²² Ibid, 90.

²²³ Ibid.

Baptists and Methodists in the South made a complete reversal on their stance on slavery by the start of the Civil War. During the colonial and early American Republic period evangelicals were almost uniformly against slavery. Leaders and theologians like John Wesley preached sermons and wrote treatises decrying the evil of slavery. For them slavery was a living-breathing symbol of placing capital before humanity.²²⁴ Their meetings were characterized by interracial worship and membership. More, it was not uncommon for black preachers - slaves - to undertake the authority of preaching to the interracial assembly, which inherently undermined the ability of Evangelicals to participate in slavery. Theology and practice worked together to cause Evangelicals to reject and condemn slavery.

Yet, by 1850 Evangelicals in the South were solidly pro-slavery. Every major evangelical denomination in the United States had split North and South over the issue of slavery. No longer did Southern evangelical leaders criticize slavery as theologically incompatible with evangelical beliefs and ambitions, but instead preached its inherent biblical foundation. Evangelical congregations were no longer distinct in their egalitarian racial diversity in relation to established denominations like the Episcopal (Anglican) Church. Instead, slaves were relegated to balconies or under open windows, if allowed at all. For Southern Evangelicals, slaves were at best a lower form of humanity whose souls were rudimentary spirits only capable of salvation, but wholly unable to partake in the higher forms of Christian Discipleship white Baptists and Methodists practiced.

Still, even in the years running up to the final schisms of the 1850's, there were some Southern Baptists and Methodists who on some level pushed back against this view. Richard

²²⁴ John Wesley and William Warburton. 1774. *Thoughts Upon Slavery*. Philadelphia: London, printed: re-printed in Philadelphia, with notes, and sold by Joseph Crukshank, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>, accessed November 18, 2015, 45-46.

Fuller responded to the charge made by Francis Wayland that slavery was wholly wrong insofar as it compromised the primary obligations of evangelicals, which were to be practiced without respect to position and situation. These obligations were fidelity in marriage, rising of children in the fear of God, and the proclamation of the Gospel.²²⁵ Fuller, a Baptist preacher from South Carolina argued against Wayland's charge writing that slavery, in technical terms, did not inherently compromise those obligations. Slaves could hold those obligations even if they were held in bondage because slavery's interference with personal freedom did not mean their obligations were not still sacred. Any violation on the part of masters to respect these sacred obligations was not a problem inherent to the system of slavery, but of the sinful actions of the masters.²²⁶

This debate in the form of an exchange of letters was important because Fuller's response to Wayland set forth the basis of pro-slavery apologetics for Southern Baptists and Methodists until and through the Civil War. During the Civil War, preachers from Georgia to Alabama to Texas adapted this argument to explain setbacks experienced by the Confederacy. Confederate Baptists and Methodists began to preach a message of repentance, which grew more urgent even as the lost nature of their cause became obvious. This message of repentance, however, was not the rejection of slavery as an institution. Instead, it was a call to return to a more "biblical" slavery whereby slave's familial relations were respected, their conditions improved, and their instruction in matters of the faith were made paramount over and above the acquisition of wealth.²²⁷ The tone of the message was still ultimately paternalistic. Slaves needed to be taken

²²⁵ Richard Fuller, and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery as a Scriptural Institution* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008), 192.

²²⁶ Fuller and Wayland, *Domestic Slavery*, 106.

²²⁷ For an excellent example, see Issac Taylor Tichenor, *Fast Day Sermon – Delivered Before the General Assembly of the State of Alabama* (Filmed from the holdings of The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia), 11.

care of and guided by benevolent white masters who discharged their God given duty to promote the will of God among those they held in subjection. Yet, within the argument was a tacit acknowledgement that slaves were God's children for whom He cared a great deal and were, as such, their sisters and brothers in Christ. Why else would he turn his wrath against their more perfect union -

During the Civil War the message of slave's humanity was preached from pulpits to legislatures throughout the south. This message, however, never transcended the belief that slavery was biblically sanctioned. Nor, did it undercut the racism inherent to chattel slavery in the South. For that matter, there is no demonstrable evidence that these messages overcame the eroding effects of capitalism on morality - even Christian morality. The truth is that slavery was part and parcel of white evangelical belief in the South. The depth of this integration was such that the Southern Baptist Church, for example, did not apologize and repent of its support and role in slavery (and segregation) until 1995...almost a century and half after the passage of the 13th Amendment.²²⁸ To say that White Baptists and Methodists in the South struggled to come to grips with the new reality after the Civil War is an understatement.

But the truth is that a new world had dawned and their theological justifications for slavery were now on the losing end of a bayonet. During reconstruction Freedmen's rights were greatly expanded, and they eagerly participated in the security of Federal occupation troops. White Baptist and Methodist's emotions and thoughts were surely no different from those of other Southerners. They too suffered under the psychological shock of the loss of their

²²⁸ *Resolution on Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention* – Atlanta, Georgia – 1995. www.sbc.net/resolution-on-the-150th-anniversary-of-the-southern-baptist-convention, accessed November 26, 2016.

hegemony. Former slaves' demands for recognition of their rights and an equal place at the table was incompatible with the worldview and spiritual understanding of White Evangelicals.

During Reconstruction congregations and denominations set new congregations and denominational structures for freedmen. While some white congregations only contribution to this process was to give freedmen letters of transfer to join newly formed black churches, other churches and denominations started new associations, conferences, and other entities under the umbrella of their established organizations. I believe this can provide a window to view white evangelical's motivations. Church records, denominational documents, sermons, and reminiscences, from both White and Freedmen sources, can shed light onto the motivations for these actions.

While it is tempting to look at this simply as a racially motivated schism, the question goes much deeper. If new churches and denominations based on racial homogeneity were reasons for these actions, why did predominantly white denominations work to stem the tide of former slaves leaving their fold to join northern affiliated denominations like the Methodist Episcopal Church, or African American Denominations like the African Methodist Episcopal Church? Why did Freedmen join churches and denominations originating from white dominated Southern churches and denominations? White evangelical churches and denominations response to freedmen in their midst can shed light into the thoughts and motivations of one people coping with effects of their Lost Cause, and another finding a new identity in freedom.

II

An expected result of the creation of new churches and associated denominations for Freedmen in the South by white controlled Southern Churches and Denominations was tension between them and their Northern counterparts as well as previously established African American denominations. Religion is especially well suited in either pushing the war of reform further into the hearts of a society or establishing the last redoubt of a Lost Cause. Northern Evangelical black and white missionaries to the South saw Reconstruction as an opportunity to “bring the light of Christian civilization to a benighted land” by educating freedpeople and defending their newly canonized rights.²²⁹ Missionary endeavours always, at some level, entail cultural destruction. Southern Baptists and Methodists were equally as familiar with this notion as their Northern counterparts. Thus, while their estranged Northern brethren were bringing Christian light, Evangelicals in the South countered by seeking redemption for their culture. Ultimately, the hopes of Northern Evangelical’s vision failed to materialize in the post-reconstruction South as “white southern denominations resisted ecclesiastical re-incorporation while newfound black southern religious institutions steered free of white control, northern or southern.”²³⁰

The creation and the formative years of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church is a good window into the dynamics of this tension between denominational structures jockeying to serve and harness the religious needs of former slaves. In 1866 the Methodist Episcopal Church - South, understood they would surely lose some of their colored members to the African

²²⁹ Paul Harvey, *Freedom’s Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill and London, The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 7.

²³⁰ Harvey, *Freedom’s Coming*, *Ibid.*

Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church in spite of the way the MEC-S had expended their “means and strength liberally and patiently for many years for their salvation and improvement.” Others would remain with the MEC-S “notwithstanding extraneous influences and unkind misrepresentations” of their denomination.²³¹ In reality, they were hemorrhaging Freedmen members to other Methodist denominations. In 1866 the MEC-S, however, did not have a clear plan as to how to handle the freedmen attached to their congregations.

Prior to the 1866 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church -South, the African Methodist Episcopal Church had sent a letter requesting direction regarding the acquisition of property housing colored congregations that had, or might possibly, leave the MEC-S and join themselves to the AME.²³² The MEC-S expressed its shared commitment to the spiritual well-being of Freedmen, and agreed to direct the trustees of such property to allow colored congregations to continue meeting in those places. At that point, however, they felt their best approach was to discern the AME leadership’s attitudes about joining with the MEC-S as a dedicated entity for freedmen based on a plan put forth by the General Convention of the MEC-S.²³³ In other words, the MEC-S decided to pursue an unlikely attempt to draw the influential AME under its umbrella under its terms. For the time being the MEC-S sought to maintain cordial relations with the AME, allowing them use of denominationally owned church buildings inhabited by freedmen congregations that had chosen to withdraw and align themselves with the AME, but retained actual ownership as a bargaining chip in their attempt to have the AME join them.²³⁴

²³¹ Methodist Episcopal Church South, General Conference, Journal of General Conference - 1866 (Nashville: MEC-S Publishing House), 18.

²³² *Journal of General Conference – 1866*, 65.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 73.

²³⁴ MEC-S, 66.

By the Methodist Episcopal Church – South's General Conference of 1870 the plan to draw the African Methodist Episcopal Church into Union with the MEC-S had been replaced with creating a new, separate, and independent denomination for Freedmen. In the four years between Conferences, the MEC-S set up five Annual Conferences and forty-five Districts overseen by white bishops, but staffed by African American presiding elders and pastors.²³⁵ Ironically, during that time African American members of the MEC-S had proved to their white brethren they had the requisite ability to successfully run their own denomination.²³⁶ To that end, the General Conference of 1870 decided to move forward with the creation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church which would stand as a completely independent denomination with no official ties to the MEC-S other than the common attribute of Methodism.²³⁷ At the same time, the MEC-S sought to shore up the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church by disallowing the transfer of any MEC-S property used by African American congregations to the AME.²³⁸

This accomplished two goals for the Methodist Episcopal Church – South. First, was the obvious goal of segregating Freedmen away from the white church. Second, it avoided northern influences and attitudes to be integrated into the MEC-S solution for its freedmen members. It is almost mystifying that the MEC-S even gave consideration to any form of connection with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the first place. First, at its inception the AME was created as a body of African American Methodists free from White supervision. Second, the AME was heavily involved in Reconstruction politics such that the constitutional conventions of

²³⁵ Ibid., 168. Methodist Denominations are usual subdivided into geographic decision making units emanating down from the General Conference to Annual Conferences to Districts to congregations. Accordingly, the General Conference oversees the entire denomination, while Bishops oversee Annual Conferences, Presiding Elders oversee districts and pastors oversee churches

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid, 182-183.

²³⁸ Ibid.

Georgia and Mississippi had nine and six AME ministers in them, respectively.²³⁹ By 1870 the majority of white Southerners saw "Reconstruction as a hated, imposed regime."²⁴⁰ As the late 1860's progressed, the idea of joining a denomination deeply involved in the politics of Reconstruction became increasingly unpalatable. The solution the MEC-S needed was one that allowed for the separation of the races while creating a independent denomination that, if not imbued with filial ties of loyalty, at least was apolitical in its make up. To that end, the MEC-S ensured that the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, as a denomination, would be apolitical by virtue of its Discipline.

From December 19th to the 21st the Organizing General Conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church deliberated over the Discipline which would guide their church.²⁴¹ On the whole, the CME adpoted without significant change the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church - South. One significant change, which "precipitated the sharpest division and parliamentary maneuverings among the delegates" was over the political use of church buildings.²⁴² Section 1, Chapter XI of the Discipline regarding church buildings stated church buildings should be "plain and decent, and with free seats, as far as practicable," and should also "in no wise be used for political purposes or assemblages."²⁴³ Ostensibly the purpose of the inclusion of this section in the CME Discipline was to avoid distraction from the purpose of evangelization and ministry. CME Bishop Lucius H. Holsey told the General Conference of the MEC-S that the CME's purpose was to "raise us a set of holy men, fully consecrated to the work

²³⁹ Harve, *Freedom's Coming*, 34.

²⁴⁰ David W. Blight, *Race and Reconstruction: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 106.

²⁴¹ Othal Hawthorn, *The History of the CME Church* (Memphis, Tennessee: The CME Publishing House, 1985), 205.

²⁴² Hawthorn, *History of the CME*, 209.

²⁴³ *Ibid*, 207.

of the ministry, and to preach the simple and pure gospel of Christ to our people."²⁴⁴ As he saw it, party politics were "corrupting and entangling alliances" which had the capacity deprive the CME of the energy and strength needed to accomplish their stated goal.

It is important to note that this was not a prohibition on political activity or expression by individual members of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. Many members of the CME voted Republican enthusiastically. Yet, people tend to take on the priorities of those groups with which they align themselves, either because they are joined to them by affinity, or are shaped by their involvement with them. Thus, in comparison with other African American denominations working in the South, CME ministers did not become politicians or activists.²⁴⁵ The prohibition of using church property for political purposes had a chilling effect on the mission of the CME expanding beyond traditionally spiritual matters – which incidentally served Southern white Methodist's desire to halt the expanse of black political activism associated with Northern Methodist denominations working in the South like the Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

This unique apolitical aspect of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church as a denomination brought scorn from other rival denominations seeking to grow their influence in the South. For denominations seeking to extend their influence, for whom the light of the Gospel was expressed not only in the ecclesial realm but also the political realm, the CME represented a counter-Reconstructive alternative by which former white masters could turn their former slaves into unwitting pawns in their fight to establish a New South on white terms. In fact, other black

²⁴⁴ Lucius H. Holsey, *Bishop Holsey's Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South - 1882*, Originally published in "The Daily Christian Advocate". Appendix B, *The History of the CME Church*, 667.

²⁴⁵ Raymond R. Sommerville Jr., *An Ex-Colored Church: Social Activism In the CME Church 1870-1970* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 2004), 2-3.

denominations often referred to the CME as "the Southern Church" or "the Democratic Church" as an epithet against them.²⁴⁶ There was, however, a much more material dynamic in play whose influence was perhaps more formative in the creation of the CME and inter-denominational dissention among African American Methodists: property.

In 1863 Secretary of War Stanton issued a circular authorizing Federal Troops to place property owned by the Methodist Episcopal Church – South under control of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North).²⁴⁷ By April of 1866, however, while there were still some Methodist Churches in the South having to petition for the restoration of their pre-war property, Andrew Johnson had restored most church property back to the MEC-S.²⁴⁸ A few instances notwithstanding, the MEC-S had such control of property expropriated from them during the Civil War that they saw fit to appoint a group of Bishops to personally thank Andrew Johnson whilst assuring him of the MEC-S submission to the United States Government.²⁴⁹ It was probably in this spirit of gratitude (or not wanting to bite the hand) that the MEC-S directed trustees of MEC-S property to allow those Freedmen congregations that opted to attach themselves to other Methodist denominations to continue using property previously designated for use by colored members of the MEC-S. More accurately, without a plan to address the spiritual needs of newly freed slaves, the MEC-S was wise to not incite the Federal government by evicting politically connected Northern denominations like the MEC and AME without reason.

²⁴⁶ Jamison, *Autobiography*, 85.

²⁴⁷ Andrew Johnson, *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, compiled by LeRoy P Graf, Ralph W. Haskins, and Paul H. Bergeron (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967), 595.

²⁴⁸ Andrew Johnson, *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, 421.

²⁴⁹ *General Conference of MEC-S 1866*, 34.

This placed denominations like the Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Church in a quandary. Stanton's order of 1863 and the presence of federal troops in the South ensured Northern evangelical denominations vying to minister to newly freed slaves had pre-built bases of operation to work from in territory hostile to their work. And, even though for Northern Methodist denominations immediate eviction was not forthcoming, their goals were anathema to the MEC-S (which is why their dalliance with the idea of forming a connection with the AME is so odd). When it came to the future of black Methodists in the South, the MEC-S held the cards by virtue of the fact that they held the deeds.

The Methodist Episcopal Church – South's creation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church doomed any hopes Northern influenced, Reconstruction-minded Methodist denominations had that they would be able to retain their easily gained property. As the Southern economy adapted to plug back into the world wide cotton industry that was massively changed by the Civil War and Emancipation, and Redeemers in the South's power began to coalesce, whites in the MEC-S realized the need to blunt the influence of the MEC and AME while establishing an alternative body more attuned to white Southern goals.²⁵⁰ The CME was the solution, and the MEC-S control of property was key to that solution. The MEC-S now had justification for expelling other denominations using their property since the space was needed for their denominational progeny the CME.²⁵¹ Additionally, the MEC-S had the leverage needed to ensure the CME as a denominational body acted in a supportive fashion. Though the MEC-S resolved to make the deeds of MEC-S property dedicated to the use of freedmen (formerly, slaves) prior to the 1870 Organizing General Conference of the CME, at the time of the

²⁵⁰ Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the World Wide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *The American Historical Review*, 1405-1406.

²⁵¹ *General Conference of the MEC-S 1870*, 183.

conference no property had yet been transferred as there was yet no denomination to transfer it to. Homes for their congregations were just as important to the CME as it was to the AME and MEC. So though there was "no indication" that a restriction on political use of church property was "*sine qua non* for the transfer of property from the white church to the colored church," it was obviously in the CME's best interest to act in deference to the desires of the MEC-S.²⁵²

III

In 1851, Mariah who was a slave of Davis Gurley, presented herself as a candidate for baptism and was received as a member of First Baptist Church in Waco, Texas.²⁵³ Six years later in 1857 Mariah was "excluded (from fellowship) for the crime of Adultery" at the service for "the colored population."²⁵⁴ Following three years of separation from the body of Baptists in Waco, Mariah confessed her sin and the congregation of FBC Waco restored her to fellowship.²⁵⁵ One year and four months later, Mariah was again excluded from fellowship for adultery.²⁵⁶ Ultimately, we know that Mariah was yet again restored into the family of First Baptist Church, Waco. Her name appeared amongst the signatories of eighteen recently emancipated African American members to the white members of First Baptist Church requesting their letters of dismissal in order to form their own new church.²⁵⁷

²⁵² Othal Hawthorn, *The History of the CME*, 209-210.

²⁵³ *Church Records*, Entry for June 9, 1851, Minute Book "A", First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas, p. 32.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, entry for February 8, 1857, 43.

²⁵⁵ *Church Records*, Entry for February 12, 1860. Minute Book "B", 33.

²⁵⁶ *Church Records Vol. 5*, Entry for June 1861, Minute Book "B", 77.

²⁵⁷ *The History of New Hope Baptist Church*, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, 1.

Baptist did not drink. They did not dance. They did not play cards. Generally, they eschewed what they perceived as secular forms of entertainment.²⁵⁸ What they did do was get into each others business, and keep fairly explicit records of it. In the church minutes of First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas, there are numerous reports of committees formed to investigate various accusations presented against members of the church ranging from unethical business dealings to apostasy to uttering slander and falsehoods.²⁵⁹

In 1856 a concern was raised among the congregation of First Baptist Church, Waco, that Brother Lineard and his wife had separated. At the heart of the concern was that Brother Lineard's neglect of his duties as husband led to his wife leaveing him. Though Brother Lineard's wife had left him, his actions – or lack there of – was thought to be the cause of his wife's departure. If this was found to be the case, then Brother Lineard's neglect was tantamount to abandonment. Functionally this was divorce which was adultery.²⁶⁰ Whatever the case, it is apparent that Mrs. Lineard was no longer at home, someone had concerns regarding the circumstances of her absence, and Brother Lineard's explanation was either not sought or unsatisfactory to his accuser. Thus, a committee of six men were appointed to investigate the situation and give a report back to the congregation.²⁶¹

As it turns out, the concern for Brother Lineard's marital fidelity was greatly exaggerated. After digging through the various stories circulating and examining the sources available to them, including making inquiries at the "provision shop," the committee decided that Brother

²⁵⁸ While this is an obvious generalization, it tends to officially and publically be the case. In other words, Baptists don't have fun. For example, see Jason Horine, Pastor Welborn Baptist Church, my former boss. The man is the utter example to Baptists of righteous, rigorous, boring living. For a decent, albeit brief, explanation of basic historical Baptist beliefs and practices, see <http://www.religionfacts.com/baptists>

²⁵⁹ *Church Records*, Minute Book "A", First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas.

²⁶⁰ Jesus condemns divorce as adultery in Matthew 5:31-32.

²⁶¹ *Church Records*, First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas, Minute Book "A", p. 40.

Lineard had made "ample provision" for his family and that Mrs. Lineard had "access to...get anything she wanted, a privilege she freely used."²⁶² The committee, moreover, was "constrained" by the evidence to conclude that Brother Lineard was not guilty of any "unkindness" to Mrs. Lineard, and in today's parlance would say he was emotionally available to her.²⁶³ Turns out, the reason for Mrs. Lineard's extended absence was that she left to visit some of her children who lived somewhere else as she missed them greatly. Brother Lineard was thereby absolved of any wrong doing before the church by the committee, whose report the congregation "heartily" accepted.²⁶⁴

On the face of it this episode, recorded in the minutes of First Baptist Church, Waco, gives us an understanding of the concerns and methods of Baptists living in and near Waco. Family was important to FBC Waco. The responsibility of husbands to their wives and children was of great importance. FBC Waco had an efficient method for investigating members accused of acting in un-Christian ways. We can even deduce that Mrs. Lineard enjoyed being able to buy what she wanted when she wanted. Yet, the investigation of Brother Lineard is one of many episodes that illuminate the value of black members of FBC Waco in the eyes of white members. That illustration is found in a careful examination of the source. Often, the key to understanding a historical narrative is examining the silences within the data, silences that can easily be overlooked. It is through these silences that we are able to locate the source of power within historical components.²⁶⁵ One place silences enter historical production is in the moment of "fact

²⁶² Ibid, 41.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press), accessed on November 19, 2016, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=acls;cc=acls;q1=silence;rgn=full%20text;idno=heb04595.0001.001;didno=heb04595.0001.001;view=image;seq=54;page=root;size=100,,> 28.

creation" or sources.²⁶⁶ The silences of some places in the record books of FBC Waco are amplified by the loudness of other places.

Mariah, servant of Davis Gurley, and Brother Lineard both found themselves accused of sins relating to adultery. But, rather than the detailed and nuanced treatment Brother Lineard's case was given, each of the descriptions of Mariah's sin and consequential disciplinary actions are no more than two sentences each. Each case states the sin she accused of – without detail – and the sentence met out by the church for her sin. Even the passages dealing with her restoration to the congregation of FBC Waco are only a few sentences at best. Whereas we know the details of the sin for which Brother Lineard was accused, albeit erroneously, we know nothing of Mariah's adultery. Was she herself married, or was she single and committing adultery with a married man? Who was the other party involved. After all, its hard to practice adultery alone. Did her fall back into adultery occur with the same person, or was there someone new? Who was on the committee who investigated her crime, if there was one? The juxtaposition of the informational silence surrounding Mariah's sin and the volume of information surrounding Brother Lineard's accusation clearly show – albiet not suprisingly – the poverty of the black members of FBC Waco within the economy of value and power of their congregation. And, these are only a couple examples. Time and again the church records of FBC Waco treat conflicts, accusations, and consequences of white members with far more detail than those of the black slave members.²⁶⁷

Black members of First Baptist Church, much like most Southern evangelical churches, occupied an odd position within the church, almost being a second congregation within the congregation. As early as 1853, only two years after the founding of the congregation, black

²⁶⁶ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 26.

²⁶⁷ *Church Records*, First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas.

members of FBC Waco wanted their own services, deacons and preachers. In 1854 the whites of FBC Waco granted black members their own afternoon service. Initially they were preached to by the white pastor of FBC Waco. White members could attend their service at any time, and the appointment of deacons and preachers were subject to approval by a formal vote of the white



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members of the congregation.²⁶⁸ This arrangement reflects the attitude set forth by the committee on Colored Instruction of the first meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1846, held in Richmond, Virginia. They encouraged Southern Baptist congregations to dedicate one sermon per Sabbath to their black members while appointing "colored deacons" to exercise a sort of peer oversight over their fellow black members. Additionally, the committee recommended the establishment of Sabbath Schools to give *oral* (italics original) instruction. At the base of it all was the paternalistic role slave masters had in the spiritual life of their slaves. They were as responsible for their slaves' religious instruction as they were for their own children's.²⁶⁹ . Rufus Burleson, one time pastor of FBC Waco and president of Baylor University, described the dedication of Albert Clinton Horton, the first Lt. Governor of Texas, to the Christian instruction of his slaves. Burleson recounts the so-called "touching memories" of Noah Hill – a pastor hired by Horton explicitly to minister to his slaves – of Horton and his wife reading the Bible and praying for

²⁶⁸ Frank E. Burkhalter, *A World Visioned Church: Story of First Baptist Church Waco, TX* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1946), 60.

²⁶⁹ B. M. Sanders, "Report of the Committee on the Instruction of the Colored Population," (report presented at the First Triennial Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, Richmond, Virginia, June 10-15, 1846), 16.

their servants.²⁷⁰ This conjures up the image of a patrician white master sitting in his chair on the porch with his kind and genteel wife serenely reading to their slaves gathered round sitting on the ground with childlike looks of devotion and interest on their face. ²⁷¹Burleson hails Horton as an example of slave masters taking their duty seriously, to the point of using his financial resources to not only hire a pastor, but to build a church meeting place for his slaves between his multiple plantations.²⁷²

While blacks were given their own service and leadership structure, it was nominal in nature. One might look at it akin to a church youth group, or student government association in a school. They have clearly defined leadership structures where young people might practice acts of self-determination and autonomy under the negating influence (as far as self-determination and autonomy goes) of adults with the requisite experience, intelligence, and ability to ensure young people make good decisions. In a church dominated by white slave owners, the situation allowed them to meet their duty to the spiritual welfare and instruction of their slaves while at the same time ensuring they were only taught what whites wanted taught, in the ways they wanted slaves taught – that is orally, and chose only those leaders white members were comfortable with.

This father-child understanding, however, did not go so deep among slaves.

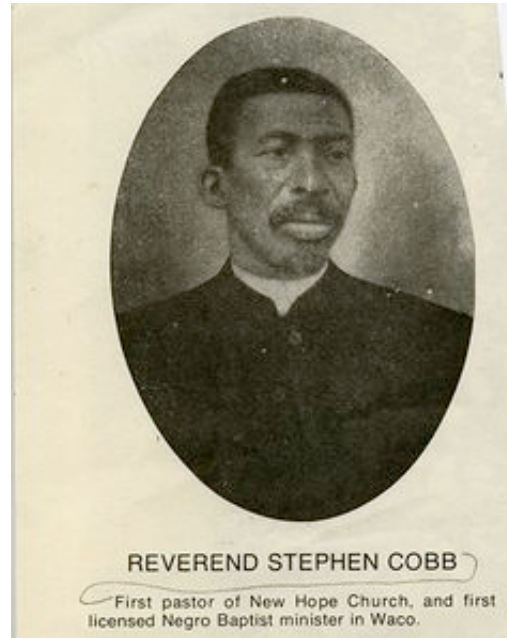
²⁷⁰ Georgia Jenkins Burleson, Rufus Columbus Burleson, and Harry Haynes, *The Life and Writings of Rufus C. Burleson: Containing a Biography of Dr. Burleson by Harry Haynes: Funeral Occasion, with Sermons, etc; Selected, "Chapel Talks," Dr. Burleson as a Preacher with Selected Sermons* (Waco, Texas: ?, 1901), 711.

²⁷¹ Picture Source: <http://www.tspb.state.tx.us/spb/gallery/govs/6.htm>, accessed November 20, 2016.

²⁷² Ibid.

IV

On May 20th, 1866, just shy of a year since Juneteenth, First Baptist Church, Waco unanimously adopted a resolution put forth by black members of the congregation to form a completely independent congregation.²⁷³ Until this point they had been pastored by S. G. O'Bryan, who was white, and meeting on Sundays at 3 o'clock in the afternoon after the whites had their service. The black members of FBC Waco wanted the freedom to conduct their Sunday schools and prayer meetings whenever they wanted.²⁷⁴ New Hope Baptist Church was the name suggested by Brother Stephen Cobb, the first pastor of New Hope after examination by three white pastors in the area – Reverend O'Bryan and Reverends Rufus and Richard Burleson.²⁷⁵ The church, under the leadership of Brother Cobb immediately set about securing their own meeting place in order that they would no longer "trespass upon our white brethren any longer."²⁷⁶ They were able to quickly sign a contract to rent an old foundery as a meeting place,



²⁷³ There is a discrepancy over when the White portion of First Baptist Church, Waco, adopted the resolution leading to the creation of New Hope Baptist Church. The History of New Hope Baptist Church found in the Texas Collection at Baylor University places the date one week later. First Baptist Church, Waco, has been unable to locate any relating documents mentioned in their Minute Books from that time period. The History of New Hope can not be confirmed by written church sources insofar as the first written documents associated with New Hope Baptist Church do not appear until 1871.

²⁷⁴ *The History of the Organization of New Hope Baptist Church*, located in the New Hope Baptist Church archives, housed in The Texas Collection at Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 2.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

and it was only a few months before the church appointed a member to both find a piece of land on which to build a church, and to raise the funds to purchase the property. By 1867 New Hope had a church building where they both worshiped and hosted a school run by "an old Republican gentleman" who had recently moved to Waco by the name of J.E. Davis.²⁷⁷ Davis' arrival in Waco was an important event in the life of the black Baptists of New Hope. Texas, like all Southern states except Tennessee, prohibited teaching slaves how to read or write.²⁷⁸ After the Civil War freedman had an "unquestionable thirst for education" that inspired families to relocate to cities and town to be near schools, and made school-houses a condition on the part of freedmen before signing labor contracts on plantations.²⁷⁹ For former slaves, education meant autonomy and self-improvement. While many recongnized education as a path to economic advancement, many also realized that education would also satisfy their craving to read the Bible.²⁸⁰ Reading the Bible had the power to unshackle former slaves from their master's (and the Pastors they paid for) *oral* instruction.²⁸¹ At the heart of Protestantism, particularly among Methodists and even more so Baptists, is the idea of *sola scriptura*. This is the doctrine that the sole guide for faith and doctrine lays in the inspired Word of God as revealed in the Bible. Thus, literacy is just shy of absolutely vital to Christian life.²⁸² White Baptists and Methodists, while expressing the importance of teaching scripture to their slaves, in fact placed themselves and their agendas between slaves and the Bible. Evangelicals in the South subjigated their deeply

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1871* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 96.

²⁷⁹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 96-96.

²⁸¹ First Triennial Meeting, SBC, 1846.

²⁸² A good example of this principle is Wycliff Bible Translators who have been sending missionaries to remote places to teach literacy, even creating written languages where none exist, to accomplish this – all for the purpose of enabling converts to have the Bible in their own language. See: <https://www.wycliffe.org/about/>

held and formative dogmas regarding scripture to the value of economic considerations and controlling their labor force.

If their vision for a new church was autonomy, separate identity, and some modicum of self-determination, then for the early members of New Hope education – reading, writing, ciphering – gave form to their vision. It enabled them to not just study the Bible, their ultimate rule of faith, but also to function as truly independent congregation. There are no written church records for New Hope between its founding and the mid-1870's. Given the time it takes for an adult to learn to read, it is not unreasonable to assume until that time no members of New Hope had the ability to write well enough to maintain standard church documents (letters of dismissal, reception, church minutes, etc). However, by the mid-1870's New Hope maintained a leather-bound minute book where they recorded proceedings of their church conferences (nineteenth century parlance for "Business Meeting"). There is a greater series of different secretaries who made the entries in New Hope's minute books compared to First Baptist Church, Waco, but the



script is even and, for the most part, quite legible throughout. All in all the minute book from the 1870's reads like the minute books of a Baptist church: full of mundane but necessary details like financial dealings and member roles, interspersed with church drama and disciplinary actions against

church members.²⁸³

What is remarkable is that in ten years the former slaves of New Hope Baptist Church showed how, in spite of the pre-war paternalistic beliefs of Southern white Baptists and

²⁸³ Minute Book, 1876, Box 2, Folder 13, New Hope Baptist Collection, New Hope Baptist Collection, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

Methodists about the inability of blacks to govern their own churches, they ran a fully functional, vibrant, and growing congregation to meet their own spiritual needs.²⁸⁴ These minute books are stylistically very similar to those of First Baptist Church, Waco. But instead of relegating former slaves to passing comments signifying their marginal status as congregants, they were the center of the ministry and church life. They exercised dignity. Whereas, when accused of a moral failing as members of FBC Waco they were excluded from membership without much ado, as members of New Hope they were accorded lengthy investigations by committees appointed from the deacons of the church – the same respect white transgressors of FBC Waco were afforded.²⁸⁵

V

While in the case of New Hope Baptist Church freedmen approached the whites with the desire to form their own church, opposed to the whites of the Methodist Episcopal Church – South deciding to create a denomination for their black members, the black members of FBC Waco still sought the aid of white members in establishing their congregation. The "fraternal request" on the part of the black members of FBC Waco was that the white members of that church appoint deacons, elders, and a pastor to guide their new church. And, while it is clear that the black members wanted to split from their white brethren, there is no reason to doubt that their feelings toward the whites at FBC Waco were, on some level, truly fraternal.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ *The History of the Organization*, 6-7.

²⁸⁵ New Hope Collection, 57-59. This section of the Minute Book recounts an investigation beginning with a Brother White and his wife for the transgression of separating from each other, which lasted over several months drawing in more members and ultimately resulting in the apparent exclusion of Samuel Cobb from the Church. This is not made note of in *The Organizational History of New Hope*, though that document does make note that Samuel Cobb left the church as pastor in the corresponding time.

²⁸⁶ *Church Records*, Minute Book "B", First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas, 165.

Baptist polity, unlike Methodist polity, does not require an organic process to begin a new church. The Methodist polity is hierarchical, therefore the denominational body itself starts new churches or initiates the creation of new legitimate sister denominations. In the Baptist polity, each congregation is independent. Its legitimacy was derived wholly from itself. The eighteen original members of New Hope Baptist Church simply did not need the permission, or even the blessing, of FBC Waco to form their own legitimate Baptist congregation. Yet, they opted to for the customary procedures for a group of Baptists in good standing to separate themselves from one congregation with the intention of joining themselves to another congregation.

The members of New Hope Baptist Church had a few reasons to genuinely have fraternal feelings for the white members of First Baptist Church, Waco. During the Civil War, white members of FBC Waco came to the defense of black members of that congregation and convinced the Waco City Council to rescind an ordinance forbidding any mass meetings of blacks, including church services.²⁸⁷ Five months before the original eighteen members of New Hope formally asked to leave in good standing, FBC Waco took up a subscription for the purpose of building a new meeting place for their "colored brethren."²⁸⁸ On the other hand, the founders of New Hope needed the resources FBC Waco had to get their fledgling church off the ground. Rufus Burleson and S.G. O'Bryan were intergal in advising the new members of New Hope in ordering their congregation, as well as in identifying men with the abilities and temperment to lead the new congregation as deacons and pastor. One of the first actions by New Hope as a body was to appointed Shed Willis to raise money to buy property to place a church

²⁸⁷ Burkhalter, *A Worldvisioned Church*, 61.

²⁸⁸ *Church Records*, FBC Waco, Minute Book "B", 158.

building. He was well known and ingratiated among the whites of Waco and soon raised sixty-dollars in cash.²⁸⁹ It is also possible that New Hope felt their association with FBC Waco would afford them a level of protection from white terror groups like the Ku Klux Klan – who none the less shot up a revival meeting 1869.²⁹⁰

Much like the members of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, the fact is in the early days of their congregation it was in New Hope Baptist Church's best interest to maintain good relations with the white members of their former church - the church of their former masters. As with the Methodist Episcopal Church – South, however, it is inaccurate to view the supportive actions of whites in forming New Hope Baptist Church as wholly benevolent and without selfish gain.

Emancipation created problems for Baptists in the South. As we have seen, when the legal justifications for slavery passed away so did the theological justification – in practical terms.²⁹¹ In spite of the fact that many Southerners never gave up on the idea of slavery as an institution ordained by God, one could not preach in support of the institution of slavery from the pulpit when there was no longer an institution of slavery to support.²⁹² Even if one was deluded enough to do so, former slaves were no longer under any compunction to sit and listen. The real fear among white Baptists was that blacks, empowered by the foundational Baptist doctrine of congregational church government, might begin to insist they be treated equally in church

²⁸⁹ *The History of the Organization*, 2-3.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 4. This may derive from the school for freedmen closely associated with New Hope Baptist Church connection with a Republican, and northern Methodist, and its willingness to allow itself to be directed by a representative of the Federal Government at that time.

²⁹¹ Southern White Evangelical's belief in the Biblical justification for slavery, obviously, did not just disappear.

²⁹² Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 68.

matters.²⁹³ Just as forming new churches offered black Baptists an "inoffensive way" to express their freedom, whites were able to "deny blacks an equal voice in church affairs in violation of the doctrine of congregational government."²⁹⁴

Though, as seen with Methodist Episcopal Church – South, control and influence over newly freed slaves was paramount in the minds of the Southern Baptist Convention. Blunting the corrupting affect of outside forces on freedmen ran a close second to rhetoric of the importance of sharing the Gospel with blacks. Southern Baptists admitted that year that the Old South was gone and a new civilization was springing forth. They also also acquiesced to the idea that blacks were so numerous that there was no way to deny they were going to have an effect on how the new civilization shook out. Thus, it was of the upmost importance that the Church use her influence to ensure blacks did not become "the prey of ignorance and vice that they may pollute the very sanctuary of our strength and fill its chambers with the deadly vapors of moral pestilence."²⁹⁵ The SBC was well situated to save blacks from "errorists of every name and school" to trap blacks into destruction.²⁹⁶ As Southern whites struggled to come to grips with the outcome of the Civil War, they began to define themselves in terms of morality and religion, that is, they viewed themselves as virtuous people who, while defeated militarily, were still the keepers and defenders of a "peculiarly blessed" culture.²⁹⁷ It was still their job to paternalistically ensure blacks did not make bad decisions and kept to their place in society. Antebellum attitudes toward slavery, moreover, transferred into new attitudes toward indebted

²⁹³ John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 31.

²⁹⁴ Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ I.T. Tichenor, "Report on the Committee of The Colored Persons" (Report presented at the Twenty-second Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, May 10, 11, & 12, 1877)

²⁹⁶ Tichenor, "Report on the Committee of The Colored Population", *Ibid.*

For a great example of the continued patristic outlook of Southern Whites see Section 4 of the report.

²⁹⁷ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 7.

labor like sharecropping as cotton was once again becoming the significant economic engine of the South after its paralysation during the Civil War.²⁹⁸

VI

It would be easy to view denominations and churches set up for freed slaves purely as vehicles for white dominance of Southern culture after the Civil War. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was shaped and formed by the Methodist Episcopal Church – South as an attempt to stop the advance of politically active Northern Methodist denominations. Black churches like New Hope Baptist Church solved sticky theological questions of equality in church representation by separating the races. Both cases allowed whites to maintain paternalistic feelings, which allowed them a touch point with the past as they worked to ensure Southern culture remained as close to the antebellum ideal as it could without slavery.

But, we also see former slaves taking full ownership of their new denominations and churches. Their freedom and dignity expressed itself through the mundane: church record books written in their own hand, in words a few years before they could not comprehend. Words that expressed dignity. Words where even when they were details of their sins, it showed they mattered more than a brief sentence or two. They held sway over their own denominational structure. Though set up under the guidance of Whites who had their own agenda, these black denominations and churches were none-the-less their own with the legitimacy of being canonically sound. In their poverty, they called attention to how they were not simply pawns of whites in denominational and regional battles for political and ecclesial influence.

²⁹⁸ Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *The American Historical Review* 109 (2004): 1428.

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