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A mingled yarn: Race and religion in Mississippi, 1800–1876

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Rice University, 1988
RICE UNIVERSITY

A Mingled Yarn:
Race and Religion in Mississippi, 1800-1876

by

Randy Jay Sparks

A Thesis Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Houston, Texas

May, 1988
Preface

Most historians of southern religion and slavery have either ignored biracial worship in southern evangelical churches or dismissed the white controlled churches while concentrating their attention on religion in the slave quarters. Historians have also concentrated on the eastern seaboard states; even studies of the entire region are often based primarily on sources from the east. The following work is an attempt to present an interpretive study of biracial worship in Mississippi from 1800 to 1876. I have relied heavily on unpublished church records; sources too often overlooked by historians.

In researching and writing the dissertation I have accumulated many debts. A religious history course with Professor John B. Boles first led me to this topic. His enthusiasm, advice, and encouragement contributed much to this project, and his personal and professional integrity are qualities I hope to emulate. Other friends and colleagues at Rice University are also due my thanks: Evelyn Thomas Nolen, Mary G. Winkler, Chris and Kenneth De Ville, Elizabeth Turner, and Dean James deserve special mention. I am also grateful to the archivists and librarians at Mississippi State University, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Millsaps College, and Mississippi College for their expert assistance. Peggy Bonner, a
skilled and dedicated typist and a long-time friend, made a vital contribution to this endeavor.

My parents, through their emotional and financial support, have contributed more than any others to my graduate career. It is my chief regret that my father, John Russell Sparks, did not live to read this dedication. With love and respect, I dedicate this work to my mother, Mrs. Mildred H. Sparks, and to the memory of my father.
Abstract

Randy Jay Sparks, Doctor of Philosophy, 1988

Major: History, Department of History

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ABSTRACT

From their inauspicious beginnings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Mississippi evangelical churches—the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian—expanded dramatically and set the moral tone of society. Early churches were founded on egalitarian principles by members of both races. A study of unpublished church records reveals that before 1830, blacks and whites received equal treatment in the churches. White evangelicals welcomed slaves into the churches, often opposed slavery, and defended slaves' religious freedom.

The rapid expansion of slavery in the state, the movement of slaveholders into the churches, and the growing wealth of the membership presented evangelicals with a serious moral dilemma. As sectional tensions rose and the debate over slavery intensified after 1830, most evangelicals embraced slavery. Religious leaders articulated the most accepted justification of slavery, one based on
Biblical teachings. The Biblical defense of slavery emphasized the spiritual welfare of slaves. After 1830 evangelical efforts to minister to blacks increased, and black church membership grew.

As they moved from sect to denomination, churches became more hierarchical and less egalitarian. Ministers sought a higher social position and placed greater emphasis on the ministerial gift. Lay participation in worship services was discouraged. Because of their preference for a different style of worship and because of white discrimination, blacks often preferred segregated services.

Some historians have characterized biracial churches as simply another white control device against slaves, but an analysis of approximately 1600 disciplinary actions from 30 churches demonstrates that while whites sometimes used church courts to punish slaves who violated the slave code, most cases against blacks involved the same charges made against white offenders.

The coming of the Civil War highlighted the divergent goals held by black and white evangelicals. With varying degrees of enthusiasm, white evangelicals lent their support to sectionalism, secession, and war. War and defeat brought about a crisis in many churches, yet out of that malaise grew a powerful, and heretofore unexamined, revival on the home front. Blacks joined in the revivals.
The war disrupted life in the slave community, but many slaves saw the war as an answered prayer for freedom.

From the end of the war through the Reconstruction period evangelical churches separated along racial lines. The separations usually occurred after blacks requested a division and were generally accomplished amicably. The postbellum separations ended biracial worship in the state.
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Introduction

Almost 200 years of southern religious history came together symbolically on Sunday, November 14, 1976, in Plains, Georgia, hometown of President-elect Jimmy Carter. Carter's deep religious faith became an issue in the campaign and focused attention on the First Baptist Church of Plains where the Carters worshipped. Like most southern churches, the Plains First Baptist Church was segregated, and a black man's highly publicized attempt to join the church created a storm of controversy. On this particular Sunday hundreds of spectators and members of the press gathered outside the church for what became "probably the most publicized church meeting in history." November 14 was "decision day" when church members would decide whether or not to admit blacks to membership.¹

A few members of the press noted a paradox in the situation; blacks and whites attended Plains Baptist Church together from the church's organization in 1848 until the 1870s when blacks left voluntarily to organize their own church. The history of antebellum religious fellowship was largely forgotten by southerners a century later, and a black man's desire to join the church threatened to split

the congregation. Carter, the minister, and a group of younger members favored allowing blacks to join, while another faction opposed integration and wanted to oust the minister. Decision day resulted in a compromise of sorts. After an emotional meeting the membership agreed to allow blacks to become members and established a "watch-care committee" to "test the sincerity of all persons applying for membership . . . ." Carter and others praised the church for the change of policy, while the minister exulted, "We've soared like eagles." A few weeks later, however, the minister was forced to resign over the controversy. A century of segregation could not be easily erased, though perhaps a better understanding of the history of southern biracial worship could facilitate the process.

The postbellum history of religious segregation has, to some extent, influenced scholars. The dynamic role of the church in the postbellum black community has led historians to trace its development back to the "invisible church" in the slave community, a view that negates biracial worship. Biracial churches receive only offhand treatment in most studies of the slave experience; too often historians view the churches as only another white control device against slaves. Historian John B. Boles recognized the problem when he wrote, "Historians have sufficiently

---

2 "Change of Mind," p. 51 (quotations). See also articles cited above.
recognized neither the role of the slave in the so-called white churches nor the role of those churches in the lives of the slaves."^3 Like Boles, more historians are beginning to examine biracial churches and exposing a rich and complex aspect of the southern experience. This study seeks to contribute to this endeavor by examining evangelical religion in Mississippi from 1800 to 1876.

My discussion of Mississippi evangelicals will focus on the three major denominations in the state: the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. The three denominations were well established in the South before Mississippi became a part of the United States. Both the Baptists and Presbyterians trace their histories in the region to the late seventeenth century, while the Methodists existed as a separate denomination only after 1784. Periodic, though somewhat localized, revivals helped the evangelicals grow and spread their religious ideas before the Revolution, especially in Virginia and North Carolina. Migrants into the burgeoning territories to the west carried evangelicalism with them. For a variety of reasons, some of which will be discussed in Chapter I, a remarkable religious revival began in Kentucky in 1800. The Great Revival, as this outpouring came to be known, revolutionized the South's

religious life and resulted in what has been described as a "revitalization movement" among evangelicals.4

The outbreak of the Great Revival coincided with United States' acquisition of Mississippi and the beginning of large-scale immigration to the area. The United States was the fourth power to claim Mississippi. Hernando de Soto, who traveled across Mississippi in the mid-sixteenth century, was probably the first European to explore Mississippi. The Spanish, however, did not capitalize on de Soto's discovery. In the following century, the French recognized the potential of the Mississippi River and began exploring and settling the lower Mississippi Valley. In 1699 the French established a settlement at Biloxi on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and in 1716 they built Fort Rosalie which became a center of French activity and the future site of Natchez. As a consequence of the French and Indian

War (1754-63), France ceded its territory east of the Mississippi River to Britain.\textsuperscript{5}

The British colony of West Florida included the area up to the 31° parallel, later moved to the 32° 28" parallel, a boundary change that caused future disputes. The town of Natchez was established by the British, and many British settlers moved into the Natchez District. When the American colonies rebelled in 1774, Natchez remained loyal to the mother country, and many Tories chose it as a haven from the rebellion. In 1779 the Spanish declared war on Britain and soon captured Fort Rosalie.

The Treaty of Paris that ended the American Revolution recognized Spanish control of West Florida while granted the newly born United States all British territory east of the Mississippi River from Canada in the north to the Florida boundary in the south. The treaty failed to specify the boundary; the Spanish claimed the 32° 38" parallel, while the United States maintained that the 31° parallel was the proper boundary. At issue was control of Natchez which lay north of the 31° parallel. The young United States was as yet too weak to press its claim, and Natchez remained in Spanish hands. The Spanish gave liberal land grants, guaranteed religious freedom (within limits),

\textsuperscript{5}On the early history of Mississippi see J. F. H. Claiborne, Mississippi, As a Province, Territory, and State . . . (Jackson, 1880); D. Clayton James, Antebellum Natchez (Baton Rouge, 1968).
and encouraged settlements. By 1787 a majority of the Natchez residents spoke English. Spanish control of the area continued until 1795 when involvement in a European war made it impossible for the Spanish to defend their far-flung empire. In the Treaty of San Lorenzo the Spanish agreed to the 31° parallel boundary rather than risk a war that could cost them New Orleans. The Spanish delayed their departure until March 1798 when they officially transferred the territory to the United States. Later that year Congress established the Mississippi Territory, and immigrants from the seaboard states quickly began to settle in the new territory. The Americans found slavery well established in their new territory; of a population of approximately 7,000 in 1798, some 2,400 were slaves. Geography, soil, and climate made the territory ideally suited for plantation agriculture, and the supply of fertile land was a powerful magnate drawing thousands of settlers to Mississippi.
Chapter I

Planted Together: Black and White Evangelicals in Mississippi, 1798-1830

Like all American pioneers, early settlers in Mississippi struggled to create viable communities on the untamed frontier. Churches came to play an important role in their efforts to impose order on the wilderness, but conditions in the Mississippi Territory were not conducive to religion, as the first ministers quickly discovered. A small group of Baptists began to worship together in Mississippi as early as 1781, though Spanish persecution prevented formal organization of their church until 1798 when the United States took possession of the area. Relieved after years of struggle, the Baptists named their church Salem, meaning "peace." ¹

These early Baptists were far from wealthy, as a 1792 Spanish census shows. Three charter members of Salem Baptist Church are listed on the census: Margaret Stampley, John Jones, and William Thompson. The Baptists first met in Margaret Stampley's home. She owned no land, but possessed one female slave, one horse, eighteen cows, nine swine, and seventy bushels of corn. Jones owned 400 acres of land, though most of it must have been unimproved for he owned no slaves, three horses, twenty cows, twenty swine,

and one hundred bushels of corn. Thompson owned no land, two horses, eight cows, twenty swine, and one hundred bushels of corn. There is no evidence that the other church members were any more affluent than these three. Since the early records from Salem are incomplete, it is impossible to ascertain when blacks first joined the church, but by 1816 at least twenty-five blacks belonged to the church.²

Some evangelicals moved to the territory as a group, bound together by ties of Christian brotherhood. In 1804 a group of one hundred Baptist, including a number of slaves, began the long and dangerous journey from the Beaufort district of South Carolina. They arrived in the territory in 1805, settled near the future town of Woodville, and built Bethel Baptist Church.

The first Methodist society in the territory was organized in 1799 in Washington, the territorial capital. The new congregation of eight people included a black man and his wife. The Reverend Tobias Gibson, a South Carolina native, established this church shortly after his appointment as missionary to the territory. Gibson was unmarried, handsome, well educated, and had relatives in the Natchez region. Methodist minister and historian John G. Jones

described Gibson as being opposed to slavery, a sentiment
that led him to free the slaves he inherited from his
father. In the years following, the Methodists sent
several other missionaries to the territory. Their task
was a difficult one; Gibson died in 1804, and only 132
whites and 72 blacks had joined the Methodist churches in
the territory.³

Launer Blackman, a Methodist missionary who arrived
in the territory around the time of Gibson's death,
described the obstacles facing evangelicals there. He
wrote that many of the "Old Settlers" were "so rich they
are above religion and religion is above them." The poor,
on the other hand, were "mostly very ignorant," and he
found it "difficult to make impress on their minds about
religion . . . ." He observed that blacks were numerous,
but "mostly very wicked." Only "A few of the old inhab-
ants that hold a mediocrity in life embrace religion
. . . ." Blackman was encouraged as more settlers from the
southern states arrived in the territory. Many of them
were already converted, and they proved to be a means of
reaching others by providing food, shelter, and contacts.⁴

³Jones, A Complete History of Methodism in the Missis-
sippi Conference, 2 vols. (Nashville, Tenn., 1908), I: 105;
II: 230; Jones, Concise History, pp. 99, 101-02, 116;
Learner [Launer] Blackman Journal (J. B. Cain Archives,
Millsaps College, Jackson, Miss. hereinafter cited as Cain

⁴Blackman Journal, pp. 5-6; Jones, Complete History,
I: 362.
The Presbyterians were the last major evangelical sect to become established in the Territory. In 1801 three missionaries sent by the Synod of Carolina arrived in southwestern Mississippi, where they labored for one year. They collected congregations, but, unlike the Methodists missionaries, they did not establish churches. In 1804 the Reverend Joseph Bullen organized the first Presbyterian church near Uniontown, in the Natchez region. Bullen, a Massachusetts native educated at Yale College, served as missionary to the Chickasaw nation in north Mississippi before moving south. The Reverend James Smylie, a North Carolinian of Highland Scots ancestry, arrived in the territory in 1805 as a missionary from the Synod of Carolina. He established several churches in the Amite and Adams county area, and became one of the most influential ministers in the old southwest.⁵

Despite the missionaries's best efforts, evangelical churches attracted only a few hundred members before 1810 when a great outburst of religious enthusiasm began. This outburst was part of the Great Revival which began so forcefully in Kentucky in 1800. The revival came somewhat later to Mississippi than to other parts of the South.

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While the revival blazed across the older states, Mississippi evangelicals were quietly laying the necessary foundations — establishing churches, creating networks of believers, and fostering a climate favorable to religious ideas. Demographics also help explain Mississippi's lag. From roughly 1800 to 1805, when the revival reached its peak in other parts of the region, Mississippi's population was simply too small, too widely dispersed, and too much occupied with basic survival to join such a movement (see Tables 2 and 3). Other studies have shown also the important role evangelists played in sparking revivals. As we will see, such individuals came later to Mississippi.  

Since the roots of revivalism lie in both individual psychology and larger sociocultural patterns, the phenomenon is particularly difficult to explain, but peculiar frontier conditions suggest at least partial explanations for the revival's development. Again, demographics reveal a great deal about the frontier society. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of Mississippi's frontier population was its youth; from 1800 to 1820 from 65 to 80 percent

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of the population was under the age of twenty-four (see Table 1). Also significant is the rapid population growth; from 1805 to 1810, for example, the population grew 300 percent (see Table 2).

These demographic patterns have important implications for the revival. We find large numbers of young people in a frontier society characterized by lawlessness, isolation, and lack of community. Some were young married couples seeking a fresh start in a new land, but separated from their kin. As one young woman described her situation, "I am sad to night, sickness preys in my frame I am a lone & more than 150 miles from any near relative in the wild woods of an indian nation, a stranger & unknown sitting in a low roofed cabbin by a little fire ...."

Another "adventurous pioneer family, consisting of the husband and wife and several small children" settled in east Mississippi when it "was almost one unbroken wilderness ...." They lived "as in exile from human society," and their closest neighbor lived eleven miles away. The absence of relatives or any other support group was particularly felt when one of their children died, "and in solitude and loneliness they buried him with their own hands." The woman found religion by praying and studying the Bible, but no doubt her happiness increased when her
Table 1

Population by Age and Percentage of Total, 1800-1830
(population given in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Under 5 years</th>
<th>% 5-14</th>
<th>% 15-24</th>
<th>% 25-44</th>
<th>% 45+</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Total Population and Percent Increase, 1800-1830

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>75.6</td>
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</table>

Table 3

Total Population and Percentage Between 5-24 Years of Age for Mississippi, Kentucky, and South Carolina, 1800-1830 (Population in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Miss. Total</th>
<th>%5-24</th>
<th>Ky. Total</th>
<th>%5-24</th>
<th>S.C. Total</th>
<th>%5-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

husband was converted by a Methodist preacher. People such as these, cut off from any sense of a larger community and isolated from their kinship networks, hungered for comfort, friendships, and connections.

The limited evidence suggests that many converts in this pre-1830 period were young adults, striving for individual identity after a period of experimentation. A sample of eighteen evangelicals who converted before 1830 shows a median age of 20.5 years. The experience of John G. Jones will speak for many others. Jones is somewhat atypical in that he was a native of Mississippi and had a large family network, but his identity confusion and his conversion experience mirrors many others. Born August 23, 1804, in Jefferson County, he was the son of Jonathan and Phebe Griffing Jones. His father died when he was ten years old; his father’s death coincided with his first attempt to pray. Jones’ father had not been a religious man, but his mother gave him religious instruction. He was more attracted, however, by "the obscene, blasphemous, and wicked conversation and conduct" of his family’s slaves and

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his schoolmates. Jones's spiritual autobiography presents the image of a vile past ultimately redeemed by faith. His "vices" included swearing, drinking, and Sabbath-breaking. He was sometimes afraid to fall asleep at night for fear that God would strike him dead for his sins. Because of a friend's encouragement he attended a camp meeting in September 1821; he planned to leave before nightfall but his friend convinced him to stay by promising him that "There is much more to be seen after night . . . for they will fall down, five, or six in a pile."9

Jones attended the meeting to amuse himself, but he became caught up in the emotional service. He lost his friend in the throng, and as he stood close to the altar one of the mourners - i.e., a person seeking salvation - was "taken off to the tents under great distress of mind." Jones was deeply moved by the scene, but refused to show his distress. His emotional state must have been obvious, for when his uncle saw him the following day he said, "I

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wonder if they (the preachers) have not almost won your heart?" Jones' only response was to cry on his uncle's shoulder. He joined the Methodist Church the following month at the age of seventeen, and despite his resolution to join with "manly dignity," he "wept freely" while his relatives "wept around me for joy . . . ."\(^{10}\)

Though now a church member, Jones's conversion was not yet complete. He found that class meetings greatly benefitted him in his religious quest. In these meetings a class leader, often a lay person and sometimes a woman, asked each person a series of questions about his or her spiritual condition. Jones, for example, felt most troubled when the leader asked "if I had yet an evidence that God, for Christ sake had pardoned my sins?" Jones was unable to answer in the affirmative until conversations with other members who shared their conversion experience and his thrice daily prayers "produced in my heart a thorough conviction of inward, and outward sins, of the deep depravity of my fallen nature . . . ." He spoke the words of Job: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He often wept during his secret prayers. Finally, on February 22, 1822, four months after the beginning of his conversion, he "embraced religion." He often attended camp meetings, prayer meetings, and class meetings where he

\(^{10}\)Ibid., pp. 9 (first and second quotations), 12 (third, fourth, and fifth quotations).
began to pray and exhort. After his mother's death in May 1823, Jones decided to become a minister.\textsuperscript{11}

Like most aspects of any religion, the evangelical conversion experience became ritualized, a process predating the revival movement in Mississippi. Anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace described the conversion experience as a learning process, a "ritual reorganization of experience." He suggested five stages in this "ritual process of cognitive-and-affective restructuring," a scheme useful in exploring Jones's highly typical conversion experience. The first stage, \textit{Pre-Learning}, precedes the actual conversion experience and involves the learning of the basic elements of the belief system and the rights and obligations of a convert. Jones acknowledged that his Baptist mother provided him with religious instruction, and he may well have attended camp meetings or other services before his conversion.\textsuperscript{12}

Wallace called the second stage \textit{Separation} in which the ritualist is separated from the general environment and attention is somehow focused on religious concerns. For Jones and for thousands of other evangelicals throughout the nineteenth century, the camp meeting served this purpose. Among the many devices involved in this stage,

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., pp. 12-15, 31, 38, 42 (first quotation on p. 13).

\textsuperscript{12}Wallace, \textit{Religion}, pp. 239-42 (first quotation on p. 239; second on p. 240).
Wallace identified several that apply to the camp meetings. Deprivation of sensory contact through physical isolation, darkness, and distracting noise was a vital part of the meetings. Camp meetings were, as their name implies, literally camps; clearings in the woods, usually removed from a village or town, where people isolated themselves from the world around them. Services were held all through the day and late into the night; the effects of the torches and campfires can be well imagined. Meetings were notoriously noisy affairs. When the celebrated but eccentric Methodist evangelist Lorenzo Dow held the first camp meeting on Mississippi soil in 1805, the shocked residents who ignored his message asked, "Is God deaf, that they cannot worship him without such a noise?"¹³

The journey to the meeting, the long services, and the uncomfortable conditions imposed physical stress on the participants; such stress is another of the devices Wallace identified with the separation stage. Jones recalled crowding into a ox-cart with family members and slaves to attend camp meetings. Meetings often became tests of endurance; one minister, for example, preached for three hours nonstop! Preachers carefully manipulated their audiences. One listener recalled two noted revivalists--Miles Harper and Thomas Griffin--brothers-in-law noted for

¹³Ibid., p. 240-41; Dow, History of the Cosmopolite: or the Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow . . . (Cincinnati, 1857), p. 218 (first quotation).
their successful camp meeting technique. They worked as a team:

They were both men of . . . rough manners and severe aspect; often with a frown upon their brows; and full of pungent and sometimes very bitter satire . . . Mr. Griffin was rather harsh and sardonic. He would make the congregation quail, and shrink and hide their heads with fear and shame, and then Harper would solace and comfort them, and inspire them with hope and confidence; and between the two, whenever they preached, a revival was sure to follow.14

Add to the long sermons and physical stress the effects of the music. Camp meetings became famous for the stirring revival hymns. Jones recognized the contribution of blacks to the development of the singing style. He observed that many blacks had exceptionally good voices and enjoyed the night-time services. He wrote of the early meetings; "the crowds . . . soon caught the songs and choruses and enlivened the midnight hours with a vast swell of the most enrapturing church music." The song's repetitive choruses made them easy to learn. Although no musical instruments were used, the songs were usually accompanied by the clapping of hands or stamping of feet. As Wallace noted, "the presentation of monotonous and repetitive stimuli . . . help to induce trance."15


15Jones, Complete History, I: 448; Wallace, Religion, pp. 240-41. On the importance of song in such services see Boles, Great Revival, pp. 76, 121-24; Gobel, Trabelin' On, p. 153.
Such trances and related manifestations became a common feature of the camp meetings. Jones described the physical effects exhibited at these meetings. Shouting was perhaps the most common form of expression, but weeping was also common. Mourners, those sorrowful would-be converts, were present at most meetings where they were called forward toward the meeting's close. More dramatic "bodily exercises" frequently occurred. Some converts, feeling themselves overcome by the Holy Spirit, fell gently to the floor, and all their apparent bodily functions ceased for hours except a faint respiration. Their extremities and face became cold to the touch, and their pulse decreased. Jones, who experienced this sensation, described it "as a rushing mighty wind" and called himself a "willing captive." He recalled that "It was unpleasant to be touched, or spoken to. . . . But O! the joy, the rapture, the dissolving and absorbing love felt in the 'inner man.'"

Some modes of expression required physical strength and stamina. In the jumping exercise "the subject would bound from the floor twenty or thirty times in quick succession, with a countenance beaming with holy joy . . . the feats performed in jumping over benches, and bounding from place to place without injury . . . were extraordinary."

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16 John Griffing Jones Autobiography (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss. hereinafter cited as MDAH), pp. 131, 132 (first and second quotations), 136 (third and fourth quotations), 138; Winans Journal, May 19, 1812; May 28, 1815; May 13, 1821.
One form of exercise usually experienced by women was the dancing exercise in which women "would suddenly spring to their feet, and with countenances beaming with extatic [sic] joy, and their eyes turned upwards, they would grace-fully jump up and down with a quickness, nimbleness, and apparent ease, not easily imitated. . . ."  

These physical effects were one indication that the ritualist had achieved the state of separation, which was followed by the third stage, Suggestion. As Wallace described it, "the cognitive material relevant to resyn-thesis can be readily recombined under the influence of direct suggestion from others or from one's self . . . ."

This stage corresponds to what one evangelical described as "literally a Change of Mind, -that is, from the carnal mind to the spiritual state." This stage can take several forms, from a temporary change in mood to an alternate personality, and can be a temporary change, as in the case of an alternate personality, or an enduring restructuring of values and beliefs.  

Jones apparently reached this stage when his uncle asked (or suggested) if the preachers had won his heart. The suggestion produced a radical change in mood. For Jones, and for many others, an enduring identity transformation occurred. For others,

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however, the change was temporary, and "backsliders" were common.

The evangelicals differed on the spiritual state of these backsliders. The Methodists believed in "the possibility of falling from the highest attainments in religion;" they saw nothing inconsistent in saying that someone "had religion, but lost it." As Wallace observed, once a person experienced separation and personality alteration, he retained a lower threshold for such experiences. His observation helps explain the condition of some mourners, like those described by Jones in an 1840 letter: "I am more at a loss to know what to do in Natchez on the subject of calling up mourners . . . We have here . . . a parcel of illfamed women—who, at every call are the first to come to the altar—the most noisy while at it—and the last to go away—and what is most to be lamented—is they are mourners by profession indefinitely—for they never get religion." While these women were exceptional, their experience was not uncommon. Evangelicals recognized the difficulty in maintaining the new role.19

This difficulty is related to the fourth stage, Execution. After the ritualist has achieved resynthesis or a "change of mind," he or she will be expected to act in

19 Blackman Journal, p. 20 (first and second quotations); Jones to Benjamin M. Drake, May 6, 1840 (third quotation), Drake Papers (Cain Archives); Winans Autobiography, p. 23.
accordance with the belief structure. If a person failed to act on these beliefs once the dissociated state had passed, the Methodists would say the person had lost his religion, while others might deny the validity of the conversion experience. All evangelicals expected, however, a lifelong change of personality.20

A convert's ability to make such a lasting change depended upon the fifth and final stage, Maintenance.21 This stage might be thought of as a "follow-up" process. The Methodists, for example, recognized the importance of this stage and put converts like Jones into class meetings where a standard question emphasized the continuing knowledge of salvation. Evangelicals sought to renew the experience, or keep it fresh in their hearts and minds, by sharing it with one another. Thus, the camp meetings and revivals, regular summer and autumn events throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, gave the converts an opportunity to repeat the ritual of conversion and assist others along that difficult road. As noted previously, assisting others provided an opportunity to retell, and thereby repeat and renew, the experience.

Camp meetings, then, provided evangelicals with a means of spreading their message well-suited to frontier conditions and to the needs of settlers. Lorenzo Dow's

21Ibid., pp. 241-42.
1805 meeting was a profitable and exciting one. Critical reports of him in the Natchez newspapers increased interest, and a large crowd attended the meeting. Dow wrote that "A panic seized the congregation, and a solemn awe ensued. We had a cry and a shout. It was a weeping, tender time." The meeting lasted four days, and fifty people were converted. Momentum increased with the arrival of veterans from the revival movement in Kentucky. William Winans, a Pennsylvania native and Methodist minister, arrived in the territory in 1810 and became a leader in the revival movement. Winans's first ministerial appointment was in Kentucky where he attended camp meetings and heard celebrated revivalists including Dow. Winans was a man of humble origins who had received only two weeks of formal education, but his simple background was probably an advantage on the frontier where he labored among men much like himself. He was described as "a unique character, tall, thin, weatherworn, and looking the very image of a Green Mountain farmer . . . ." He criticized people who took too worldly an interest in their personal appearance, but his lack of attention to personal grooming gave the impression of slovenliness; as one contemporary wrote, "his whole attire has the appearance of uniform neglect."

22 Jones, Complete History, I: 81-83, 122-24, 217 (second quotation); Lorenzo Dow, History of the Cosmopolite, pp. 217-218 (first quote on 218); Winans Autobiography, pp. 1, 33; Quotations in Winans Scrapbook (Cain Archives).
By 1812 camp meetings drew impressive crowds that experienced the emotional outbursts common to such meetings across the South. At a June 1812 meeting eight evangelists preached on a Saturday; by the night-time services people were "on fire with exhortations." Winans reported with satisfaction that "we had a considerable disturbance." On the following day Lewis Hobbs, also a Methodist minister, "set the people on fire or raised their passions to an incredible pitch."^{23}

What sort of sermons produced these responses? William Winans recorded the various texts used by six preachers at a camp meeting service held in 1812. Although it is impossible to reconstruct their interpretations of the texts, their choice of scripture is illustrative. Winans opened the day's events with a sermon based on the following scripture: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." [Romans, 10:13]. Roswell Valentine followed using for his sermon Luke 10:25: "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life." "Parson Montgomery" preached from another new Testament text: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among man, whereby we must be saved [Acts 14:12]. Miles Harper chose for his

^{23}Winans Journal (Cain Archives), June 6, 1812; June 7, 1812 (quotation); Winans Autobiography, p. 81.
text, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear" [Isaiah 59:1]. His must have been a powerful sermon; in Winans' words, "an awful fist be made of it!" "Bro. Kennon" followed with a sermon from I John 5:5: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" "Bro. Lewis" returned to Isaiah for his scripture: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" [Isaiah 55:6]. He was followed by "Bro. Johnson and Bro. Hobbs," who "set the people on fire with exhortations." 24

Several themes central to the evangelical's success run through these texts. Winans opened with a statement of the universal accessibility of salvation. Valentine followed with a verse that precedes the parable of the Good Samaritan. Both Winans' text and the story of the Good Samaritan carried tremendous meaning for the racially mixed

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24Winans Journal, June 6, 1812. Roswell Valentine came to Mississippi from New York with Lorenzo Dow and resided in Claiborne and Jefferson counties. Harper was sent to Mississippi in 1809 from Kentucky where he had participated in revivals. "Bro Kennon" could have been one of three brothers who were itinerant preachers originally from South Carolina. Samuel S. Lewis arrived in the territory in 1812 from the Western Conference. John C. Johnson, born in Pennsylvania and reared in Kentucky, also converted in a Kentucky camp meeting, settled in Mississippi, and made many converts through his powerful preaching. Lewis Hobbs, a Georgia native, was sent to Mississippi from the South Carolina Conference. He also served as a missionary to New Orleans before ill health forced him to return to Georgia where he died in 1814. For biographical sketches of these men see Jones, Complete History, I: 208-10, 371, 236, 137-40, 239-40.
congregation. Harper's sermon, too, based on a verse describing the long arm of God, must have affected listeners who may have experienced feelings of isolation. Harper might well have told them that God could reach even into the wilderness and could hear those who called on him from a lonely log cabin. Bro. Kennon's scripture speaks of the power of faith over the things of the world; another scripture full of possibilities for the plain folk and blacks. Lewis, through the verse from 55 Isaiah, again spoke of God's presence in the wilderness and the necessity of seizing an opportunity to find salvation—no doubt a powerful appeal to those who seldom heard a sermon or saw a preacher, and to those who felt the presence of death in their midst. The services ended with emotional exhortations; Hobbs was called the "weeping prophet," which provided an outlet for deeply held emotions.

The camp meeting provided the perfect solution to the problem of a widely dispersed population and few ministers. The meetings often attracted huge crowds. In 1823, for example, William Winans estimated that 4-6,000 people attended a camp meeting; the crowd included a large number of blacks. During the revival period hundreds of new converts came into the churches, and those already converted came into closer fellowship with one another. One historian wrote that the Great Revival "did not vitalize the lethargic or renew church members in their church
membership; instead it relocated them from life outside the influence of the church and Christianity . . . ." While some frontier residents had never heard the gospel, many new residents, especially those who arrived after the Great Revival subsided in Kentucky and the older southern states, had joined evangelical churches in the East before moving to the West. Statistics from the Mississippi Baptist Association illustrate this point; from 1807 to 1814, 875 members joined the churches in the Association. Of this number 485 (or 54.2 percent) joined by baptism while 390 (or 44.6 percent) joined by letter.\textsuperscript{25} The latter group, almost half the new converts, transferred their membership from another Baptist church. Revivals and other services revitalized Christians on the frontier, brought new settlers into the Christian community, and helped evangelicals create visible and influential networks of churches and organizations.

Church membership and the establishment of new churches reflected the revival's strength. The Methodists grew from 132 white and 72 black members in 1805 to 1,551 white and 410 black members in 1816—an astounding 1,075

\textsuperscript{25}Winans Journal, June 6-8, 1812; May 12-13, 1815; October 5, 1823; October 16-21, 1823; Winans Autobiography, pp. 66-67; Jones, Concise History, pp. 102, 110, 48; Republication of the Minutes of the Mississippi Baptist Association, From Its Organization in 1806 to the Present Time (New Orleans, 1849), p. 264; Samuel S. Hill, ed., Religion in the Southern States: A Historical Study (Mercer, Ga., 1983), p. 394 (quotation)
percent increase in white membership and 469 percent increase in black membership, a rate considerably higher than the rate of population growth (see Table 2). In 1807 the five Baptist churches in the territory organized the Mississippi Baptist Association; by 1818 the Association had forty member churches. Membership grew from 196 in 1807 to 1,072 in 1818.26

The revitalization movement brought hundreds of converts into the churches where the regular worship services continued the simple and emotional style of outdoor worship. Services might be held on any day since itinerant ministers, common in the Methodist and Baptist churches, met with worshippers throughout the week. Congregations often gathered in private homes, in a brush arbor or open space in the woods, in a local school, or in a simple log church. A chair or a large log might service for a pulpit. Services opened with singing and prayer. Because of the scarcity of hymn books and the high illiteracy rate, a song leader typically "lined" the hymns; he called out a line at a time and the congregation responded. They sang a cappella since evangelicals looked upon musical instruments with disfavor. As noted earlier, congregational singing played a vital role in the services, and ministers taught the

26 Jones, Concise History, pp. 102, 110; "Comparative Statement of the Condition of the Churches composing the Mississippi Baptist Association, from 1807 to 1847 inclusive," in A Reproduction of the Minutes of the Mississippi Baptist Association, p. 264.
popular hymns to their congregations. Following the song service, the preacher spoke. Jones described the preaching style common in the early churches as the "heavenly tone," also called the "holy tone." It was characterized by "assumed annotations of the voice, expressive of great earnestness, and . . . composed of the cadences of whining, mourning, lamentation and wailing, . . . intended to arouse the sympathies of both preacher and auditors." Because of its rhythmic quality one hearer asked a preacher, "Brother . . . did you preach us a song or sing us a sermon?" Services often aroused congregations to a fever pitch; mourners filled the front pews, the newly converted knelt at the altar, and the church or the woods rang with the shouts of joyful worshippers. For example, Winans recorded that Meredith Renneau delivered a sermon "followed by singing, prayer, and some noise."27

As part of their effort to civilize the frontier, evangelicals created interdenominational and secular organizations. In 1815 they organized the Amite and Florida Bible Society; Ezra Courtney, its first president, was a prominent Baptist minister, and James Smylie served

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27Jones, Concise History, pp. 48, 63 (first quotation), 55, 66, 71, 76, 209-10; Jones, Complete History, I:61, 79, 327, 334, 409, 447, II:220, 159; L. S. Foster, Mississippi Baptist Preachers (St. Louis, 1895), pp. 493, 495 (second quotation); In 1813 the Baptist appointed 15 itinerant preachers. Minutes of the Mississippi Baptist Association, p. 35; New Orleans Christian Advocate, September 9, 1834; Winans Journal, May 28, 1815, July 27, 1821; May 13, 1821; June 14, 1823 (third quotation; July 22, 1823.
as one of its vice-presidents. For over twenty years this society distributed Bibles to poor residents of south-western Mississippi. Smylie was also a founder of the Amite Literary Society. William Winans was a founding member of the Franklin Debating and Literary Society. Smylie and other evangelicals taught schools, and in 1818 the Methodists organized the Elizabeth Female Academy in Washington, the first chartered institution for the higher education of women in the South and one of the earliest in the United States.28

Despite their efforts to gain respectability, many evangelicals remained the object of scorn and ridicule because of their lack of education, their severe style of dress, their strict moral code, their unusual services, and their readiness to criticize the world around them. Ruffians often disrupted camp meetings and other evangelical services. At an 1823 camp meeting a "mob" cut bridles and saddles at night and forced Winans to stand guard until 3:00 a.m. On another occasion "lewd fellows of the baser sort" invaded a meeting house and "played many foolish

28Amite and Florida Auxiliary Bible Society Minutes (MDAH), December 7, 1815; June 1835; Winans Autobiography, p. 127; Casey, Amite County, II: 193; Winans Autobiography, pp. 71, 91; Charles B. Galloway, "Elizabeth Female Academy - The Mother of Female Colleges," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, II (1899), pp. 169-78; Jones, Complete History, pp. 28-31; James Smylie to James Latimore, September 2, 1837, Claiborne Papers (MDAH).
pranks, among which was the putting of a Tailor's sign into the pulpit."²⁹

The tailor's sign probably referred to the Methodists' severe style of dress. They may not have believed that clothes made the man or woman, but they recognized the symbolism attached to clothing and enforced a strict dress code among members.³⁰ In part, they made a virtue of necessity, since few evangelicals could afford finery; more importantly, the rules on dress were a part of their egalitarianism and evidence of their fight to keep worldliness out of the church.

The evangelicals, especially the Methodists and Baptists, continued to draw their strength from the common folk and had difficulties with the wealthy. Daniel de Vinne, a Methodist minister, found "a good many of what the world calls the better sort of people" on his circuit, but he wrote that "Riches and worldly honours are so unfriendly to taking up the cross daily and following a lowly Saviour." He criticized wealthier members who refused to

²⁹Jones, Complete History, I: 62; Winans Journal, October 5, 1823 (first quote); July 22, 1823 (second and third quotation). Winans observed that "disorderly persons . . . are too often found in the route of any remarkable religious enterprise. . . ." See Winans Autobiography, pp. 72, 94.

³⁰Jones, Concise History, p. 175; Winans Journal, December 20, 1820; April 12, 1821; May 6, 1821; July 15 & 16, 1821; New Orleans Christian Advocate, September 9, 1854; September 30, 1854; Rev. Walter Edwin Tynes Diary (MDAH), p. 5.
participate in the services, but he was more disturbed because he could not "get them to feel rich enough to let their poor servants come to preaching." He often preached to a dozen slaves, "when the sound of the horn might summons 250 and 300 to meeting . . . . These poor creatures I never see & some never hear the gospel." In de Vinne's opinion, the blacks were eager to hear the Word, and he was certainly eager to preach it, but suspicious or indifferent masters stood in the way.

Despite opposition from some masters, evangelicals attracted black converts. Black society was perhaps more in need of revitalization than white society. While slaves retained a great deal from their African heritage, "the specifics of African religions . . . could not be transported intact to the American South." Slaves drawn from various African cultures shared many basic beliefs, but these beliefs lacked coherence. In order to survive, blacks had to find some means of reconciling themselves to slavery and its demands. As historian Mechal Sobel wrote, "The African/American was thus uniquely ready for the Great Awakenings. First, coming from a living mystery faith in Africa, he was prepared to participate in the Christian mystery. Second, because of his noncoherent world view, he deeply yearned for new coherence and a new sense of unity.

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31 Daniel de Vinne to Benjamin Drake, August 22, 1823, Drake Correspondence (Cain Archives).
and purpose." Blacks enthusiastically joined the first evangelical services in the Mississippi Territory.

The percentage of slaves in frontier Mississippi was high compared to other southern states, statistics that help explain the growing number of black evangelicals. James Davis estimated that in 1800, 10.4 percent of southern pioneers were slaves, 27.1 percent in 1820, and 30 percent in 1820. In Mississippi the black population increased from 39.4 percent of the total in 1800, to 46.4 percent in 1810, and from 43.5 percent in 1820, to 48.1 percent in 1830. By the 1820s, evangelical ministers held separate services for blacks. Blacks who wished to join and be baptized were expected to have certificates from their master, though ministers sometimes baptized slaves without them. As more blacks converted, they organized their own churches. In 1820 the Pearl River Baptist Association had twenty-three member churches, including an African Church that sent black delegates to the association's meetings. In 1825 the largest church in the Union Baptist Association was an African church with 115 members; the twenty-two member churches together had only 635

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members. At least one African church belonged to the Mississippi Baptist Association from 1810 to 1820.\textsuperscript{33}

In the Mississippi territorial days and during early statehood the independent African churches attracted more black members than the biracial churches. Of the fourteen members of Jerusalem Baptist Church in 1822, only one was black. In 1824 Galilee Baptist Church had 109 white members, but only ten blacks. Only two of Bethany Presbyterian Church’s forty members were black in 1823.\textsuperscript{34} Of course, membership is not an accurate reflection of attendance, though it may suggest proportions. Members were always joined by the curious and by those seeking salvation.

Slaves in the African and biracial evangelical churches gained powerful symbols of humanity and spiritual equality; the slave was ushered into a new community and


\textsuperscript{34}Church records reproduced in Albert E. Casey, comp.; Amite County Mississippi, 1699-1865 (2 vols. in one, Birmingham, Ala., 1948), II: 413, 56, 251, 315, 59, 212, 173, 251-53, 315-20.
given a social existence outside his master. In a wide variety of ways, white evangelicals recognized blacks as their spiritual brothers and sisters with souls equal to their own, a recognition that shook the foundations of the slave system. While the ideology of slavery had not fully developed by the early 1800s, slavery had been justified by the slaves' heathenism, by a presumed racial inferiority, and even by a denial that blacks had souls. Evangelicals, however, ministered to blacks; admitted them to their congregations in the same ways as whites; listened as blacks recounted their conversion experiences; baptized them in the same waters; extended to them the right hand of fellowship, a symbolic rite welcoming new members into the spiritual community; often called them "Brother" or "Sister"; performed marriage ceremonies; and perhaps most dramatically, licensed blacks to preach. Blacks and whites worshipped together in the outdoor services, in the small log churches, or in private homes opened for services. Perhaps seated separately but still in close proximity, blacks and whites interacted and together shaped the character of worship services.

The story of Pompey, "a celebrated negro preacher" in early Mississippi, shows the impact conversion could have on a slave and the interaction between the races. Pompey belonged to a family of nonbelievers, but he converted to Methodism. A white man once asked him why he became so
excited about religion. Pompey replied that "it makes my soul so happy." The white man scoffed at him and said, "You simpleton, a negro has no soul." Although Pompey could not openly contradict the white man, he answered, "Then, master, it makes my body happy, for I know I am happy." Evangelical religion had given Pompey a shield against such attempts at dehumanization. The Methodists licensed the black man to preach, and he ministered with great success to both blacks and whites. Pompey was "a very impulsive and noisy Christian," and an exhortation, a sermon, or a song produced some vocal response from the slave. His master threatened to punish him for these outbursts but did not because he saw that "religion made him a humble, obedient, and faithful servant . . . ."

While Pompey may have found spiritual freedom in his religion, the tragic reality of slavery followed him. Even when he grew old and almost blind, he was locked indoors when left alone. On one such occasion the house burned, and he died in the fire.35

The effect black preachers had on the slave community is, unfortunately, almost impossible to document in these

35Jones, Complete History of Methodist, II: 294 (quotation). For other examples of blacks receiving licenses to preach see Bogue Chitto Baptist Church Records, Pike County, Miss. (Mississippi Baptist Historical Collection, Mississippi College, Clinton, Miss. hereinafter cited as MBHC), September 1827; Hopewell Baptist Church Records, Franklin County, Miss. (MBHC), November 1825; Zion Hill Baptist Church, Casey, Amite County, II: 315, 321; Winans Journal, May 19, 1821; Raboteau, Slave Religion, p. 134.
early years. But seeing one of their number elevated to a position of visibility and prestige must have had an impact. Certainly black preachers must have been responsible, at least in part, for the growing number of black converts. Slaves saw a fellow slave treated not only with a degree of equality but even occasionally as a superior, at least in the spiritual realm. Many whites must have shared the experience of one Baptist minister who was guided in religion by "a pious colored man."[36]

Because of their interactions in religious settings, blacks and whites often saw one another in a new and different light. William Winans remembered that while he had seen few blacks as a child, he had somehow learned "to consider them as inferior race of human beings . . . ." His opinion changed dramatically when he attended a love feast where a black man recounted his religious experience. The black man's "deep and ardent piety" greatly affected Winans, who saw the man's faith as "the highest attainment to which man can aspire . . . ." Winans wrote, "Many, very many instances have, since that time, assured me that . . . 'God's no respecter of persons,' colors, or conditions. Among the most deeply pious Christians who I have known, have been many black people who, ignorant in other matters, degraded in conditions - many of them slaves, were children

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of God by Faith, and heirs to the promise of life eternal through Christ Jesus." Many slaves undoubtedly recognized and appreciated Winans' egalitarian sentiments. In a touching tribute to Winans, Limerick and Sukey Higdon, slaves who purchased their freedom in the 1820s, named their son Orville Winans.37

Such sentiments about slaves' religiosity were widespread among early evangelicals in Mississippi and led many early evangelicals to oppose slavery. John G. Jones, a native Mississippian who later became a Methodist minister, confessed that "Previous to my embracing religion, I . . . thought it was right for us to have as many of them [slaves] as we could get, and took a pleasure in the government of them, even when I had to use some violence to keep them in subjection." After his conversion, however, Jones "began to look on slavery as a great moral evil . . . ." Most evangelicals apparently agreed with Jones. He wrote that before the late 1820s and 1830s "few professors of Christianity, either among the laity or clergy, thought of attempting the justification of African slavery . . . from Holy Scripture." Most people, according to Jones, assumed that slavery "was a great social, political, and moral evil, which, while it had to be endured for the present, ought as soon as possible to be removed." Most

Methodists in the opening decades of the nineteenth century favored the gradual emancipation of slaves. Alexander Talley, another Methodist minister, asked prophetically, "Has Heaven no blessing in store for this class of her creatures. Are we doomed to pass on until the secret thunder burst . . . ." 

Antislavery sentiments were widespread in Mississippi before 1830. In 1818 the state Supreme Court ruled that "Slavery is condemned by reason and the laws of nature. It exists and can only exist, through municipal regulations . . . ." In the same year George Poindexter, popular United States Congressman from Mississippi, expressed his desire to see slavery abolished; "It is not with us . . . a matter of choice whether we will have slaves among us or not: we found them here, and we are obliged to maintain and employ them. It would be a blessing, could we get rid of them; but the wisest and best men among us have not been able to devise a plan for doing it." 

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38 Jones Autobiography, p. 75 (first and second quotations); Will of John W. Hundley, October 16, 1829 in Mary G. Barker, Mavis Olivin Feltus, and Diane A. Stockfelt, comps., Early Will Records of Adams County, Mississippi (n.p., 1975), p. 77; Jones, Concise History, pp. 240 (third and fourth quotations), 116; Talley to William Winans, March 28, 1826 (fifth quotation); Diary of Jacob Young reproduced in Casey, Amite County, II: 540; Lewis Hobbs to Winans, December 29, 1813 in Drake Papers (MDAH); Jones, Complete History, II: 488.

39 Charles Sackett Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (Gloucester, Mass., 1965), pp. 239-48 (quotations on p. 239).
slavery later led to a fruitful collaboration between evangelicals and the state's slaveholding and political elite. Clearly, opposition to the institution went from the elite slaveholding politicians at the top of the social ladder to the evangelical plain folk on its lower rungs.

The Methodists in their state conference and the Baptists in their association meetings discussed the slavery issue. Jacob Young, Methodist minister and presiding elder, recalled that slavery caused friction in a 1808 church conference. He wrote, "our troubles began on the fourth day --slavery--we were sitting in a slave state--Slavery had given the church much trouble previous to this time; it has been giving trouble from that day to this & will continue to give us trouble while there is a slaveholder in the Church." Unfortunately, Young gave no details of the discussions at the conference, but clearly many ministers, including Young, opposed slavery and recognized that the issue would not disappear.

The first query printed in the Mississippi Baptist Association's 1808 minutes regarded slavery: "What steps would be most desirable to take with members of our society whose treatment of their slaves is unscriptural?" The Association recommended that the churches "take notice of any improper treatment of their members toward their slaves

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40 Diary of Jacob Young reproduced in Casey, Amite County, II: 540 (first quotation).
and deal with them in brotherly love according to the rules of doctrine." One historian referred to this as a "mild and ambiguous" reply, but it was actually a clear directive. A master charged with cruelty would be treated in the same fashion as any other offender. A committee would be appointed to investigate the charges; if they were valid, disciplinary action would be taken.

Eleven years later the Mississippi Baptist Association published a lengthy address to masters and slaves in which the Association clearly outlined the duties of both parties. A dutiful slave should "be industrious, honest, faithful, submissive and humble . . . ." The Baptists did not defend slavery as a positive good, nor did they enter into a lengthy Biblical defense of the institution. They did state, however, that "under the dispensations of God you have been brought into a state of bondage, however dark, mysterious and unpleasant those dispensations may appear to you we have no doubt that they are founded in wisdom and goodness." The Baptists enjoined masters to care for slaves' bodies and souls. They acknowledged that slaves had few pleasures in life and wrote that their "drudgeries and toil . . . ought to excite sympathy and compassion in the hearts of those who enjoy the fruits of their labor." They warned masters to "Let not Avarice

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... induce you to oppress your servant lest his groans, his sweat, and his blood ascent up to God as a witness against you."\(^2\)

Oppression and cruelty against slaves in early Mississippi was apparently widespread, but evangelicals defended slaves from brutal masters. In 1827 the members of Pisgah Presbyterian Church called William Thompson before the church conference after he "cruelly whipped a slave . . . ." Winans often chastised masters who mistreated their bondsmen. One master attempted to stop theft among his slaves by threatening to punish all of them unless they identified the culprit. Winans, outraged by his injustice, "remonstrated with him so warmly and . . . forcibly that I believe he abandoned his intention."\(^3\)

Sometimes even the most faithful and respected evangelicals inflicted terrible pain and suffering on their slaves. In 1821 Winans wrote, "This morning Bro. Foster gave a cruel whipping to a boy about ten years of age, leaving his clothes bloody in every part . . . ." Winans did not specify the boy's misdeed but noted that Foster inflicted the lashes "for no other offence than what is common to boys of any colour at his age." Winans

\(^2\)Casey, Amite County, II: 123-25; Bailey, Shadow on the Church, pp. 140-41.

\(^3\)Pisgah Church Records in Casey, Amite County, p. 94; Winans Journal, December 24 & 26, 1820; February 16, 1821; 20 May 1821 (second quotation); June 27, 1821; July 21, 1823; Winans Autobiography, p. 164-65.
"hesitated long whether I should denounce his conduct in severe terms of reprobation or only insinuate my disapprobation so as to make myself be understood . . . ."\(^{44}\)

The minister faced a dilemma that troubled evangeli- cals as they sought to find their way through the thorny issues surrounding slavery. Winans acted forcibly in the earlier incident described above, but with Foster he hesi- tated. Foster was a wealthy planter, a founding member of the first Methodist church organized in Mississippi, a liberal donor, an hospitable host, and, paradoxically, an opponent of slavery. Perhaps such thoughts ran through Winans mind as he weighed his alternatives, and perhaps these considerations outweighed any thoughts about a child's suffering, the injustices committed by the strong against the weak, and the ordeal of parents and loved ones who stood by, impotent to prevent a man's abuse of a child. After a long hesitation, Winans chose to "insinuate" his disapproval,\(^{45}\) a decision that foreshadowed the future course of evangelical compromise with slavery. It would be unfair to suggest that Winans sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver, but evangelicals needed money to pay preachers, to build churches, and to support their many

\(^{44}\)Winans Journal, June 27, 1821.

\(^{45}\)Ibid.; Jones, Complete History, I: 36, 165-66; 417, 420, 451-60; II: 315-16.
benevolent activities; in Mississippi such funds could only come from slaveholders.

Evangelicals did not, however, completely abandon their black brethren. They publicly defended slaves' religious rights when in 1822 a new law code placed prohibitions on black worship. George Poindexter, then the state's popular second governor, suggested a general revision of the state's laws, and the General Assembly gave him the task. A Virginia native and son of a Baptist minister, Poindexter enjoyed a successful but scandle-ridden career in Mississippi. His popularity was considerable; in the 1819 governor's race he defeated his opponent by a two-to-one majority. State historian J.F.H. Claiborne referred to Poindexter as "the idol of the people."46

Winans wrote that Poindexter's code met with "general satisfaction" except for the restrictions it placed on slaves' right to worship among themselves and its requirement that black services be conducted by a white minister. Winans wrote that "Such a wanton curtailment of the religious privileges of the Slaves . . . aroused very general and strong feelings of opposition in all Christian Communities in the State; and it was deemed proper that this opposition

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should be such as to bear in a manner most forcible with politicians."\textsuperscript{47}

Winans led the evangelical attack on the Code and on Poindexter, who was a candidate for Congress in 1822. Winans was most "conspicuous" in his opposition, and he "determined to render that opposition as effectual . . . as possible." He used the popular camp meetings as a platform to denounce the Code. Because of the large attendance, camp meetings had become important places of political activity where candidates came seeking support. Many Baptists also opposed the Code. Both the Pearl River and Mississippi Baptist associations appointed committees to seek the repeal of the law. Poindexter lost the election and blamed his defeat on Winans and the evangelicals. The state legislature heeded the message sent by the voters and revised the Code along lines suggested by Winans.\textsuperscript{48}


\textsuperscript{48}Winans Autobiography, pp. 166 (quotation), 167, 172; Minutes of the Mississippi Baptist Association, p. 87; Leavell and Bailey, Complete History, I:129; Claiborne, Mississippi, p. 391; Allen Nevins is one of the few historians to describe this important event, though he incorrectly identifies Winans as a Jacksonian Democrat. He was, in fact, a Whig and a strong supporter of Henry Clay. See Nevins, Ordeal of the Union, 2 vols. (New York & London, 1947), I: 540-41.
The new law no longer prohibited black preachers or black meetings, but it required that services either "be conducted by a regularly ordained or licensed white minister, or attended by at least two discreet and respectable white persons, appointed by some regular church or religious society."\textsuperscript{49} The law made it necessary for African churches to have some sort of affiliation with a white organization.

In many respects, the controversy over the Code was a pivotal event. The evangelical victory demonstrated their growing influence and numbers. Initially, the odds against the evangelicals winning a political victory against an established and popular politician looked slim indeed, but their stunning success gave notice that evangelicals could not be ignored. Certainly, Poindexter expressed his "surprise" and "mortification" that an uneducated and politically naive preacher like Winans could bring down the peoples' idol. More significantly, perhaps, the battle over the Code foreshadowed the future of independent black worship. Evangelicals had preserved limited religious freedom for blacks, but the revised Code was simply a forerunner of further legal restrictions to come in the wake of Nat Turner's 1831 revolt, which demonstrated the

revolutionary potential of independent black worship and a dynamic black leader.\textsuperscript{50}

In the late 1820s evangelicals began to support the efforts of the American Colonization Society. In 1827 the Methodist annual conference, acting upon a resolution introduced by Benjamin Drake, endorsed the organization's efforts and asked preachers to take an offering for the society around July 4. The Methodists passed a similar resolution the following year and published their position in the \textit{African Repository} and New York's \textit{Christian Advocate and Journal}. By 1829 almost $1,000 had been collected, much of it from or by evangelicals. Initially, of course, the Society's purpose was the transportation of free blacks to Africa, a course supported by many Mississippians. Efforts to organize a state society in the fall of 1828 failed because slaves believed that the Society's purpose was to gain their emancipation, a misconception that frightened slaveowners. The Mississippi Society was not organized until 1831;\textsuperscript{51} its progress will be considered in the following chapter.

In 1829 the Methodists took the lead in sending missionaries to slaves on plantations. In that year Thomas


\textsuperscript{51}Jones, \textit{Complete History}, II: 117, 140; Sydnor, \textit{Slavery in Mississippi}, pp. 204-206.
Clinton, who later served as a popular missionary to the slaves and helped prepare an oral catechism for their instruction, introduced a resolution "to instruct our missionary committee to inquire into the expediency of sending missionaries to the people of color in our own country, which resolution prevailed . . . ." Historian Donald G. Mathews in his discussion of the origin of the mission movement ignores the Mississippi Methodist Conference's action and dates the beginning of missions to a 1829 request from South Carolina planters to that state's Methodist church that missionaries be sent to their slaves. The Mississippi Methodists acted on their own initiative. They were concerned that slaves on isolated plantations did not have access to religious services. Drawing on their itinerant system as a model, they proposed to send preachers to them.\(^5\)\(^2\)

In a circular letter written in 1829 the Mississippi Baptist Association agreed that the lack of religious instruction of slaves weighed heavily against them; "there is a criminal neglect among us," they wrote. The Baptists stopped short of a Biblical defence of slavery and reaffirmed the slaves' humanity: "An all wise God, in order to execute some of his unfathomable designs, has thought proper to permit a portion of the human family to be

\(^{52}\)Jones, Complete History, pp. 241 (quotation), 376, 443; Mathews, Religion in the Old South, p. 138.
reduced to servitude . . . ." According to the Baptists, the slaves' condition was not an act of God; "Among us, those who are reduced to servitude are, also, by the laws of the land, made slaves . . . ." They hesitated to recognize the institution of slavery and wrote that despite the law "we shall only regard them in the light of servants . . . ." The Baptists condemned masters who abused slaves and described "men even in this, our own country, who look upon slaves with no more respect than upon a dumb beast . . . ." Holding firm to their egalitarian traditions, the Baptists wrote, "For, however sable their hue, and however degraded their condition in this life, they possess rational and immortal souls . . . ."53

The Baptists clearly and eloquently reaffirmed the spiritual equality of men, but also in 1829 churches began to provide separate accommodations for black worshippers rather than seating them in the rear of the sanctuary as had been common practice. In that year Salem Baptist Church attached a shed to the side of the church building for blacks. A high partition divided the races, but the raised pulpit allowed blacks to see the preacher. Other churches also explored ways to seat blacks separately.54

53Minutes of the Mississippi Baptist Association, pp. 167-68 (emphasis added).

54Leavell and Bailey, Complete History, I: 77; Boyd, Popular History, p. 70; Bethany Baptist Church Records, Jeff Davis County, Miss. (SBHC), May 1829.
As the decade of the 1820s drew to a close, evangelicals continued to espouse egalitarianism and spiritual equality among all men, and many maintained their opposition to slavery, but in the late 1820s the seeds of compromise with slavery and racial separation, with its implicit statement of inequality, were sown. Writing about the South in the post-Revolutionary years, historian Eugene Genovese wrote, "One generation might be able to oppose slavery and favor everything it made possible, but the next had to choose sides."55 His quote is applicable to the first generation of Mississippi evangelicals.

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Chapter II

The Seed Shall Be Prosperous:
Evangelicalism Comes of Age, 1830–1860

The period from 1830 to 1860 was one of transition. While some evangelicals continued their anti-slavery efforts, another current developed within their ranks, one with tremendous implications for the future. During this period evangelicals would be forced to choose sides on the slavery question. Many evangelicals remained hostile to slavery and criticized it openly until the mid-1830s; after that time criticism of the institution was not welcomed or well received. Events outside the state, especially the abolitionist movement, affected Mississippi churches. Some of the seeds sown in the preceding years took root; the mission to the slaves and the Mississippi Colonization Society grew during these years. The frontier character of the state waned during the 1830s and 1840s, and as the frontier passed away, much of the emotionalism, egalitarianism, and simplicity of the early churches passed with it. The increasing wealth and sophistication of many evangelicals created new expectations. From within the churches came calls for a more educated ministry and for changes in forms of worship. The period was one of dramatic growth and change. The population explosion of the 1830s and the opening of new lands created additional challenges for the evangelicals.
As noted in the previous chapter, many prominent Mississippians did not approve of slavery, nor did they believe that it should be perpetuated, a position that many evangelicals also held. This liberal attitude is usually associated only with the Upper South, but in Mississippi it was surprisingly strong. As George Poindexter suggested in 1818, the main obstacle to emancipation was the status of freed blacks. Many southern liberals held the view that the removal of former slaves was a necessary corollary to large-scale emancipation. The American Colonization Society, organized in Washington, D.C. in 1817, proposed to transport free blacks to Africa, a popular idea with southern liberals. The Society also appealed to supporters of slavery who believed that the presence of free blacks weakened the institution.¹

It was not until ten years after its founding that the Society attempted to organize in Mississippi, although it had received notice in the state press. In 1827 the Reverend William Winans received a letter from the Society

asking if an agent would be successful in the state. Winans answered in the affirmative and successfully solicited funds on behalf of the Society. After the false start in 1828, the Mississippi Colonization Society was organized in June 1831 at a Natchez meeting.¹

The Mississippi Colonization Society’s organizers were predominantly from two groups – the planter elite and the evangelicals. For many years the two groups had eyed one another with suspicion, but the conversion of wealthy planters, the growing wealth of many evangelicals, and the influence exerted by prominent ministers had narrowed the gap between the two. Among the Society’s elite members was Stephen Duncan, who served as president. He was a successful planter and physician, president of the Bank of Mississippi, and one of the state’s wealthiest men. Gerard C. Brandon, the state’s Governor, and Cowles Mead, former Secretary of the Mississippi Territory, were also officers, as was Isaac R. Nicholson, Natchez lawyer, speaker of the State House of Representatives and later member of the state Supreme Court.³

Several evangelicals served as officers of the Society; one-fifth of its officers were ministers. Among

¹Sydnor, Slavery, pp. 205-06; American Colonization Society, Annual Reports (New York, 1969), 1832, p. 11.

these was the Reverend John C. Burruss, Methodist minister and president of the Elizabeth Female Academy. He was described as "an elegant gentleman, a finished scholar, and an elegant preacher." Benjamin M. Drake, also an officer, was a prominent Methodist minister who succeeded Burruss as president of the Academy. Drake's friend William Winans became one of the Society's most tireless members. Edward McGehee of Wilkinson County, a active lay leader in the Methodist Church, owned approximately 1,000 slaves, making him one of the state's largest slaveholders. At least three of the officers were Presbyterian ministers: Zebulon Butler who pastored at Port Gibson, Jeremiah Chamberlain who served as president of Oakland College, and Benjamin Chase. Several members of the Mississippi Colonization Society also served as officers of the American Colonization Society; among them were Duncan, Winans, and McGehee.  

Although the stated purpose of the Society was the transportation of present free blacks out of the state to be colonized in Africa, the Society soon turned its attention to freeing and transporting slaves. From its organization until around 1840 the Society enjoyed some success. During that period Mississippians donated approximately $100,000 to the colonization movement. The

Methodist conference appointed Winans to raise funds for the Society in Mississippi and Alabama; he became one of the Society's most visible and valuable supporters in the Southwest. No doubt Winans and the other evangelicals helped turn the Society's attention toward freeing slaves in keeping with their long-held belief in gradual emancipation. At least four local auxiliary societies were organized in the southwestern part of the state. Agents from the national society visited the state frequently, raised considerable sums of money, and assisted in organizing local societies. Evangelical churches allowed these representatives to deliver their addresses in the churches, and they also allowed the state and local societies to meet in their buildings. Agents from the national society often opposed slavery, but their abolitionists views did not interfere with their efforts in the state during the 1830s. James G. Birney, an Alabama lawyer and slaveholder turned abolitionist, made successful visits to the state, spoke in churches, and received favorable notice in the press.

Birney praised the officers of the Mississippi Society who were "remarkable for their intelligence, and for their liberality." In Natchez he spoke in both the Presbyterian and Methodist churches and wrote, "The first was well attended--the last still more numerously." He collected approximately $2,000 during this brief visit. He noted with satisfaction that "The subject of colonization
is now open here, - talked about without concealment or privacy, and not necessarily connected with abolition or insurrection." He warned, however, that heated rhetoric or praise for abolition from northern members of the Society could destroy the movement in the South.  

By the mid-1830s the state society was so successful that its leaders decided to establish a separate colony in Liberia for Mississippi blacks called "Mississippi in Africa." Approximately 570 blacks, the majority of whom were freed slaves, settled in the colony. Many of these slaves were freed by evangelicals. William Foster, who died in 1834, freed twenty-one of his slaves to be transported to Liberia. Edward B. Randolph of Columbus, Mississippi, freed his slaves shortly after his conversion in 1834 and paid for their transportation to Africa. Randolph, a member of the prominent Virginia family, settled in the Columbus area in the 1820s and became a successful planter. He had reservations about the Methodists because of "class meetings, Love feasts & not least that enquiry in the discipline 'what shall be done to . . . Slavery?'" After his conversion, however, he became

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5Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, pp. 210-14, 218; South-Western Religious Luminary, January 1838; Dwight L. Dumond, ed., Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857 2 vols. (Gloucester, Mass., 1966), Birney to Ralph R. Gurley, April 8, 1833, I: 65-66 (quotations); Same to Same, April 13, 1833, I: 70; South-Western Religious Luminary, January 1838.
convinced "That Slavery is a great evil . . . ." and followed his conscience and freed his slaves.6

Great hardships and suffering often accompanied the freed slaves in their move to Liberia. Elisa Thilman, one of Randolph's former slaves who settled in "Mississippi in Africa," described his feelings to his former master in an 1844 letter. "I desire very much to hear from my mother and all my people," he wrote, "please to tell them they must Write to me . . . ." He told of his sister's death in Liberia and asked if his sisters in Mississippi were religious. Elisa's faith helped him bear his hardships: "I am yet on the lords Side," he wrote, "and hope to continue so if it be his Wishes." He asked Randolph to tell his mother "that my head is much bowed down but looking up to Christ he is able to raise it up again . . . ." Mississippi evangelicals did not completely forget black Christians like Elisa in Liberia. Oakland College's missionary society planned to sponsor a white missionary there while the Presbyterian Synods of Mississippi and Alabama

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6 Ibid., pp. 214, 223, 237; "The Religious Life of Capt. E. B. Randolph, A Methodist Church Leader;" "Families of Randolph and Sherman;" "Capt. Edward B. Randolph;" Will of May 9, 1846; Randolph to "Dear Brother," July 6, 1844 (first quotation); Randolph to "the Preacher in charge and members of the M.E. Church in Columbus," undated [1845] (second quotation) in Randolph-Sherman Papers (Special Collections, Mississippi State University, hereinafter cited as MSU); William Winans to Benjamin M. Drake, October 4, 1834 in Drake Papers (Cain Archives).
purchased a black slave preacher, Harrison Ellis, and his family to serve as missionaries in Liberia. ⁷

Despite its early success, the Mississippi Colonization Society faced many difficulties in the late 1830s. Most of its troubles in one way or another related to the growing debate between northern abolitionists and southern slaveholders. Robert J. Walker, United States Senator from Mississippi, told his colleagues that "among the unfortunate consequences which had been produced in Mississippi, owing to the . . . Abolitionists was the unpopularity of the Colonization Society, which previously . . . had been extremely popular." Members of the slaveholding elite abandoned the Society while evangelicals who remained friendly to the Society found themselves branded as abolitionists. In the 1840s Winans faced such charges after he delivered a speech favoring colonization. In the face of such attacks Winans defended himself by embracing slavery, a life-saving tactic that many other evangelicals must have taken. ⁸

Evangelicals and other southern supporters of colonization and gradual emancipation felt betrayed by northerners who abandoned colonization and gradual emancipation in

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⁷ Elisa [Elisha?] Thilman to Randolph, May 11, 1848, Randolph-Sherman Papers; see also Hector Belton to Dr. John Ker quoted in Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 235; see also p. 218.

⁸ Jones, Complete History, II: 240; Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, pp. 216-217n (quotation), 215-17.
favor of immediate abolitionism. In an 1838 letter Winans criticized Gerrit Smith for leaving the colonization movement for abolitionism. Winans pointed out that the former had freed hundreds of slaves and showed promise of even greater success until abolitionist agitation destroyed it. Abolitionism, on the other hand, perpetuated slavery "by disgusting the white man against every measure which tends, no matter how remotely, to the accomplishment of . . . emancipation." When an agent for the Colonization Society visited the once liberal Natchez region in the 1840s, he could not collect enough money to cover his expenses. The Mississippi Colonization Society collapsed about the year 1840.⁹

Along with increased abolitionist attacks on the institution of slavery came southern defenses of their peculiar institution. Southern historian Drew Gilpin Faust has written that "Southerners did not move from an anti-

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⁹ Robert L. Finley to Winans, February 25, 1837; J. Gales to Winans, February 15, 1839; Untitled speech (1840s) in Political Addresses and Writings, Winans Collection; Winans to Benjamin Drake, August 28, 1835 and February 25, 1850 (Drake Papers); New Orleans Christian Advocate, January 12, 1859; Smith to Winans and Winans to Smith, Liberty (Miss.) Advocate, March 31, 1838; R. S. Finley to John Ker, August 5, 1847 in Franklin L. Riley, ed., "A Contribution to the History of the Colonization Movement in Mississippi," Publication of the Mississippi Historical Society IX (1906), pp. 396-99; Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, pp. 215-17. Technically, the Society functioned for several years after 1840 as its officers carried out its business, but it was without widespread support.
to a proslavery position" until after 1830, but her
generalization ignores the complexities men like Winans
faced. Many evangelicals did indeed move from an anti- to
a proslavery position. Few Mississippi evangelicals could
be described as rabid abolitionists, but as Methodist John
G. Jones observed, most believed that slavery was an evil
that should eventually be removed. Jones grew up in a
slaveholding family and, until his conversion, had no
qualms about slavery. After his conversion, however, he
became an opponent of slavery. His journal in the 1830s
contains many anti-slavery passages. He advised friends
against buying slaves, distributed "Mr. Wesley's thoughts
on the Slave Trade," and offered to free his slaves though
they chose instead to be sold to a kindly master. He wrote
of "the curse of negro slavery" and described it as "a
great evil . . . ." In 1840, however, he added this post-
script: "More mature experience and a more thorough
examination of the whole subject has greatly modified my
views of 'negro slavery.'"\(^{10}\)

Between 1830 and 1840 southerners developed a
systematic proslavery ideology. Mississippians took an
early lead in elaborating upon the Biblical defense of

\(^{10}\)Faust, *Ideology of Slavery*, p. 5 (first quotation);
Jones Journal, April 7, 1835 (third and fourth quotation);
April 12, 1835 (second quotation); May 8, 1835; June 6, 21,
1835; December 5, 1836; Jones, *Complete History*, p. 488;
Winans to Daniel de Vinne, August 31, 1841, Winans Collec-
tion. Winans letters clearly show that he, too, moved from
anti- to proslavery. See Ray Holder.
slavery, and many evangelicals like Jones were swayed by proslavery arguments based on scripture. In the late 1820s James Smylie, one of the first Presbyterian ministers to settle in Mississippi, began to defend slavery on Biblical grounds. Smylie settled in Amite county in 1809 and purchased over 1,000 acres of land. By 1830 he owned fifty-three slaves, making him the third largest slaveholder in the county. It was no coincidence that the defense of slavery began with a wealthy slaveowner who ministered to the state's most affluent denomination. Recently scholars have described authors of proslavery tracts as frustrated and unhappy men unable to rise to positions of prominence in the South or as neglected intellectuals who used the defense of slavery to carve out a respected place for themselves in southern society. As noted above, Smylie was a successful planter, a member of the state's slaveowning elite. He was "superior in literary attainments and pulpit abilities" to his fellow ministers and was already "one of the leading ministers of his denomination . . . ."¹¹

Smylie hardly expected or needed proslavery writings to raise his status. Indeed, his Biblical defense of

slavery initially set him apart from his fellow evangelicals, most of whom opposed the institution. Jones in his history of Mississippi religion wrote that "while others were discussing various schemes for gradual emancipation, colonization, etc., Mr. Smylie sat down to a quiet, honest and critical examination of the Holy Bible . . . ," an exercise that convinced him "that the enslavement of the Hamitic race had been recognized as justifiable under every dispensation of the Church . . . that the holiest men . . . in the Bible had been connected with it, without censure, and that the relative duties of masters and servants were clearly defined in the New Testament Scriptures, which was demonstrative evidence that the relation was . . . compatible with Christianity . . . ." In the late 1820s, Smylie composed a sermon on the subject that he delivered in local churches. When he first delivered the sermon in Port Gibson it "gave great offense, not only to the church but also to his brethren in the ministry, who seriously advised him to preach that sermon no more." In the early 1830s he published the sermon as a pamphlet; it "circulated generally through the country, and was the first . . . ever published in the Southwest on that side of the question." His work won increased recognition because of abolitionist attacks on the institution; he and New York abolitionist Gerrit Smith engaged in a fierce pamphlet war. Smylie's
pamphlet circulated widely in the Southwest and dominated religious thought on the question across the Lower South.\textsuperscript{12}

As Smylie observed in 1837, "It is too late in the day to suppose that the subject of Slavery is a subject on which our civil or religious community can rest in apathy or on which men can be allowed to have little or no mind at all . . . ." Opposition to slavery had deep roots in the evangelical movement, yet slavery was expanding rapidly even among evangelicals. Smylie's Biblical defense of slavery offered evangelicals a solution to a troubling and potentially explosive contradiction in their belief system. For many the clear implication of the Biblical message was emancipationist; for others, the Scriptures clearly defended slavery. Confronted by such a contradiction, evangelicals had two choices: either continue their opposition to slavery or restructure their beliefs to

accommodate slavery and slaveholders. As the early Methodists had learned in the 1780s, the first choice could destroy the church in the South.\textsuperscript{13} Seen in retrospect, the evangelicals made a tragic decision.

It seems hardly surprising that the Mississippi Colonization Society collapsed in the early 1840s or that most of the state's evangelicals became defenders of slavery; it is surprising, however, that such significant numbers of Mississippian either opposed slavery, favored gradual emancipation, supported colonization, or some combination of the three until so late in the nineteenth century. Many historians have maintained that antislavery sentiments were either non-existent or insignificant in the Lower South. As Carl Degler wrote of the cotton-producing areas of the Deep South, "opposition to slavery never achieved any significant expression during the nineteenth century . . . Virginia and Kentucky, with their small-scale agriculture and relatively small number of slaves, might produce a small antislavery movement, but the booming cotton states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas could not . . . ."\textsuperscript{14} As demonstrated in the previous

\textsuperscript{13} Smylie to the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, 1837 (quotation); Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago and London, 1977), pp. 68-69.

\textsuperscript{14} See for example Clement Eaton, Freedom of Thought in the Old South (Durham, N.C., 1940), p. 277-78; Carl N. Degler, The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century (New York, Evanston, San Francisco and
chapter, from 1800 to 1830, that is for half the state's antebellum history, many Mississippians, especially evangelicals, held casual antislavery sentiments and many others were fervent in their opposition and in their support of colonization. As the debate over slavery intensified, however, sentiment underwent a revolution.

Beginning in the early 1830s and accelerating throughout the antebellum period, more and more evangelicals adopted the Biblical defense of slavery and defended the South from abolitionists attacks. The evangelical press helped spread the Biblical defense of slavery, expressed opposition to the colonization movement, and debated reopening the African slave trade. The Methodist Crystal Springs Circuit expressed their belief in the Biblical defense of slavery and concluded "that slavery as it now exists in the South is not a sin." In 1836 a statewide Baptist meeting criticized northern abolitionists "as misguided and politic . . . ." In 1841 Winans charged that abolitionists were "incendiaries, cutthroats, and . . . hydra-headed monsters of inhumanity." The Biblical defense also found adherents among politicians. A resolution introduced in the state legislature declared slavery to be "a blessing . . . the legitimate condition of the African

race, as authorized ... by the laws of God. . . ."\textsuperscript{15} As Winans' statement suggests, the debate became more virulent as time passed.

Evangelicals who refused to join the proslavery chorus found themselves in an uncomfortable position. Some ministers who opposed slavery left the state for the North; for example, William Langarl preached to a Methodist congregation in Natchez, but because he favored the abolition of slavery he left the state in 1841 for Ohio. The Reverend George Potts, a Presbyterian minister active in the colonization movement in Natchez, moved in New York in 1835.\textsuperscript{16}

The local debate over the churches' position on slavery was tame, however, compared to the debate in national religious organizations. As early as 1820 the

\textsuperscript{15}Crystal Springs Circuit, Methodist Quarterly Conference Records (MDAH), August 1844 (first quotation); Proceedings of a Meeting to Consider the Propriety of Forming a Baptist State Convention Held . . . December, 1836 (Natchez, 1837), p. 17 (second quotation); Winans to Daniel de Vinne, August 31, 1841, Winans Papers (third quotation); Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 242 (fourth quotation); Richard Aubrey McLemore, A History of Mississippi Baptists, 1780-1970 (n.p., 1971), p. 146; Jones, Complete History, p. 346-47. For examples see New Orleans Christian Advocate, January 24, 31, 1857, June 26, 1852; January 12, 1859; Mississippi Baptist, September, 1858; July 23, 1857; February 16, 1860; March 1, 1860; Jack P. Maddox Jr., "Proslavery Millennialism: Social Eschatology in Antebellum Southern Calvinism," American Quarterly XXXI (Spring 1979), pp. 46-62; Mississippi Baptist, October 13, 1859; September 16, 1858; June 3, 1858; March 22, 1860.

\textsuperscript{16}Henry G. Hawkins, Methodism in Natchez (Jackson, 1937), p. 67; Dumond, Letters of James Gillespie Birney, I: 58n.
Methodist General Conference saw heated disputes over the institution. Mississippi minister Thomas Griffin took the floor to defend southerners against northern ministers who were willing to see southerners "damned and double-damned, rammed, crammed and jammed into a forty-six pounder and blown into the fiery vaults of a deep damnation for being connected with slavery!" The conflict came to a head in the 1844 conference when the Methodist Church was torn asunder. Mississippi Methodists debated the split; as John G. Jones reported, "our church papers were filled with it, our ministers and members talked of little else, [and] our Churches and Quarterly Conferences debated the subject . . . ." Not all Methodists in the state supported the division; as Jones wrote, "instead of our usual increase we had a decrease of sixty white members . . . ."17

At least one Methodist minister in the state refused to support the division, and another minister wrote that the separation "was a sore trial to many members of our conference." Edward Randolph of Columbus, a prominent member of the town's Methodist Church, wrote an open letter to "the Preacher in Charge and members of the M. E. Church in Columbus" in which he expressed his opposition to the division and wrote, "I do believe in opposition to a portion of the ministers and membership of the South That

17Jones, Concise History, pp. 186-87 (first quotation); Jones, Complete History, II: 501 (second and third quotations), 524, 543, 545.
Slavery is a great evil as set forth in the book of discipline . . . ." His stand was not a popular one; the following year he wrote that some members wanted him to leave the church, but he refused to do so without placing his case before a church conference. He did, however, resign his church offices.  

The division of the Methodist Church attracted the most attention, but the Baptist and Presbyterian churches also divided along regional lines. Despite their fierce independence, Baptist congregations organized local and state associations and met in a national Triennial Convention. Sectional tensions became apparent in the early 1840s. When in 1844 the Convention's Board of the Home Mission Society, which was dominated by northerners, refused to appoint a slaveholding preacher as a missionary, southerners withdrew from the Mission Society and created a

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Board of Domestic Missions under their control. The split was completed the following year when delegates from eight southern states and the District of Columbia met in Georgia and established the Southern Baptist Convention, a move endorsed by the Mississippi Baptist Association.¹⁹

Technically, the Presbyterian Church remained united until 1861, but their apparent national unity was possible only because of an 1838 division that took most abolitionists out of the church. The roots of the split can be traced back to an 1801 union between Congregationalists and Presbyterians, a union that led to a theological debate between the New School—liberal, dominated by New Englanders, and supporters of abolition—and the Old School—conservative and strongest in the South. While the two factions differed on many issues, slavery became the bone of contention in the 1830s. In the 1837 General Assembly the Old School staged a coup, abrogated the 1801 Plan of Union, and thereby ousted many of the New School supporters. Large numbers of New School supporters attended the 1838 General Assembly determined to undo the work of the previous assembly. The result was the creation of two general assemblies, one dominated by southerners and

amenable to slavery. While other issues played a part in
the split, slavery was paramount in the minds of most
southern Presbyterians. James Smylie was one of the
authors of the statement issued by the Synod of Mississippi
and South Alabama in support of the division. The state-
ment read, in part, "The Synod has good reasons for believ-
ing, that an overwhelming majority of the seceding body,
and of those of the North who adhere to it, are hostile to
one at least of the domestic institutions of the South."\(^2^0\)
By 1845, then, the southern churches were in the pro-
slavery camp.

One Methodist newspaper wrote that the division of
the church "left us of the Church, South, responsible for
the salvation of the negro, to an extent difficult to
realize and fearful to contemplate." Evangelicals had long
maintained that intermeddling by northern evangelicals and
abolitionists impeded their mission work to the slaves.
Some masters were undoubtedly suspicious of evangelicals
given their early opposition to slavery, but by the 1840s
evangelicals' public support of slavery removed that

\(^2^0\)Synod of Mississippi and South Alabama Extracts,
1838, p. 117 (quotation); George M. Marsden, The Evangelical
Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience (New Haven,
1970), Elwyn A. Smith, "The Role of the South in the Pres-
byterian Schism of 1837-1838," Church History 29 (1960),
pp. 44-63; Bailey, Shadow on the Church, pp. 230-36; Smylie,
375-79; Posey, Frontier Mission, pp. 372-73; Ernest Trice
Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, vol. 1, 1607-1861
(Richmond, Va., 1963), pp. 362-412.
obstacle. Evangelical interest in the salvation of slaves was not new, of course, but the organized mission to the slaves differed from earlier efforts and was based on a new set of suppositions. In part, the mission was a response to abolitionists attacks, but more importantly, it was a corollary of the Biblical defense of slavery. Beginning with Smylie’s tract, the defenses of slavery stressed not only the duties of slaves, but also the duties of masters. Most southern evangelicals came to accept the idea that slavery was not sinful, when the masters fulfilled their religious duties. Perhaps the master’s most pressing responsibility was the religious instruction of his slaves. In return for their support of the institution, evangelicals expected masters’ cooperation. One missionary advised masters that "They [slaves] are yours—wholly yours; and no one has, according to the teachings of Heaven, and the laws of men, any right to interfere, in the smallest degree, with you or them, except myself." Smylie, who spent his latter years in slave missions, often infuriated masters by criticizing their treatment of their slaves.\(^2\)\(^1\)

As noted in the previous chapter, the Mississippi Methodist Conference led the South in the establishment of missions when they resolved in 1829 to send missionaries to the slaves. The organized mission enterprise remained largely a Methodist phenomenon. One historian has found "a curious lack of enthusiasm" for missions among southwestern evangelicals, but a closer examination of slave missions in Mississippi shows a marked enthusiasm. From 1830 to 1840 the Methodists established 13 colored missions, 19 from 1840 to 1850, 23 from 1850 to 1860, and 16 from 1860 to 1867. Their efforts produced a substantial growth in black membership; from 1831 to 1845, for example, black membership in the Mississippi Conference increased 251.5 percent (from 2,645 to 9,302). White membership over the same period grew by 132 percent (6,380 to 14,834). In 1845, 38.5 percent of the members of the Mississippi Conference were slaves. By the 1840s and 50s the majority of blacks in several districts worshipped in missions. In 1845, 58.5 percent of the blacks in the Natchez District were in missions. In 1852 the Vicksburg District had 63.2 percent of its 1,662 black members in missions while in the Aberdeen District the figure stood at 58.2 percent of 1,546 black members. In 1852 the Methodists had at least 5,000 black members in colored missions across the state.\(^{22}\)

\(^{22}\)W. B. Jones, *Methodism in the Mississippi Conference* (Jackson, Miss., 1957), pp. 474-78; Bailey, *Shadow on the Church*, p. 227 (first quotation); Jones, *Complete History*,
Evangelicals went to great lengths to gain access to the slaves; they appealed to masters' self-interest and flattered overseers. As one missionary wrote, "the intelligent planter has learned from experience as well as theory that religion inculcates honesty, sobriety, obedience, industry, and perseverance . . . ." Another missionary expressed sympathy with the overseers and their "ungrateful calling." He wrote that overseers often decided if services would be allowed and if slaves from other plantations could attend. An overseer responded that this minister exaggerated overseers' influence. Certainly, some masters gave overseers detailed directives regarding the type of religious services to be allowed on plantations.23

Missionaries sometimes disagreed with owners over the operation of the missions. One debate between the owners

pp. 271, 283; Methodist Episcopal Church. South, Minutes of the Annual Conferences . . . 1845-1851 (Richmond, Va., 1846-53), pp. 31, 402, 412, 415. Mississippi was divided among the Mississippi, Alabama, and Memphis Conferences. Crawfordville Methodist Church, Crawford, Miss., Prairie Hill and Crawfordville Circuit Records (MSU), 1843-1860, May 1, 1845, July 2, 1850, March 1, 1861; First Methodist Church, Columbus, Miss., Quarterly Conference Records, 1849, 1854, 1855, 1856, 1857; New Orleans Christian Advocate, November 25, 1854.

23New Orleans Christian Advocate, November 17, 1855 (first quotation); August 20, 1853 (second quotation); October 8, 1853; May 5, 1855; Mississippi Baptist, September 16, 1858; July 23, 1857; John Hebron Moore, ed., "Two Documents Relating to Plantation Overseers of the Vicksburg Region, 1831-1832," Journal of Mississippi History XVI (January 1954), pp. 31-32.
and ministers arose over allowing slaves from different plantations to meet together for religious services. One owner clearly directed his overseer to allow "no assemblage of negroes from other plantations . . . on Sundays." Evangelicals, however, stressed the importance of drawing congregations from several plantations; "from the constitution of our nature, a congregation is . . . important as an occasion for the preaching of the Gospel." The evangelicals may have based their argument on the slaves' preference for inter-plantation meetings; ministers found that such meetings produced better results. Masters, however, were determined to keep a close eye on their slaves' religious instruction, and preaching on separate plantations became the norm for missionaries.24

Preaching on separate plantations was also more time consuming and meant that missionaries reached fewer slaves than they could have otherwise. One hardworking missionary in the Mississippi Delta estimated that 20,000 slaves lived within his three-county charge, but only about 6,000 heard the gospel on a regular basis. At least one planter recognized this weakness in the system; he wrote that the missionary preached at each plantation once in every three to six weeks, and even then it was "a hasty, hurried

24 Moore, "Two Documents," p. 35 (first quotation); New Orleans Christian Advocate, July 10, 1850 (second quotation); March 7, 1860; May 26, 1855; Walter Wade Plantation Diary (MDAH), June 11, 1854; July 9, 1854; Robert Gordon Diary (MDAH), May 22, 1853.
sermon, for the preacher has to preach four times that day." He observed that "the preacher becomes dull . . . and fruitless . . . preaching, as my cook said of one of the missionaries, 'as if there were no danger'--of eternal death." Still, missionaries reached thousands of slaves who might not have heard the gospel otherwise. In many plantation areas, blacks had no other option. Biracial churches were few since the white population was small.

The mission to the slaves differed in several respects from the traditional biracial services. Before the 1830s evangelicals proclaimed a gospel open and available to everyone, one easily understood by all ranks and classes in society, including slaves. In contrast to that egalitarian position, some supporters of missions argued that "the slave's mind is not capacitated to receive the same mode of instruction . . ." as whites. Rather than bring slaves into biracial churches, missionaries organized black congregations on plantations. Despite the bravepronouncements of some missionaries, the mission system gave slaveholders more control over services, and they often chose ministers themselves. Some planters preferred to employ trusted local preachers rather than allow the Conference to appoint a missionary. Planters paid handsomely; "Some . . . colored charges, especially those in

25New Orleans Christian Advocate, November 17, 1855; September 23, 1854 (first and second quotations).
the valley between the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers, became the best-paying circuits in the [Methodist] Conference."

Not all ministers who labored with blacks received high salaries. From the third Sunday in February to the third Sunday in November 1856, one Methodist minister preached 80 times, visited 175 families, paid 440 visits, traveled 3,000 miles, sold $350 in books and distributed $40 and 6,000 pages of tracts. He took in 2 whites and 160 blacks on probation, and catechized 550 slaves. He "had chills and fever over half the year, and got $80 salary." Money seldom motivated men to serve as missionaries.

Among the most prominent ministers to enter the mission field was John G. Jones, whose opposition to slavery has already been discussed. In 1845 and 1846 he held an appointment at Cole's Creek Colored Mission, in 1860 and 1861 he served the Adams Colored Mission, and in 1863 he returned to Cole's Creek Mission. As noted earlier, he abandoned his opposition to slavery sometime before 1840. Evidently, his former position did not make masters suspect his intentions; he wrote that slaveowners "generally let me take my own course with the religious concerns of their negroes . . .," but he observed

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nevertheless that "planters were careful as to who they would employ to preach to their negroes . . . ." Masters often attended services themselves, whether to keep an eye on the service or join in Christian worship is unclear, although few of them were Methodists. Jones's motives for undertaking a mission to slaves are uncertain, though he wrote that he "had long coveted an opportunity to give my time wholly to them . . . ." Like Jones, many missionaries to slaves across the South had once opposed the institution.28

Jones had success among the slaves, although he differed with them over the style of baptism. His success can in part be measured by membership figures; during his two-year stay at Cole's Creek, for example, membership on the mission rose from 179 to 303. Jones found that some slaves preferred to receive the ordinance of baptism by immersion rather than effusion, but after he "gave them a plain talk on the scriptural mode of baptism--they readily consented to receive the ordinance by effusion--since which time I have heard no more of any wishing to be immersed . . . ." A missionary to the slaves near Columbus, Mississippi, encountered the same problem; the slaves believed "that nothing but going into and under the water, will ever

28Methodist Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Annual Conference, pp. 32, 82; Jones Journal, p. 77 (first quotation); Jones Autobiography, pp. 177 (second quotation), 119, 71 (third quotation); Mathews, Religion in the Old South, pp. 138-39.
save them . . .", he wrote. Slaves argued scripture with him, and apparently got the best of him. He reported that "The bare assertion that John baptized in Jordan, holds more weight with them than any argument that I can produce on the subject." The black's preference for immersion may have been part of their African heritage, as some scholars have suggested, but the missionary ascribed it to the influence of "old Baptist leaders" on the plantations. The slaves placed more faith in their own religious leaders than in the white missionary. One wonders if Jones actually convinced his flock, or if they simply accepted the only form of baptism available.

Jones and other missionaries also found that slaves became very emotional and vocal during worship services. Jones wrote, "I often had to use all the ingenuity I could command to keep them from defeating my instructions by loud shouting." Jones understood, or at least thought he understood, the religious motivation behind their excitement, and "sometimes when . . . there was a very strong religious feeling among them, I would give place, and let them spin round, shaking hands, sing and shout for ten or twenty

29Methodist Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Annual Conference, pp. 31, 81; Jones to B. M. Drake, May 6, 1840, Drake Papers (first quotation); New Orleans Christian Advocate, November 6, 1852 (second and third quotations); Raboteau, Slave Religion, pp. 57-58. A Baptist minister in Virginia observed that the slaves' religious beliefs resulted from "instructions received from leading men amongst themselves . . . ." reprinted in New Orleans Christian Advocate, August 25, 1855.
minutes." He observed that "It seemed to do them a great
deal of good and they often appeared to be as truely happy
as any christians I ever saw." Missionaries occasionally
defended slaves' right to their own form of religious
expression. One missionary explained to a doubting master
that "the Bible says they shout like thunder in Heaven:
but he has never seen any such passage (though a Missionary
Baptist), and thinks religion is a quiet something. We
read it to him from 19th of Revelations." Another mission-
ary explained that "The excitement among the colored people
which I have witnessed this year has not been an animal
excitement. No, thank God, it has been a religious excite-
ment; an excitement produced by the Holy Spirit upon the
heart."30

As discussed in Chapter 1, such emotional scenes were
common during the early 1800s where shouting and "bodily
exercises" were an important part of services involving
both races. The "bodily exercises" became less common by
mid-century, but shouting and other emotional outbursts
continued. They were especially common during revivals and
camp meetings, more common in the country than in the
towns, and often occurred during biracial services.
Whether or not shouting is an example of an African

30Jones Journal, p. 78 (first quotation); New Orleans
Christian Advocate, October 11, 1856, May 5, 1855 (second
quotation), May 26, 1855 (third quotation), November 29,
1851.
survival adopted by whites from slaves has been a subject of debate; shouting may well have been an example of the reinterpretation of African beliefs in a new religious context, and certainly blacks and whites must have influenced one another as they worshipped together. Regardless of its origins, shouting continued to play a vital role in worship for many Methodists and Baptists of both races. A description of an 1856 revival meeting among Methodists in Holmes County is illustrative:

On Saturday night at the close of the sermon, the Holy Ghost came down, and if it did not fill the house the shouts did, for they went up from every part of the congregation . . . . It seemed to be the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, for the young men and young women did become teachers of the people—going through the congregation in search of their associates, bringing them to the altar; and if the old men and old women did not dream dreams, they did see visions and shout glory. After one hour more of rejoicing we tried to pray for the mourners, but the shouts of the brethren were so loud and incessant the Brother who led in prayer could not be heard. We then rejoiced for an hour more, when I called on the congregation to kneel. I could not command silence, and after midnight I got up in the pulpit and commenced talking. I supposed they would stop, they did not, and I had to dismiss them still rejoicing, and I was told it was with difficulty that some of them could be got to leave.

On the following day, twenty-eight people, black and white, joined the church.\(^{31}\)

A Baptist minister in Lauderdale County reported the following scene:

\(^{31}\)Raboteau, Slave Religion, pp. 60-75; New Orleans Christian Advocate, September 13, 1856 (first quotation).
never have I witnessed such a time, brethren and sisters crying out I see the heavens opened, I see father and mother, brothers and sisters, I see Jesus, oh! I want to go. . . . At the meeting house, on Thursday morning, a brother who had for a long time been in a cold lifeless state, began to weep, in a moment he fell upon his knees and began to cry . . . he laid hold upon my knees, he then rose to his feet, then fell upon his back, and cried out, I see Jesus, I see Jesus--his countenance was truely strange, sinners were crying for mercy on every hand.

Similarly, at another religious meeting "an old negro woman in the rear of the congregation began to clap her hands and shout and talk about her children in heaven. . . ." One Methodist minister reported that he once expelled a black woman from the church when during a love feast she proclaimed that she was "young King Jesus." As the above examples illustrate, visions of heaven, and especially the presence of lost loved ones, emotional intensity, and shouting were common to both races. The final example of possession is unique in the records and closer to the spirit possession reported in African religions, though in Africa the High God never possessed individuals.\(^{32}\)

\(^{32}\)Mississippi Baptist, October 7, 1858 (first quotation); Jones Journal, June 7, 1835 (second quotation), July 5, 1835; Thomas O. Summers, ed., Autobiography of the Rev. Joseph Travis, A.M. . . . (Nashville, Tenn., 1855), p. 71 (third quote); Raboteau, Slave Religion, pp. 63-64; Mechel Sobel, Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith (Westport, Conn. and London, 1979), p. 19; Jones Autobiography, pp. 131-32. For other examples of shouting in white and biracial services see New Orleans Christian Advocate, May 26, 1855; August 17, 1859; October 4, 1856; October 11, 1856; October 6, 1855; Isham Robertson Howze Journal (MDAH), August 20, 1854; Winans Journal, April 17, 1842; Jones, Complete History, II: 476-77; Mississippi Baptist, October 29, 1857.
As the above illustrations indicate, shouting was not limited to blacks but was common to both blacks and white plain folk. The association of the practice with these groups led to criticism of it from more elite whites who considered themselves above such displays. John G. Jones described his wealthy congregation in the affluent Natchez region as "quite respectful to religion." These people were cultivated and made pleasant company, "but there was a great want of New Testament spirituality . . . ." Isham R. Howze, a Baptist planter in Marshall county wrote: "I do not think these seasons of excitement are favorable to the proper instruction of Sinners . . . Warmth, in religion, is . . . pleasing in the sight of God. Yet prudence should govern every man . . . There is such a thing as religious intemperance; an excess in animal feelings." The Reverend Charles K. Marshall, prominent Methodist minister, wanted services to be free of "getting happy," shouting, and other emotional expressions. During the 1840 state conference many of those attending a service, including ministers, shouted and clapped their hands during the service. Marshall, outraged at his fellow preachers, criticized them at conference the following day; his remarks offended many, and a motion was made to locate him without his consent. The motion was lost after a
heated debate, but Marshall, young and popular, represented
the wave of the future.  

As the evangelicals moved from sect to denomination,
many ministers sought a higher status, more recognition as
professionals, an ambition that necessitated separating
themselves from the laity and elevating their position
within the churches and society. The issue was not simply
one of maintaining order and decorum in church services,
but a new definition of the ministry and the role of the
laity in worship. In the early church as described in the
New Testament no distinction existed between the minister
and the laity. The gift of evangelism was only one of many
different gifts bestowed upon Christians, and all gifts
played a part in the Church's ministry. All Christians
received a call and gifts from Christ; Paul described to
the Ephesians the various gifts Christ gave all believers;
some should be prophets, some evangelists, others pastors
and teachers, and all of them engaged in the work of the
ministry. Paul described the church as a body, with each
church member making a necessary contribution to the work-
ing of the whole [Eph. 4:7-16]. The early evangelical
churches, especially the Baptist and Methodist, functioned

33 Jones Autobiography, p. 86 (first and second quo-
tations); Howze Journal, August 21 (third quotation) and 26,
1854; September 3, 1854; Rev. Henry J. Harris Autobiography
(Cain Archives), pp. 32-33 (fourth quotation); Undated
Biographical Sketch in Charles Kimball Marshall Papers
(MDAH); New Orleans Christian Advocate, February 17, 1855.
in just this way. Preachers were men much like the members themselves except that God chose preachers to exercise their gifts in public. Other members had equally important gifts, and the entire laity functioned as ministers of the church in this broad, New Testament definition of the word. For purposes of discussion, churches that emphasize such active involvement on the part of its members in worship services can be said to have a congregational ministry.

Keeping this definition of the ministry of all believers in mind, let us consider the following detailed description of an night-time evangelical service (whether Methodist or Baptist is unclear in the records) in north Mississippi. The writer was a young Presbyterian minister:

The congregation was large the house being full. Stubbs got up and read a hymn which was sung standing, then he offered a prayer, the congregation kneeling. Another hymn was sung sitting, and then he read Lev. 7:17 ['But the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire.'] as his text and preached a discourse. In my judgement the sermon was a very ordinary affair. In his manner or matter there was nothing indicative of special excellence. His object was to arouse the people. After sermon he came down and called for mourners while a small cluster were singing different hymns. His call was successful for a good many mourners went up... They knelt around the 'alter.' The preachers and the members commenced talking to them, singing was kept up all the time... prayer was offered twice during this scene. One of the Miss Hoskins all at once commenced squalling and acting very foolishly. Presently she... ceased her noice [noise]. Just before the congregation was dismissed an old lady dressed in black... commenced a scene. Her voice was harsh, and while she was addressing with much gesticulation the group around her I could not but think of Paul's command "Let your women keep silence in the Churches" (1 Cor. 14:34).... of the meeting tonight the only
objectional features to me was the hymn singing and the scenes above referred to. I do not think that such things are right. Confusion should not prevail in the house of God.\textsuperscript{34}

While there was a great deal of activity going on, was it a state of complete confusion as the young Presbyterian suggested? First, let us consider the preacher’s role. He led in singing and in prayer, then delivered a message. The young man may have been quite accurate when he wrote that the preacher showed no "special excellence." He was chosen from the laity to lead them in their ministry, but he was not chosen because of his education. The Presbyterian critic’s observation that the preacher’s chief object was to "arouse the people" was a criticism often leveled at evangelical preachers of both races. The criticism was legitimate as far as it went; the preacher did not aim to educate or instruct but to arouse. The preacher acted as a catalyst to bring together God and the people. If the preacher, acting as the instrument of God, succeeded, as this preacher did, in bringing God and people together, his role was over. He then called up mourners, those seeking salvation, and allowed the members of the congregation to exercise their gifts.

In this description we see members of the laity exercising gifts in song, prayer, teaching, pastorship, and prophecy. At first, the entire congregation sang the

\textsuperscript{34}Samuel A. Agnew Diary (Microfilm, MSU), September 6, 1865.
hymns, but later, after mourners came up, only a "small cluster" sang, those specially gifted in song. Likewise, the preacher led the first prayer while later prayers apparently came from the congregation. Another group of lay people joined the preacher at the altar where they attempted to guide lost ones to Christ; they sought to teach the tenets of the faith to nonbelievers. They must have also acted as pastors for those with particular griefs or problems. Two women in the congregation demonstrated the so-called gift of prophecy, not in the sense of predicting future events but rather in sharing a divinely inspired revelation or utterance. Even shouting was a form of prophecy, since the shout resulted from a perception of God's presence. In many respects, the most important part of this type of service was not the preacher's message, but rather the laity's exercise of their ministerial gifts. The actual work of the salvation of souls involved the entire church.

Many evangelicals attempted to hold fast to this traditional form of worship as debate began between older and poorer evangelicals and a younger, more affluent group who wanted to abandon the old ways. The growing wealth of the church and many of its members often conflicted with its egalitarianism. The following incident, though perhaps apocryphal, is indicative of a polarization which increased in the 1840s and 1850s. A minister related a conversation
between two church members, one a wealthy man and the other a poor country woman. The man flaunted his wealth: he carried "a gold-headed cane," wore "a fine cloth coat . . . [and] came to church in a $1,000 carriage, drawn by a span of beautiful match horses." The woman spoke to him sharply: "Well, my old man never tuck a payer [paper] in his life . . . and I reckon he is as good as some of the rest, that lives in fine houses, giving a leer to the brother of the gold-headed cane." When the preacher "enlarged upon the special promises and privileges of the poor, the sister made the walls ring with her shouts."  

No doubt the wealthy brother winced with every shout! Whether or not this particular story is true, such events did occur. The more elegant and costly attire of some church-goers attracted comment and criticism; some wealthy members lorded it over their less fortunate brothers and sisters; and education, especially for clergymen, became more important in the Methodist and Baptist churches.

Many churches became fashionable places. In 1837 a Methodist minister complained that the Presbyterians were completing "a fine church . . . and when it's done they will be likely to take some of our hearers--as a great many like fine things." Nancy M. Robinson of Port Gibson wrote

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35New Orleans Christian Advocate, February 24, 1854 (first quotation).
that many people went to church "their dress to show." In 1855 William Winans, who had once expelled women from the church for dressing in finery, gave up the battle but continued to criticize; he wrote, "I found Georgiana Carter, who had, I believe, but six rings on her fingers besides considerable other jewelry. Such are many modern Methodists!" 36

Modern evangelicals who could afford fine things looked down upon poorer, more traditional church members. Augusta H. Rice, who spent part of the year on an Oktibbeha County plantation and the rest in Mobile, Alabama, wrote of a neighbor, "They live very plainly & made me feel rather uncomfortable talking about it all the while, as if it were a matter of vital importance & essential to worth." Perhaps she visited with the same attitude and equipage she took to the local Baptist church. She wrote a city friend, "You would have called me country, Oktibbeha, & everything else could you have seen me starting off on Sunday with the baby & nurse on the front seat, an extra attendant on the driver's box & a big champagne basket tied on behind."

Clearly, if anyone called Mrs. Rice "country" it would be in jest. "I did not do as some of the neighbors did," she

36Elijah Steele to Henry H. Bridges, August 10, 1837 (first quotation), Steele Papers (MDAH); Nancy M. Robinson Diary, July 1832 (MDAH); Winans Journal, February 3, 1855 (third quotation); Mississippi Baptist, July 23, 1856; Winans to Drake, June 25, 1851, Drake Papers (Cain Archives); New Orleans Christian Advocate, April 17, 1851, 15 and 22 May, 1852.
wrote, disapprovingly, "namely to have the baby lugged in to nurse during service, which they did with the utmost complacency imaginable . . . ." After two long sermons, common in many rural churches where preachers did not visit every Sabbath, she was so exhausted that she contemplated walking out when the meeting adjourned for lunch, which was followed by yet another sermon. 37

The Baptist preachers did not impress Mrs. Rice, who lived in the city and attended a Presbyterian Church there; in her opinion "the preachers are rather sorry, to use a country expression." Many evangelicals, especially those in towns, agreed with Mrs. Rice, that the clergy should be educated, genteel men. A Methodist newspaper reported, "There is a growing tendency in the Methodist literature to accommodate the spirit of the age, by acknowledging that its ministry, is not exactly the thing for modern society. . . . the intelligence of the people has outgrown the intelligence of the pulpit . . . ." The Presbyterians, of course, had always placed a high value on an educated clergy, but in the 1830s the Methodist and Baptist also debated the issue and generally favored more strenuous qualifications for clergymen. In 1831 Benjamin Drake chaired a committee at the Methodist Annual Conference that recommended higher examination standards for ministers.

37 Augusta H. Rice to "My dear Lute," December 14, 1852; Same to Maria Hopkins Walker, July 19, 1853 (quotations), Rice Collection (MSU).
Mississippi Methodists contributed to the support of several seminaries. The Baptists also praised education and established the Judson Institute in 1836 to educate ministers. One Baptist minister stated "that no man unless a Hebrew scholar, was qualified to occupy a pulpit."  

The growing number of educated ministers in the state, concentrated in the towns, and a growing economic, social, and intellectual stratification among the clergy and the laity was part of a general southern pattern. Churchgoers in town demanded a different sort of preacher than rural congregations. In 1840 John G. Jones was disappointed by his reception in Natchez: "I was well received by the larger part of the church in Natchez especially the older members," he wrote, "but there was a later generation that did not like my plain and direct way of preaching. It might be well enough for the country but it did not suit the style of city people." Henry H. Bridges, a Methodist minister, attempted to comfort his friend and fellow minister Elijah Steele after the latter's appointment to Port Gibson, a wealthy cotton town. Bridges expressed his preference for the "poor, rich in faith and heirs to the kingdom." He wrote that "in our rich little towns, much

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36 Augusta H. Rice to "My dear Lute," December 14, 1852 (first quotation); New Orleans Christian Advocate, September 22, 1855; Jones, Complete History, II: 274-76, 286; Boyd, Popular History, pp. 121, 104; Mississippi Baptist, September 17, 1857; July 22, 1858; South-Western Religion Luminary September, October, 1836.
wealth does not imply great or extensive knowledge in
divine things." Bridges warned that town ministers were
often tempted "to turn from 'the Old Way', and . . . tickle
the ear rather than wound the heart. Others again who can
relish plain food will not receive it unless it be served
up in a 'lordly dish.'"39

Evangelicals had some difficulty in finding ministers
to fill town stations; Winans described the importance of
churches in towns like Natchez and Vicksburg, but the
Methodists had "comparatively few suitable men to fill
them." The number of suitable--i.e., educated and sophis-
ticated--men increased, however. There were men like John
Armstrong, a Baptist minister in Columbus, Mississippi, who
graduated from Columbian College in Washington, D.C., and
studied in France and Germany for two years. The Rev. Dr.
Haden Leavel, a Methodist minister and physician, held
appointments in Jackson and Vicksburg in the 1840s. He was

39E. Brooks Holifield, The Gentlemen Theologians:
American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860 (Durham,
(first quotation); Bridges to Steele, December 29, 1836
(second, third, and fourth quotations), Elijah Steele
Letters (MDAH), New Orleans Christian Advocate, March 2,
1859; E. G. Cook to B. M. Drake, February 26, 1857, Drake-
Satterfield Papers. Cook, a Methodist minister in Vicks-
burg, was concerned that ministers in towns might become
"the object of laughter & may be of contempt."
a Kentucky native, "blessed with a liberal education" and known for "his suavity of manners."\textsuperscript{40}

Many of the town ministers became quite wealthy. By the late 1840s many ministers "had acquired for themselves plantations . . .," often by marrying into the planter elite. Such connections made them even more acceptable to congregations in plantation towns like Natchez, Port Gibson, Columbus, and Vicksburg. In Natchez, for example, in 1860 the Presbyterian minister, Perry Chase, had an estate valued at $65,000; W. G. Millsaps, a Methodist, held $45,000; and another Methodist, W. H. Watkins, possessed $8,500.\textsuperscript{41} Perhaps their country brothers envied their material success, their social prominence, and their superior educations; certainly a backlash against them began.

The country preachers questioned the value of an educated clergy. William Winans, who had only two weeks of formal schooling, understandably championed the country preachers' cause. Though self-taught, no one questioned his intellectual abilities; a fellow minister called him

\textsuperscript{40}Winans quoted in Holifield, Gentlemen Theologians, p. 17 (quotation), 27; Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Minutes of the Annual Conferences, 1847-48, pp. 139 (first and second quotations), 140, 206.

"one of the greatest minds on the continent . . . . He was an intellectual giant." After his friend Benjamin Drake chaired the committee that recommended higher qualification standards, Winans challenged Drake's conclusions: "much as we need polish, it seems to me we need Stamina more. I mean we need more of the spirit, the zeal, the industry, the devotion of the ministerial character more than we need intellectual culture." The town ministers "tauntingly asked 'Are you then in favor of having an ignorant ministry?'" To which Winans replied, "'By no means.' Nor will it result that such will be the character of a ministry from the fact that unlearned and ignorant men are admitted into it." Drake came to accept Winans's view and believed that educational requirements for ministers posed the "greatest danger to our Church now . . . ." The country ministers maintained that God's call, not education, should determine who would preach the Gospel. The country preachers called for a return to evangelical roots. A Methodist reminded his readers that early Methodist preachers "turned the world upside down. They may not be learned, but they have done a work which learning with less piety has failed to do." He harked back to the church's egalitarian tradition and proclaimed, "We are sent to no
particular class . . . . The poor man and his family must not be shut out."42

The same debate occurred in Baptist churches. In 1849 the Fellowship Baptist Church in Lauderdale County split over the role of the ministry. One faction held the traditional view of a congregational ministry; they believed that God used only the direct agency of the Holy Spirit to convert sinners, a view that denigrated the minister's role and favored the active participation of the laity. A smaller faction thought the minister had a more active role to play in salvation, a view popular with many educated clergymen involved in the attempt to elevate their status and the importance of the ministerial gift and limit the laity to the role of spectators in the worship service. These modern clergymen were changing basic aspects of evangelical worship, and creating what can be called a clerical ministry as opposed to a congregational one. The faction favoring a clerical ministry withdrew from the church. In 1853 Roland Wilkinson, a Baptist preacher, withdrew from Zion Hill Baptist Church after he became

42 R. H. Rivers, The Life of Robert Paine, D. D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, 1884), p. 102 (first quotation); Jones, Concise History, pp. 135-37, 139; Winans to Drake, August 15, 1834 (second quotation) and February 10, 1857, Drake Papers (Cain Archives); Cain, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, pp. 187-88 (third and fourth quotations); New Orleans Christian Advocate, July 10, 1850 (sixth quotation); Winans Journal, February 10, 1855; Drake Autobiography, Drake papers (fifth quotation); Hawkins, Methodism in Natchez, p. 42.
"convinced that the Baptist church or churches of that denomination as they are properly known are not . . . what they formerly were, but have widely departed from the simplicity of the gospel of Christ . . . ." The call for an educated ministry angered this country preacher; he charged that "ministers who have not enjoyed superior monetary advantages or literary qualifications but who have nevertheless been greatly blessed of God in the work of the ministry are now generally but lightly esteemed & crowded aside to make room for those who have not been called to God but have merely received the literary honors of a college or a diploma of a theological seminary."43

The debate between the two groups did not stop with education; they disagreed over issues ranging from proper preaching style to the place of singing and music in worship. In broader terms, the argument involved those who favored a congregational ministry and those who favored a clerical ministry.

Town ministers and country preachers criticized one another's preaching styles, and town and country congregations expressed their preferences. The town ministers favored a "smooth and harmonious" style free of "affectation" and "flourishes." The "heavenly tone," popular with

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43 Casey, Amite County, II: 337-39; Mississippi Baptist, September 17, 1857; Boyd, Popular History of the Baptists, p. 121; Fellowship Baptist Church Records, September 1849 (SBHC).
early evangelicals, fell out of favor. One young Port Gibson woman expressed her disappointment in a preacher who "labored so hard to get his discourse out, his distorted features & troubled body distressed me . . . ." If this preacher was trying to arouse his listeners, he had chosen the wrong congregation. On the other hand, a member of a country church "heard the Rev. Capers read an essay of his on *Reason & Religion*" during which "a great many took short naps, & Some took tolerably long ones . . . ." Obviously, the Rev. Capers made no attempt to act as a catalyst between his hearers and God. He did not expect or even want lay involvement in the ministerial effort. A Presbyterian minister described a country preacher's sermon: "His manner of preaching was *Methodistical*, clapping . . . his hands stamping with his feet, and occasionally throwing in such expressions as 'God bless your soul' 'God love you' & c. characterized his discourse." Town ministers wanted to escape the association of this preaching style with all Methodists and Baptists. The country preachers called on their critics to remember their roots and put excitement back in their discourse.44

44South-Western Religious Luminary, October 1836 (first, second, and third quotations); Jones, *Concise History*, p. 63; Robinson Diary, June 7, 1854; Robert B. Alexander Diary (MDAH), March 19, 1854 (fourth quotation), June 13, 1861; New Orleans *Christian Advocate*, March 10, 1855.
As noted in Chapter 1, congregational singing played a vital role in early evangelical services. As part of the reduction in lay participation in services, many urban churches in the 1830s organized choirs rather than allow congregational singing, and the role of song in the church became a heated issue. In 1838 an article in an evangelical newspaper criticized the use of choirs and musical instruments. According to the writer, "it is well known that singing is an essential and powerful agent in awaking devotional feelings. Not dull and formal, but lively and energetic singing." John G. Jones wrote that, "In many of the fashionable churches of the present day, all that the congregation hear during 'the service of song' is the mingled din of instrumental music and the screaming of human voices ... ."45

Again and again, country preachers called on evangelicals to remember the old ways and not follow the day's fashion. Jones lamented that "large numbers of Methodist preachers, somehow, have lost the power of song." Jones clearly recognized that singing was an important gift and a powerful instrument of conversion. He wrote:

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45South-Western Religious Luminary, February 1838 (first quotation); Mississippi Baptist, March 18, 1858; Jones, Complete History, I:61, 447, 448 (second quotation), II:220, 320-21; Agnew Diary, December 9, 1865; New Orleans Christian Advocate, March 10, 1855; July 10, 1850; April 12, 1851; July 17, 1852; June 11, July 9, July 30, 1853; February 5, 1853; Winans to Drake, May 12, 1859, Drake Papers.
It was very common in those days of spiritual power in the Church for the ministers, after concluding their preaching services, to commence singing an appropriate hymn, and chorus with great animation, as though they expected the immediate blessing of God upon this additional spiritual exercise, and in numerous instances they were not disappointed. It was no uncommon occurrence for hearts to be reached by the song that had remained unmoved by the sermon. We have known persons awakened, converted, sanctified, and otherwise abundantly comforted and edified under these concluding songs. But, alas for the spirituality of the Church, and, we may sorrowfully add, for the salvation of souls, this gushing, stirring, melting, and enrapturing method of singing . . . has been superseded by a new style, which . . . has but little--often none--of the spirit and power of our former 'service of song.'

In 1838 the state Methodist Conference passed the following resolution: "it is the sense of this Conference that the introduction of instrumental music into public worship . . . and the conducting of the music in our churches by choirs . . . is injurious to the spirituality of singing, and is inconsistent with the directions of our Discipline." The Methodist book of discipline devoted over half its directions to singing in worship, reflecting the importance attached to this form of ministry in the early church. The popularity of hymns by Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts also testify to the significance of songs in worship. The debate over choirs and instrumental music continued to disrupt the annual conferences in the 1850s.

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46 Jones, Complete History, I: 334 (quotation), 459.

47 Ibid., II: 408 (first quotation); New Orleans Christian Advocate, April 12, 1851; February 5, 1853; Winans Journal, February 10, 1855.
The issue also disrupted some local churches. In 1865 a male churchgoer recorded in his diary that his church (probably Methodist) "had the vote taken whether there should be a Melodion in the Church I voted for it. . . Some of the Sisters got very hot indeed & jumped up & run out of the Church." The diarist did not suggest why the women felt so strongly about this vote. Many women were known for their gift of song. For example, "Mother" Sarah Epps, a South Carolina native who was converted by Francis Asbury before her move west in 1820, "took great interest in the . . . poetry of our excellent hymn books, and the singing of revival songs . . . ." Jane Ross Jones, wife of John G. Jones, had a beautiful voice and often led in singing during worship services. Perhaps the women opposed the trend away from lay participation which often included choirs and instrumental music. A decrease in lay participation had a disproportionate effect on women, since they were barred from filling church offices, and therefore they may have attempted to keep traditional forms of worship intact.

Methodists also began to abandon class meetings and love feasts, two traditional services where lay participation and leadership were crucial. The love-feast

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48 Alexander Diary, August 11, 1965 (first quotation); New Orleans Christian Advocate, June 18, 1853 (second quotation); Jones Autobiography, p. 91; Mississippi Baptist, March 18, 1858.
recognized "the preciousness and individuality of every Christian's experience; and by confidence and sympathy would draw it forth, for God's glory and the Church's edification." Some ministers, however, refused to hold love feasts and class meetings. When John G. Jones took over a new appointment in the 1830s he found that the previous minister had not enforced the Discipline; he promptly re instituted class meetings, held them regularly after preaching, and noted that the participants sometimes "had a shout." He also held these services for his black congregations. Jones blamed ministers for not holding class meetings and love feasts. One Methodist called on the Annual Conference to enforce the Discipline and "do all you can to revive class meetings, for is it not the wheel within the wheel . . . ." Many Methodists recorded their moving experiences at these services, and found them an important part of their religious life. Perhaps Jones was correct in holding ministers responsible for the waning of the love feasts and class meetings. The Methodist Quarterly meeting on the Carthage Circuit suspended Stephen Henry, a minister, for failing to attend class meetings. Rather than enforcing the Discipline and encouraging or requiring ministers to hold such services, the General
Conference in 1866 changed the rule making attendance at class meetings a test of membership.49

Some ministers and evangelicals also criticized revivals and camp meetings, both of which had played a major role in the expansion of the early church. Criticisms of revivals were nothing new; many evangelicals in the early church questioned their effectiveness, but beginning in the 1830s the criticism and defense became a part of the debate between the modernists and traditionalists. Fault finders deplored these "religious pic-nics" and charged that revivals were nothing more than "school boy and girl excitement." Where critics saw excitement, proponents saw wonderful visitations of the Holy Spirit. At an 1855 revival in Homochito, Mississippi, "The convictions were powerful, sometimes prostrating the individuals and depriving him of the use of his limbs, as in the times of Wesley, Whitefield, and Dow." At a revival held in Starkville in 1852, "there was an extraordinary display of the

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49 New Orleans Christian Advocate, August 9, 1851; July 5, 1856; May 20, 1854; August 19, 1854 (first quotation); May 5, 1866; Jones Autobiography, pp. 106-08 (second quotation on p. 108); T. Walker to Benjamin M. Drake, 1858 (third quotation), Drake Papers (Cain Archives); Alexander Diary, August 22, 1856; March 6, 1859; Robert Gordon Diary, June 26, 1853; B. M. Drake to Susan Drake, August 19, 1857, Drake-Satterfield Papers; W. L. Lipscomb to "Dear Mother," January 1, 1850, Lipscomb Family Letters (MDAH); Jones Journal, p. 77, March 20, 1835; W. B. Jones, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, 1870-1894 (Nashville, Tenn., 1951), pp. 99, 114, 366, 462; ? to Elijah Steele, June 14, 1838, Steele Papers; Carthage Circuit Record Book, June 27, 1857; September 5, 1857 (Cain Archives).
power of the Almighty, and an outpouring of His spirit."
Hundreds and even thousands of people attended these
services. Occasionally, Methodists and Baptists held joint
meetings. Blacks often attended the services, and, like
the whites, were often powerfully moved. At one such
meeting 106 whites converted, "but there was no calculating
those among the colored." Usually blacks and whites
attended the same services, but occasionally separate
services were held for blacks.\(^5\)

Proponents of revivals charged that many of their
critics had been converted at revivals and camp meetings:
"If they forget the rock whence they were hewn, we must
not." Revivalists had no patience with evangelicals who
tried to raise their status. One revivalist asked "The
Lord [to] multiply revivals after the old style, and in
great mercy to the earth keep a people always upon it not

\(^5\)New Orleans Christian Advocate, August 9, 1851
(first quotation); November 5, 1853 (second quotation); May
26, 1855 (third quotation); October 23, 1852 (fourth quo-
tation); November 6, 1852; August 6, 1853; November 5, 1853;
December 10, 1853; August 4, 1854; September 9, 1854;
October 7, 1854; October 14, 1854; July 29, 1854; August
20, 1855 (fifth quotation); September 22, 1855; September
13, 1856; August 17, 1859; September 14, 1859; November 3,
1859; November 7, 1860; September 27, 1856; October 4,
1856; August 30, 1856; Mississippi Baptist, April 22, 1858;
May 6, 27, 1858; October 14, 1858; September 22, 1859;
September 2, 9, 16, 1858; October 20, 1859; June 10, 24,
1858; August 5, 19, 26, 1858; Winans Journal, August 1,
October 1-7, 1842; Harris Autobiography, p. 60; Ann to
Elijah Steele, July 5, 1859, Steele Papers.
too learned, or well-bred, or decent, to re-enact the scenes of Pentecost."  

During the period from 1830 to 1860, many evangelicals seemed to forget "the rock whence they were hewn." Evangelicalism was transformed, and Baptists and Methodists especially moved from small sects made up predominantly of white plain folk and blacks, to large, more inclusive denominations. In some respects, evangelicals became more influential and powerful as they attracted more wealthy members and became more affluent themselves, but they came to include not only the elite but their attitudes and opinions as well. After 1830, evangelicals abandoned their opposition to slavery and embraced the Biblical defense with a rapidity that suggests not the cogency of the pro-slavery argument but the desperation of a group confronted by a serious conflict in their belief system. The Biblical defense allowed evangelicals to defend slavery and thereby prosper in the South, and it gave them greater access to the slaves. The Biblical defense permitted them to criticize certain aspects of the system and thereby gave them a sense of moral superiority, however illusory.

The yearning for status, wealth, and influence that impelled evangelicals toward the acceptance of slavery also led them away from the egalitarianism of the early churches. As ministers led the churches, especially those

\[\text{New Orleans Christian Advocate, July 10, 1850.}\]
in towns, in this quest, they sought to gain a higher professional status for themselves. Increasingly, ministers set themselves above the laity; they elevated the importance of the ministerial gift while depreciating gifts traditionally exercised by the laity. In more and more churches, the laity became spectators, and the enthusiastic services so common in the early churches were replaced by a more sedate, less emotional service. This is not to suggest a grand conspiracy on the part of clergymen. Obviously, many members approved of the changes in the churches. Churches often sought to assume a dominant posture in their communities; being a part of the largest or wealthiest church could be a source of great satisfaction for many members. A more formal service appealed to many church-goers, while others might be moved by a splendid interior and a practiced choir. The tragedy is that the churches could not celebrate their diversities and attempt to learn from one another, rather than assuming that difference implied inferiority.
Chapter III
A Wholesome Godly Discipline:
Churches as Moral Courts, 1806-1870

One historian has referred to the frontier churches as "moral courts." In 1810 the members of East Fork Baptist Church eloquently stated the evangelical motivation behind the disciplinary process:

Our conduct and conversation both in the church and in the world ought to correspond [sic] with the sublime [sic] and holy systems of Divine [sic] Truth to . . . live soberly, Righteously, and Piously, in this world, endeavoring by all means to promote the peace and welfare of Society in general . . . we feel ourselves bound to walk in all humility and brotherly love, to watch over each other's conversations, to stir one another to love and to good works . . . to warn interest Rebuke, admonish in the spirit of meekness according to the rules of the gospel, at the same time we think ourselves obliged to sympathize with each other's weaknesses and other imperfections, we view it as absolutely necessary to our peace and prosperity and the honor of God to carefully maintain a strict gospel discipline all which duties together with those that respect the most peaceful conduct toward all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

Evangelicals sought to separate themselves from the world around them. They placed special emphasis on "duty" and "order," especially important in a disorganized society. Evangelicals aimed to transform both individuals and society in general. The disciplinary process was not intended to be punitive, though for those who could not or would not conform it may have been. Discipline was a part of the maintenance process, a means of reminding members, through example, of their duties and obligations and also a
teaching mechanism through which converts learned of their obligations. An important part of this symbolic process is the idea of the congregation as a family, an especially powerful concept given the importance of kin in the society and the substitution of brothers and sisters in Christ for an absent or deceased extended family. Being driven from the family, the final and most extreme outcome of the disciplinary process, could be a sobering experience, as the large number of excluded members who sought readmission or "restoration" to the family demonstrates.¹

The Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians disciplined their members, though the process differed slightly among the three denominations. The Baptist churches dealt with such cases at their monthly conferences, usually held on a Saturday. Scarcely a conference took place without one or more disciplinary cases under discussion. Using Jesus's directives to his disciples as a guide [Matthew 18: 15-17], church rules required that members first attempt to settle disputes privately. If the attempt failed, the aggrieved person notified the church of his or her complaint. The conference then appointed a

committee to investigate the matter and cite the other party in the dispute to appear at the next conference to explain his or her behavior. A second and equally important directive involved individual transgressions. Church members were expected to inform the conference of any offense—drunkenness, profanity, adultery and the like—committed by another church member, and the offender was then cited to attend the next conference, though in some clear-cut cases a vote might be taken when the charge was made. Churches often required a unanimous vote in order to establish guilt or exclude a member. The process was remarkably democratic; no one—white or black, deacon or minister, male or female—was exempt from the process, and equal care was shown in investigating most cases. In the Presbyterian Church such cases were handled in the monthly meetings of the presbytery. The process was much the same, though a smaller group of people, usually the male presbyters, decided guilt or innocence. The Methodists regulated their members’ behavior in class meetings, and cases often came before meetings of the quarterly conferences as well.

This disciplinary process was a central part of the evangelical experience. In 1810 the Mississippi Baptist Association issued a circular letter on church discipline which read in part, "This is a subject of great importance. Much depends upon a wholesome godly discipline . . . ."
Throughout the period under discussion, discipline played a vital role in the churches and affected members of both races and sexes. A careful study of disciplinary actions by race and gender can reveal a wealth of information about the nature of religious life in the antebellum South. Historians have suggested that discipline was most important in the early church, that is until approximately 1830. Donald G. Mathews wrote that "Discipline by congregational conferences diminished through the nineteenth-century South; local church records reveal ever fewer investigations into the private and family lives of members." The records under consideration here reveal a far different picture from the one he suggests. The following discussion is based on a study of thirty church and circuit records with a total of approximately twelve hundred disciplinary cases.

In contrast to Mathews' suggestion, a breakdown of cases by decade shows that the number of cases increased throughout the antebellum period. From 1800 to 1810 there were 13 cases, 34 from 1810 to 1819, 44 from 1820 to 1829,

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71 from 1830 to 1839, 233 from 1840 to 1849, and 442 from 1850 to 1859. The raw numbers are deceiving, however. A comparison of disciplines to membership in the Mississippi Baptist Association from 1807 to 1847 shows only a slight variation in the percentage of members disciplined. Data from other associations show a similar pattern (See Tables 1-3).

Of the cases in this sample, the gender of the offender can be determined in 1,169 cases. Over half the cases, 55.9 percent (654), involved white males, a percentage far higher than their percentage of the membership. Mississippi churches followed the southern pattern where women outnumbered men. Mathews suggests a ratio of 65:35 women to men in southern churches. His estimate seems accurate as an overall figure; though as Tables 4-9 indicate, ratios varied widely in Mississippi churches.³

The discrepancy between the small male membership and the high number of disciplinary cases can, in part, be explained by considering the origins of the evangelical movement. As historian Rhys Isaac has so ably demonstrated, the evangelical revolt grew up in opposition to the predominant gentry culture; he wrote, "The social world of the Baptists seems so striking a negative image of

³Mathews, Religion in the Old South, pp. 47-48, 102; Bailey, Shadow on the Church, p. 52; Agnew Diary, January 24, 1864; June 4, 1865; New Orleans Christian Advocate, September 22, 1865.
Table 1
Exclusions in the Mississippi Baptist Association, 1807-1847

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Baptisms</th>
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<th>Exclusions</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
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<td>73</td>
<td>1103</td>
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### Table 2

Exclusions in the Aberdeen Baptist Association, 1850-1868

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<th>Exclusions</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
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<td>1864</td>
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<td>1934</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<td>1868</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1643</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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### Table 3

Exclusions in the Salem Baptist Association, 1865 & 1872

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Baptisms</th>
<th>Total Membership</th>
<th>Exclusions</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
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### Table 4

Membership by Gender and Race
Bethlehem Baptist Church (Choctaw County)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>WM</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>WF</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>BM</th>
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gentry-dominated milieus that it must be considered to have been shaped to a large extent in reaction to the dominant culture." Of course, this culture was largely created by and dominated by men. It was almost inevitable, given this situation, that evangelicals struck at attributes generally considered "masculine"—competition, violence, recklessness, individualism—and also at personal behaviors that were often a part of highly ritualized, culturally significant, male-dominated activities—gambling, drinking, horse racing, fighting. This is not to suggest that male evangelicals were any less "manly" than their irreligious brothers; they were not, as they were forced to prove on many occasions. But evangelicals celebrated characteristics traditionally considered "feminine," such as non-violence, humility, emotionalism, caring, and domesticity.⁴

By far the most common charge leveled against white men was intoxication. A total of 593 charges against white men can be identified in the sample of church records; of

these, 33.6 percent (199) involved alcohol abuse. In the early churches, either fewer evangelicals drank or the churches took it more lightly; from 1806 to 1820 only five charges of intoxication came before the churches in this sample, 15.2 percent of the charges brought against white men. William Winans believed that there was less drinking in early Mississippi than in other parts of the country. He wrote, "When I first came to this country [Mississippi], I thought there was less of this vice in it than in any I was ever in . . . ." He believed, however, that the consumption of alcohol had increased so rapidly that by the early 1820s in "all classes from those who are lowest to those in high official stations, men are to be found who are not ashamed of being seen wallowing in the filth of this debauch in the very streets." Preachers like Winans denounced the sin of drunkenness from their pulpits and punished church members who drank or sold liquor. Evangelical opposition combined with a highly successful temperance campaign had results; alcohol consumption declined after 1830. The percentage of intoxication charges in the total fell from 45.8 percent in the decade from 1820-1830 to 20.7 percent in the decade from 1860-1870.\(^5\)

Henry J. Harris, who moved to the state at the age of six, recalled that "It was the custom then for rich and poor alike to keep liquers [sic] in their houses, and the children had liberty to drink almost at will. I had a little brother six years old who died from overdraught of brandy and I (humiliating as is the confession) was a drunk at 16 years of age!" Like other evangelicals, Harris believed that his faith helped him overcome an addiction to alcohol.6

Evangelicals were concerned about alcohol abuse not only because of its effect on the individual, but because of the effects on the family and the community as well. The Methodist preacher Thomas Griffin, known for his sharp tongue, denounced the drunkard as "a far worse character than the frantic suicide who would take a pistol and blow out his brains, thus ridding his family of a pest and leaving his property for their maintenance, whereas the drunkard, after cursing and disgracing his family . . . , afflicting them with his drunken revels, wasting his property, breaking the heart of his wife, and hanging his poor, ragged, uneducated children on the horns of poverty, is in the end a self-murderer." Increasingly during the nineteenth century evangelicals held up the ideal of the

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nuclear family and attempted to foster and protect it. Drinking not only affected the family’s economic well-being, it could also lead to other threatening actions. For example, in 1850 a member of Liberty Baptist Church was excluded for intoxication and adultery. A member of Galilee Baptist Church was excluded for intoxication, wife abuse, and adultery.7

Since intoxication was often linked with violent or aggressive behavior, alcohol abuse threatened the order and stability of the entire community. The link between alcohol consumption and aggression is not a causal one, but it varies from one culture to another. In some cultures there is no relationship between alcohol and violence, but significantly, in the late twentieth-century United States,

7Jones, Concise History, p. 182 (quotation); Liberty Baptist Church Records, February 1850; Bethlehem Baptist Church Records, April 1842; First Presbyterian Church Records (MDAH), 1850. For examples of articles praising the nuclear family see South-Western Religious Luminary, September, November, December, 1836; Galilee Church Records, 1853, in Casey, Amite County, pp. 211-50; Norman H. Clark, Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition (New York, 1971), pp. 12-13-, 33-34, 43, 60, 53; Ian R. Tyrrell, "Drink and Temperance in the Antebellum South: An Overview and Interpretation," Journal of Southern History XLVIII (November, 1982), pp. 485-510; Walter Brownlow Posey, Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the South Appalachians to 1861 (Lexington, Ky., 1966), pp. 303-17. Methodist women and ministers worked together to persuade the Mississippi legislature to pass a temperance bill in the 1840s. The Reverend Charles K. Marshall was called the "Apostle of Temperance." See J. B. Cain, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, 1846-1870 (Jackson, 1939), p. 122. Wyatt-Brown also discusses the link between alcohol and violence, including wife abuse. See Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, pp. 280-84.
"there seems to be more alcohol-related aggressiveness in the rural south than in the north . . . ." In this sample, there are twenty-four cases (12 percent of the alcohol cases) which specifically link alcohol and aggressive behavior. For example, a member of New Zion Baptist Church was excluded for drunkenness, profanity, and beating his slave. The most common aggressive behaviors associated with alcohol were fighting and profanity.⁶ Profanity was the second most common charge made against white men (10.6 percent of the total or 63 cases), while fighting ranked fourth (8.6 percent or 51 cases).

While the motives for drinking might vary with each individual, some suggestions for the extremely high incidence of intoxication are necessary. Despite individual motivation, "No matter how alcohol use is defined, cultural meanings, rules, and practices likely play some role in determining how, where, and why people drink and

⁶David Levinson, "Social Setting, Cultural Factors and Alcohol-Related Aggression" in Edward Gottheil, Keith A. Druley, Thomas E. Skoloda, and Howard M. Waxman, eds., Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Aggression, (Springfield, Ill., 1983), pp. 41-58 (quotation on p. 46); New Zion Baptist Church Records, Choctaw county (MSU), June and July, 1858. For examples of intoxication linked with fighting and profanity see Bethesda Baptist Church Records, January, 1854; Bethany Baptist Church Records, December 1857; and Spring Hill Baptist Church Records, December 1858. For examples of alcohol and profanity see Bethlehem Baptist Church Records, February 1851; April 1856; Mt. Moriah Baptist Church Records, March 1857; Bethesda Baptist Church Records, January 1857; May 1858; October 1860; Beulah Baptist Church Records, June 1855; and Academy Baptist Church Records, August 1848.
how they behave while drinking." As earlier quotations indicate, drinking was widespread and accepted in the general society, but as noted earlier, evangelicals demanded that their members adopt a lifestyle at odds with that prevailing in society. When white males joined the church, they immediately confronted these different norms, a confrontation that created feelings of ambivalence and guilt. Many men must have used drinking as a means of venting these aggressive feelings. Other researchers have found excessive drinking associated with loosely organized societies, a description that fits antebellum Mississippi society, especially in the early period when charges against drinkers was highest. Alcohol consumption could also be used as a means of denial; men could blame alcohol for their misdeeds. Such an attitude could help explain the number of cases combining intoxication and gambling or dancing.9

Dancing ranked third in the list of allegations made against white men, accounting for 9.1 percent (54) of the total number. Evangelicals considered dancing unholy, unprofitable, sensuous, senseless, barbaric, and devilish.

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9Levinson, "Social Setting," pp. 47 (first quotation), 54; James J. Collins, "Alcohol use and Expressive Interpersonal Violence: A Proposed Explanatory Model," in Gottheil, et al, Alcohol, pp. 16-17. For examples of intoxication linked with gambling or dancing see Bethany Baptist Church Records, July 1846, July 1861; First Baptist Church, Louisville, December 1845; Jerusalem Baptist Church, 1816; Carolina Presbyterian Church Records (MDAH), July 1850; Bethesda Baptist CHurch, February 1870.
Dancing was a popular amusement among elite Mississippians, who danced cotillions and reels, and among the plain folk who enjoyed these and folk dances such as dancing on a plank. Partners faced one another and danced as fast as possible on a raised plank while the surrounding crowd yelled their encouragement, clapped their hands, and stamped their feet. In 1844, H. W. Walter, a member of the Holly Springs Presbyterian Church, asked to be excluded because he and the church "differ widely as to the propriety . . . of many of the common gayities and amusements of life," especially dances. "The Church condemns, I approve them, and approving enjoy them." The church honored his request and excluded him.¹⁰

Taken together, the four most common charges—intoxication, profanity, dancing, and fighting (or quarreling)—account for 61 percent of the total. Almost 20 percent of the cases (19.1 percent) are general, non-specific allegations including disorder, misconduct, non-fellowship, and contempt. The remaining 20 percent of the charges vary, but may be grouped into general categories: sex and family life, race relations, property amusements, and individual behavior.

¹⁰Jones, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, p. 283; Frederick Law Olmstead, The Cotton Kingdom (New York, 1984), p. 350; First Presbyterian Church Records, Holy Springs (MDAH), April 12, 1844 (quotation); November 21, 1846; Bethlehem Baptist Church, March 1866.
In one way or another twenty-eight of the miscellaneous charges involved sex or family life. Fifteen of these related to marriage; there were seven charges of adultery, six charges of bigamy, and two charges of desertion (2.5 percent of the total). This low number does not indicate that the institution of marriage was a stable one, but rather that evangelicals were reluctant to interfere in the family relationship. When William Winans arrived in the territory, he was shocked by the moral climate; he wrote, "Morals were far from being exemplary, I have seen in one congregation three ladies whose husbands had abandoned them." He refused to believe one woman who told him of her husband’s infidelity and laughed at her distress. He described her as a "Poor old wretch . . . at war with herself and her whole family." He added, "I would grind with Sampson in the prison house without an eye in my head rather than have such a piece of crooked, malignant mortality hanging on my arm . . . ." The evangelical press advised wives to keep clean, well-run homes, or lose their husband’s affection.11

Women were often held responsible for a man’s misdeeds. Evangelicals recounted the story of Eve and the apple to demonstrate the "all controlling power of woman’s

11 Winans Autobiography, p. 76 (first quotation); Winans Journal, April 10, 1821 (remaining quotations); Mississippi Baptist, March 10, 1860. Sexual misconduct was common. See Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, 292-97.
influence." Women established "the standard of morality in any community." After a young women tried to persuade Winans to dance he wrote, "I was not the first to feel the force of female influence in solicitations to wrong-doing . . . ." John G. Jones wrote, "As a means of self preservation, and to keep the devil from tempting, both myself and others, I kept at a great distance from females . . . ." When a Methodist minister left his wife and eight children and ran away with an orphaned girl who had grown up as a servant in his family, Winans blamed the girl for leading his fellow minister into sin.\textsuperscript{12} Many evangelicals held ambivalent attitudes about women and the proper role of women, an ambivalence that becomes apparent in the disciplinary process.

Cases involving marital or family relations could be especially difficult for churches. When a male member of Bethlehem Church confessed that his wife's first husband was still living, the church called a council of sister churches to help decide the case. On occasion, members refused to answer charges involving their marriages and were therefore excluded, or they refused to accept the church's ruling on the subject and hence excluded themselves. In April 1850 the Bethesda Baptist Church

\textsuperscript{12}Mississippi Baptist, June 24, 1858 (first and second quotation); Winans Autobiography, pp. 7 (third quotation), 177-78; Jones Autobiography, p. 105 (fourth quotation); Winans Journal, June 16, 1812.
Conference appointed a committee to investigate a report of wife abuse against John Kilcrease. He refused to answer the report or attend "court," and warned the church not to send another committee to discuss the subject. The conference excluded him in June. In July another man asked that Kilcrease be restored and that a letter of dismissal be granted to his wife. In August the conference indefinitely postponed his restoration and refused to grant his wife a letter. Another member then charged Mrs. Kilcrease with unchristian conduct, and the conference excluded her in January 1851. In May 1851 John wrote the church asking for forgiveness for both him and his wife, a request the conference refused. He wrote again in August confessing his sin and asking for forgiveness and letters of dismissal. After this contrite confession, the conference gave letters to the husband and wife.

Men who abused their wives or children sometimes defended their action as "correction," an interpretation of abuse that evangelicals sometimes refused to accept. In 1816 the Salem Baptist Church conference excluded a man who claimed to have been correcting his wife by whipping her. Winans described a family of three sisters with terrible tempers. One of their husbands said, "You are a remarkable

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13 Bethlehem Baptist Church, January 1845; May 1862. The man, L. Sutherland, was excluded in March 1865. Concord Baptist Church, January 1848; Bethesda Baptist Church, April, May, June, July, August, November, 1850; January, May, August 1857.
family of Sisters--three of you have been whipped by your husbands in as many months." Winans expressed no surprise or disapproval at his remark; nor did he comment on the tempers of men who whipped their wives. A male member of Bethlehem Baptist Church denied that his treatment of his children could be considered abuse, but testimony convinced the conference otherwise and he was excluded. As the Winans quote suggest, evangelicals expected women to remain in certain roles; as a Baptist circular letter of 1835 read, "submission is the chief duty of a woman." When women stepped out of this role, as the sisters did, then male evangelicals saw nothing amiss in "correction." But the other examples demonstrate that evangelicals also outlined male duty in a way that condemned abuse by husbands. The same circular letter that required women to be submissive stated that "the husband and wife . . . must be considered as a joint head of the family . . ." and noted that "love is the first duty of a man . . . ."

Abused wives had little recourse in the law; only the churches brought such actions to light and condemned them. Evangelicals revised the ideal of marriage from a patriarchal institution to one of companionship, love, and mutual respect. The evangelical emphasis on family life, the duty

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14Salem Baptist Church, November 1816; Winans Autobiography, pp. 77-78 (first quotation on p. 77); Bethlehem Baptist Church, June 1850; Mississippi Baptist Association Minutes, 1835, p. 164 (remaining quotations); South-Western Religious Luminary, September 1836.
of spouses, non-violence, and the education of women at least helped create a climate hostile to such abuses. The evangelical attack on "masculine" attributes at the same time resulted in a new appreciation of "feminine" characteristics. An 1859 obituary praised the Methodist William Fisk McGeehee for being "Pure and modest as a woman . . . loyal, docile, loving to obey . . . ." Another Methodist, the Reverend Hamilton Watkins, was called "as gentle as a woman . . . ."\textsuperscript{15}

While "feminine" virtues became an ideal for male evangelicals, few men actually achieved them. Violations dealing with property were more common against men than women; in keeping with traditional gender roles, such dealings were in the male sphere. A second category of miscellaneous charges concerned property; twenty-four such allegations appear in the sample. Among these charges of bad debt or fraud occurred eleven times (1.9 percent of the total), while allegations of theft appeared six times (1.0 percent). The other three categories—shooting stock, passing counterfeit money, and overcharging on goods or services—account for 1.2 percent of the total number (7 charges).

The general category of amusements accounts for another eleven allegations. The most common of these involved horse-racing; six charges (1.0 percent) appear in the records. The sport was one of the most popular in the South. Many wealthy planters of the Natchez region bred and raced thoroughbreds, and race tracks abounded across the state. One of the most famous was the St. Catherine course, later called the Pharsalia, near Natchez, originally laid out in the late eighteenth century. John G. Jones considered this track to be a major obstacle in the spread of religion in the area. "Like the fabled Upas tree of Java," he wrote, "it has poisoned the moral atmosphere in all the region round about."\(^{16}\) Evangelicals would probably not have opposed races, except for the gambling, drinking, and other objectional offenses that usually accompanied them.

The remaining five allegations in this category--operating a ten-pin alley, playing cards, playing the fiddle, and attending a slight-of-hand performance--are so few that they are statistically unimportant. The ten-pin alley was an early form of bowling; perhaps, like cards and racing, it was accompanied by gambling. The evangelical hostility to musical instruments and dancing explains their

charge against the fiddler, and the slight-of-hand show with its "magical" claims, must have made the evangelicals very suspicious.

The category of charges dealing with race relations is perhaps most significant because of its small size; it contains only nine examples. Evangelicals were extremely reluctant to interfere in this sensitive area. Only two white men were charged for beating a slave; one case which also involved intoxication has already been mentioned. The second case occurred in Bethesda Baptist Church. The church conference in December 1858 alleged that J. T. Martin struck a black boy with a stick and then whipped him. The case might never have come before a church conference except that the slave belonged not to Martin but to J. H. Collins. Both Collins and Martin were leaders in the church. The conference also charged Collins for taking legal action against Martin before trying to reach a settlement in the conference. Both Martin and Collins were excluded, along with members of their families. When the White Oak Baptist Church accepted the Martin family as members without letters of dismissal, Bethesda sent a committee to White Oak to protest. White Oak refused to reconsider their action, and Bethesda requested that a council of churches consider the case; a council composed of representatives from three other churches and two associations heard the dispute. The case dragged on until
November 1860 when Bethesda followed the council's recommendation, restored Martin and his family, and granted them letters of dismissal, thereby allowing them to transfer their membership to White Oak. Obviously, the abuse of the slave youth was soon lost in the dispute.\textsuperscript{17}

More serious than beating slaves were cases involving the shooting of a slave and a slave's death. The first case, from Concord Baptist Church, reads simply, "Brother Wragg through Brother R. D. Brown laid his case before the church of shooting a negro which confession being satisfactory he was acquitted." It is impossible to tell even if the black person lived or died. Note also that the conference did not appoint a committee to review the case or examine the evidence, perhaps because Brown confessed. The case of a slave's death comes from Ebenezer Baptist Church in November 1858. Peter A. Green came before the conference and "stated he had a difficulty with a runaway negro in attempting to arrest him, which resulted in the death of the negro by Bro. Green." A motion was made that Green be excluded, but it was tabled until January 1859 when it was taken up and lost. Again the conference made no attempt to investigate the charge as they would have done in relatively minor cases involving only whites. Like

\textsuperscript{17}Bethesda Baptist Church, December 1858; April, August, September, October, November 1859; May, November 1860.
the civil courts, the conferences handled such cases with kid gloves.¹⁸

Two other cases in the records involved masters' use of their slaves' labor in violation of religious commandments; such cases put Christian slaves in extremely difficult positions. In July 1832 the Bethany Baptist Church Conference charged a master with intoxication and sending his slaves to help clear a race track; he was excluded. In 1853 the Galilee Baptist Church Conference excluded a slaveowner who forced his slaves to work on the Sabbath. Occasionally religious slaves risked punishment rather than violate their beliefs. In 1820 Winans found "Sister Bryant" "with a whip in her hand ready to castigate a servant because . . . the servant was not willing to work while other servants were keeping holy day." For many slaves a preacher probably did not appear at such an opportune moment. Slaves who were given orders that violated their religious beliefs held their masters responsible; Andrew Jackson Gill, a former slave in Lincoln County said, "Dey [the master and mistress] was responsible fer us an' if dey tol' us to do somethin' it was on dey

conscious if it was wrong, not our fault." White evangelicals agreed. Religion provided some slaves with psychological defenses against the dehumanizing process of slavery and gave them a sense of moral superiority over irreligious masters. As one ex-slave recalled, "There was an old man on the place that was a kind of a preacher. They whipped him one day but he wouldn't deny. He said that was his victory over hell, and if they whipped him to death, when they turned him loose, he was going on the same way." The slave preacher had found a path to victory not only over the eternal hell, but also over his hell on earth.

The final category of miscellaneous charges covers individual behavior. Eight charges (1.3 percent) were made against men who joined another denomination or organization. For example, there were five charges against men who left the Baptist for the Methodist church. Some Anti-Missionary or conservative Baptist churches refused to allow their members to join any other organization or society. One such church excluded a member who joined the Sons of Temperance, even though the same church disciplined

19Bethany Baptist Church, July 1832; Galilee Church Records in Casey, Amite County, pp. 211-50; Winans Journal, December 26, 1820. George P. Rawick, ed., The American Slave: A Composite Biography (Westport, Conn. and London, 1977), Supp., Series 1, vol. 8, Part 3, pp. 845 (second quotation) 899; vol. 9, Part 4, pp. 1644 (third quotation), 1864; vol. 6, Part 1, p. 202. There were three additional cases involving white men and slaves: one in which a man sold liquor to slaves, and other in which man purchased a slave without a dear title, and a third in which a man was charged for holding a "negro party" after the war.
members for intoxication. One month earlier the church issued a "Protest" vowing to exclude any member who joined a theological school, a state convention, a missionary society, a tract society, or the Sons of Temperance.  

Evangelicals also disciplined members who went to the civil courts before trying to settle their dispute in the church conference. There are three such cases in the sample.

Finally, there is one charge of desertion from the army in the sample. The case did not occur during the Civil War when rates of desertion were high, but during the War of 1812.

As the sample clearly demonstrates, white males were charged with a wide variety of offenses, with intoxication accounting for almost one-third of the total. Disciplinary actions clearly show how evangelicalism conflicted with the South's patriarchal honor bound culture. The conflict between evangelicals culture and the traditional "masculine" culture accounts for the high rate of discipline among men and the low male membership in many churches.

While many men found the responsibilities of evangelicalism

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20 Fellowship Baptist Church, March, April 1849; April 1857. The Sons of Temperance became the nation's largest temperance organization; in the late 1840s it had 6,000 units and 200,000 members. See Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade, p. 47.

21 Ebenezer Baptist Church Records in Casey, Amite County, II: 251-31.
difficult to shoulder, thousands of others did so with success and determination. Historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown depreciated the role of religion in transforming southern attitudes and stated that "the legal and community sanctions against deviancy were the chief regulators of conduct, not the church," though he fails to appreciate here the influence of the churches on these very legal and community sanctions.\(^{22}\) As several of the preceding examples illustrate, many men felt that the churches' demands were unreasonable and simply withdrew rather than submit.

White women faced 150 identifiable charges in this sample, far less than the 593 against white men, despite the fact that women made up a majority in most churches (see Tables 4-9). In none of the churches surveyed here did the disciplinary actions against women approach their percentage of the membership. For example, Bethany Baptist Church had a majority of female members by 1843 (52.6 percent), yet cases against women accounted for only 15.3 percent, and even this figure is high compared to many other churches. In Academy Baptist Church white women made up 37.7 percent of the membership in 1860, but only 4.8 percent of the exclusions.

For a variety of reasons, women found evangelicalism attractive. The social aspect of religion has already been

\(^{22}\)Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, p. xviii (quotation).
discussed; this aspect of worship was especially important for women whose lives were more circumscribed than men's. Most public meetings in the South, such as muster days or court days, were primarily male affairs. Evangelicals, however, welcomed women into the churches and into an active role in worship. A widespread belief maintained that women by their very nature were more religiously inclined than men.

Perhaps so many women joined the evangelical movement because it suited their peculiar needs. Evangelicalism provided many women with a religious faith that enabled them to instill hope and trust in their infants. As noted earlier, evangelical services, especially in the early period, assaulted the senses and particularly affected women. Women became active participants in worship services; they prayed in public, "exhorted" at revivals and camp meetings, served as class leaders, voted in many churches, taught Sunday Schools, and, perhaps most importantly, organized their own prayer meetings, missionary societies, and other benevolent organizations.²³

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²³Mathews, Religion in the South, p. 100; Mississippi Baptist, November 10, 1859; April 14, 1859; First Presbyterian Church, Port Gibson (MDAH), pp. 18-19; Augustus Harvey Mecklin Papers (MDAH), February 16, 1862; Sophie Boyd Hays Diary (MSU), April 8, 1858; Lucy Irion Journal (MDAH), 1866, p. 2, 1868, p. 8; Salem Baptist Church Records (SBHC), November 1822; Recording Steward's Book, First Methodist Church, Jackson (Cain Archives), January 7, 1871; First Methodist Church Records, Columbus, (MSU), 1837; Jones Journal, July 5, August 6, 1835; Winans Journal, February 18, 1821, November 1, 1823; New Orleans Christian
Most charges against women were for relatively minor offenses. Dancing accounted for over one-third of the charges (40.7 percent) against white women. Dancing accounted for only 9.1 percent of the charges against white men, but the raw numbers are very close (fifty-four charges for men versus sixty-one against women). As observed earlier, evangelicals strongly opposed dancing. In 1861 the Presbyterian Synod of Mississippi condemned dancing and "all kindred amusements which are calculated to awaken thoughts and feelings inconsistent with the seventh commandment ["Neither shalt thou commit adultery," Deut. 5:16] ... ." They considered the "practice of promiscuous social dancing by members ... a mournful inconsistency ... ."

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Advocate, March 1, 1851, June 24, 1854; September 22, 1866; Second Annual Report of the Mississippi State Convention ... 1824 (Natchez, 1825), p. 3; "An Act to Incorporate the Female Charitable Society of Natchez," Official Archives of the State of Mississippi, Legislature (MDAH), vol. 321 (1816-19); Petition from the Society (1825), Petitions and Memorials, 1823-26; Charles B. Dana Papers, "J. to Dear Doctor," April 14, [1850s]; Lyon Journal, October 1854; Agnew Diary, July 23, 1866; September 6, 1865; Jones Autobiography, p. 135; Blackman Journal, pp. 19-20.

24 Synod of Mississippi Extracts, p. 423.
Another 21.3 percent of the charges are general, unspecific allegations such as misconduct, disorder, non-fellowship, contempt, or immorality. Unfortunately, these cannot be identified with any certainty.

This next most sizeable group, twenty-six cases (17.3 percent), charged women with joining another denomination, usually the Methodists. The same charge occurred only seven times (1.2 percent) in the male group. The cause of this discrepancy is unclear. In 1854 a man wrote his sister, "in past times, you have changed churches, being lead, I suppose by escitement [sic], and by those whom you considered your best friends . . . ." Perhaps women were attracted to the Methodist Church because of its long history of support for women's education. Also, the Methodist class meetings, love feasts, and revivals may have given women more opportunities for involvement. A male perception of female "excitement" cannot be considered reliable. It was a common perception among evangelicals; as one religious newspaper observed, "Women are naturally more warm hearted and enthusiastic than men, more easily excited, and give way to their feelings with less
restraint." 25 Judging from the number of charges against men for fighting, profanity, and intoxication, women appear far more restrained.

Intoxication accounted for only five (3.3 percent) of the allegations against white women. Only two cases involved intoxication and aggressive behavior and both women were also charged with profanity. Even today "aggression seems never to be an important component in the image of drunken comportment on the part of women." The small number of allegations reflects the existing norm against female drinking. Thorstein Veblen theorized that since alcohol use was honorific, the taboo against female consumption of alcohol would be most acute in a patriarchal society, a designation often applied to the Old South. 26

The four categories of charges discussed above constitute 82.7 percent of the total. The remaining miscellaneous allegations will be divided into the same general

25 J. G. G. Boyd to Matilda Webb, March 26, 1854 (first quotation); Hays, Ray, Webb Collection (MSU); Mississippi Baptist, September 1836.

categories used in discussing males; sex and family life, property, and individual behavior. The general category of amusements is unnecessary since dancing was the only such allegation made against women.

The first general category, sex and family life, includes fornication, illegitimate births, leaving husbands, adultery, bigamy, and unscriptural marriage. These accounted for 8.7 percent of the total allegations against white women, compared to 4.7 percent of the allegations against white males. These percentages are far lower than those found by other historians. Jean E. Friedman calculated that 44 percent of female offenders in her sample were accused of a sexual offense, while 6 percent of the males were so charged. The remarkable difference in these findings is difficult to explain. Friedman's sample of fifteen churches is smaller, but the number of cases against women in her sample is larger (235 versus 150).\textsuperscript{27} A reference to actual numbers rather than percentages in the Mississippi sample shows seven charges of adultery against men compared to two charges against women; six allegations of bigamy against men and one against a woman; three charges of fornication against men and three against women; two allegations against men for leaving their wives and three charges against women who left husbands. Of course, no man was charged with an illegitimate birth,

\textsuperscript{27}Friedman, The Enclosed Garden, pp. 14, 131.
while three women were. But, by the same token, women were not charged with spouse or child abuse, attempted rape, or in family disputes, while nine such charges were made against men.

Perhaps a more thorough study of the disciplinary process across the South will be necessary before adequate explanations can be made, but in light of the Mississippi findings, Friedmen's conclusions concerning discrimination against white women in the process are premature. If the Mississippi sample is representative, no double standard existed; equal numbers of men and women faced charges of sexual misconduct. I disagree with Friedman's contention that charges of illegitimacy provide evidence of a double standard, since the absence of the charge against men results wholly from biology.

Only two charges in the sample involve women and blacks. One woman was charged with the ambiguous offense of holding a "Negro Party" during the troubled Reconstruction period. In a more serious case, a white woman was charged with murdering a slave. In March 1858 the Ebenezer Baptist Church Conference appointed a committee to investigate rumors that in 1856 Sister Jane Roark murdered a slave girl belonging to Henry Marston of Clinton, Louisiana. The committee presented certificates from Marston and from Dr. P. O. Langworthy, the attending

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physician in the case. Marston wrote that he could not swear that the girl's death "was caused by the violence of Mrs. Roark . . ."; likewise Dr. Langworthy refused to accuse Mrs. Roark, but wrote that death "was caused . . . either by an accidental or intentional injury." The testimony was ambiguous at best and hardly proved Mrs. Roark's innocence, yet the conference discharged the committee and dismissed the case.²⁹

There is only one charge in the sample involving a woman and property. One woman faced a charge for non-payment of debt. As noted earlier, property dealings were considered to be in the male sphere.

The general category of personal behavior includes allegations of lying, profanity, and slander. Conferences considered five charges of lying against women (3.3 percent), compared to twelve charges against men (2.0 percent). Only four charges of profanity were made against women (2.7 percent), while the charge appeared sixty-three times against men (10.6 percent), a reflection of a prevailing norm in society. One woman was charged with slander, a charge made against four men.

The sample of allegations against women demonstrates that the most common charge involved a relatively minor offense--dancing. In contrast to earlier studies, the

²⁹Galilee and Ebenezer Church Records in Casey, Amite County, II: 250, 280 (first and second quotations).
sample does not show discrimination against women in church conferences. If discrimination was at work, it operated against men who were disciplined and excluded at far higher rates than women. For example, an 1860 membership list from Academy Baptist Church (see Figure 5) also showed which members were excluded. The roll reveals that 6.7 percent of the white males were excluded, but only 1.2 percent of the white women were so severely punished. Viewed another way, 28.6 percent of the twenty-one cases involved white males, but only 4.8 percent involved white females. Exclusions against white males and females accounted for 33.4 percent of the total; obviously, blacks made up the remainder.

As the example from Academy suggests, if discrimination existed in the process, it most affected blacks. Of the twenty-one exclusions there, 38.1 percent were against black males, who made up only 10.7 percent of the membership; 28.6 percent of the cases were against black females, who comprised 10.2 percent of the membership. Of the black men on the 1860 roll, 34.8 percent were excluded, while 9.1 percent of the black women faced exclusion. The study will show that while the disciplinary process sometimes functioned as a white control device, in the majority of cases, the process disciplined blacks for the same transgressions that plagued whites. The study also demonstrates that in most cases, with a few important exceptions discussed
below, blacks received fair hearings conducted in the same way as those involving whites. The high rate of discipline against blacks resulted in large part from different standards of morality among blacks. When blacks joined evangelical churches they pledged to abide by the strict moral code evangelicals demanded; like white men, many blacks found it a heavy burden. Blacks faced real contradictions between the evangelical code and the code of the black community, a difficulty not fully resolved until the post-bellum separation of the churches.

A breakdown of cases against black males by decade shows that disciplinary actions against slaves increased steadily as black membership grew, and as slavery became a more important concern in the churches. The increase in cases against blacks contradicts David Bailey's assertion that the number of such cases declined after 1830. In Mississippi the number of cases against blacks increased dramatically after that date though a corresponding increase in black membership indicates that discipline was no more harsh.³⁰

³⁰Bailey, Shadow on the Church, pp. 191-92.

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The most common allegation against black men was running away; there were thirty-three charges (17.3 percent of the total). It should be noted that twenty-three of those charges were made against black men who joined Federal troops during the Civil War. Evangelicals attempted to prop up the institution of slavery and maintain order during the war, but many slaves escaped to freedom. Several churches appointed committees to determine the number of blacks who had fled, and often excluded many runaways at once.\(^3^1\)

The next most frequent charge, theft (twenty-three cases) made up 12.0 percent of the total. The charge appeared only six times against white males (1.0 percent of the total). Historian Lawrence W. Levine wrote that slaves, out of necessity, sometimes lied, cheated, or committed theft because of their great need. Such actions, while technically violations of the Christian teachings accepted by many slaves, could be "neutralized." He wrote, "Thus it was possible for slaves to rationalize their need to lie . . . and steal without holding these actions up as models to be followed in all instances, without creating, that is, a counter-morality." Riley Moore, a former slave in Montgomery county, recalled a white preacher who "would

\(^{31}\)Casey, *Amite County*, ii: 39, 247; Bethesda Baptist Church, August, September, 1863; Beulah Baptist Church, Tippah County (MSU), August 1865.
take a text tellin' us . . . Don't steal, be good to Marsa
an' Missus an' don't run away. Dey ought to have
been hung fo' preachin' false doctrin'.' Slaves recognized
the hypocrisy of a system that denied them an adequate
share of the product of their labor; according to scrip-
ture, "they shall not plant and another eat . . . mine
elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" [Is.
65:23].

The next most frequent charge, intoxication, accounts
for 10.5 percent of the total. Six of the 23 cases linked
alcohol and aggressive behavior (26.1 percent), twice as
high as the percentage among white males. Psychologists
have found that drinking enhances a "sense of personalized
power." No doubt many slaves vented their aggressive
feelings through alcohol consumption and temporarily over-
came feelings of powerlessness. It may be a testimony to
the strength of the black community that alcohol consump-
tion was not epidemic. Alcohol was readily available to
blacks with money to spend. One black man was accused of
selling liquor, but the charge was not sustained. In 1852
the Bethesda Baptist Church Conference excluded a black man

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32 George P. Routt, ed., The American Slave: A Com-
Ser. 1, vol. 9, p. 157 (quotation); Frederick Douglass, The
Narrative and Selected Writings, Michael Meyer, ed. (New
York, 1984), p. 122; Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, pp. 603-
08; Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-
American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom (New York,
for selling eggs and corn without his master's permission and using the proceeds to buy whiskey in Jackson. Another church excluded a white man for selling liquor to blacks and Indians on the Sabbath. Churches attempted to prevent selling and drinking of liquor at meetings. Bethany Baptist Church resolved to fine whites who sold liquor at church $30.00, while blacks guilty of the same offense would be lashed. Secular distinctions remained in evidence; as in the colonial period, "Whether one was fined or whipped for an offense was dependent upon status."\textsuperscript{33}

Bethany also resolved that a white man found guilty of drinking would pay $5.00 for each offense. A black man guilty of the same offense would get fourteen lashes for the first offense, and double that number for subsequent offenses "Provided that the Punishment Prescribed . . . shall not be inflicted in view of the church."\textsuperscript{34} Presumably if blacks had money to buy liquor, they could also have been fined rather than lashed.

The next most common charges were general allegations

\textsuperscript{33}Collins, "Alcohol Use," p. 11 (first quotation) Bethesda Baptist Church, February 1851; May 1852; Bethany Baptist Church, July 1846; July 1853; Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, pp. 643-45; Boles, Black Southerners, p. 89; First Methodist Church Conference, 1845; Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750 (New York and London, 1984), p. 128 (second quotation).

\textsuperscript{34}Bethany Baptist Church, July 1853.
of misconduct, immorality, or disorder. These charges comprise 9.9 percent of the total.

The allegations against black males discussed above constitute half of all charges made against them. Again, the remaining charges will be divided into general categories: individual behavior, infractions of the slave code (other than those already discussed), sex and family life, and amusements.

The category of individual behavior includes profanity, lying, fighting or quarreling, non-attendance and Sabbath-breaking. Allegations of profanity account for 7.3 percent of the total, slightly lower than the 10.6 percent against white males. The charge of lying comprises 5.8 percent of the total, higher than the 2.0 percent against white males. The charge of lying was often linked with the charge of theft. Allegations of fighting or quarreling account for only 2.1 percent of the black charges, but 8.6 percent of the white allegations. Two blacks were cited for non-attendance, one was charged with working on the Sabbath, and another for joining the Methodists.

Allegations involving sex or the family relationship include charges of adultery, fornication, desertion or bigamy, and wife abuse. The eleven charges of adultery compose 5.8 percent of the total, higher than the 1.2 percent (seven cases) against white males. Fornication allegations account for 2.6 percent (five cases) of black
cases, but only .5 percent of whites (three cases).
Another five black men were charged with either leaving
their wives or having two wives, while eight white men
faced these charges (1.3 percent). Allegations of wife
abuse account for 2.1 percent (four cases) against blacks,
and .67 percent (also four cases) against whites. While
the percentages are higher for black males in cases involv-
ing sex or family life, the actual numbers of whites and
black cases are remarkably similar.

Evangelicals attempted to support black family life,
but here they confronted one of the most troubling and
tragic consequences of slavery. In 1853 a slave man Nathan
owned by Isham Howze of Tennessee, became engaged to a
woman on a neighboring plantation. Nathan was compelled to
break his engagement, however, when his master moved to
Mississippi later that year. The forced separation
troubled Howze who wrote, "this evil of Slavery he [Nathan]
will have to bear . . . . It is an evil--the family rela-
tion--and the greatest evil in the institution. The evil
is in this--wives and husbands, parents and children & c.
can be separated, according to the will of the master. If
this could be avoided, " he believed, "slavery would be a
Small evil . . . ." 35

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35Howze Journal, December 30, 1853. On the separation
of slave spouses see Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in
Some evangelicals went to extraordinary lengths to keep slave families together. In 1835 John G. Jones purchased a slave woman. She and a slave belonging to his neighbor, J. W. Bryan, wished to marry, but Bryan refused to allow his slaves to marry off the plantation. Jones offered to sell Bryan the woman, but he refused to buy her. Bryan promised, however, to keep the slaves apart. Jones later sold the woman to a fellow preacher, "But when he came this morning to take her home she bursted into a great flood of grief and said 'she could not and would not leave her husband—that she would rather die.'" Jones was "utterly astonished" and asked who her husband was. She replied that she and Bryan's man were married and had been living together for three months! Jones "began to cry mightily to God . . . for His direction in the affair." To his relief, "though not without some difficulty," he persuaded Bryan to buy the woman "and let her and the man she loves get married . . . ." Jones gave thanks to God "that I have gotten pretty safely through . . . this delicate matter—and think I will try more than ever to keep clear of the curse of negro slavery . . . ." 36

As late as 1859 few slaves were married by a minister. In that year a Baptist editorialized that the

36 Jones Journal, April 7, 1835, Winans paid $725 for the husband of one of his slaves. He "was moved to this purchase by a desire to keep a husband and wife together." Winans Journal, January 26-31, 1854.
issue of slave marriages had received little attention in the state. He believed that marriages should be performed by a minister, and that such unions should be binding. "Our civil laws are here seriously perverted," he wrote, "and still unheeded--our religious institutions outraged, and still not investigated." Samuel Agnew, a Presbyterian minister who lived on his father's plantation, did not marry slave couples; one of the other slaves, "Big George," conducted the ceremonies. Only after the Civil War did Agnew perform marriages for former slaves. There is greater evidence of white ministers performing ceremonies after the war, though some did so in the antebellum period.\(^{37}\)

In 1865 James Lyon, a Presbyterian minister in Columbus, Mississippi, prepared a report calling for reforms of the laws regarding slave marriage for his church. His letter to Governor Charles Clark brought a favorable response, and Lyon drew up a reform bill which he sent to the state legislature, then meeting in Columbus. His bill died in committee. Lyon wrote, "It seems that there should be such reluctance to do any thing that would in the

\(^{37}\)Mississippi Baptist, October 13, 1859; Agnew Diary, May 28, 1864; December 30, 1869: January 27, 1870: Baptist State Convention Proceedings, 1848, p. 16; Nancy M. Robinson Diary (MDAH), March 1, 1866; May 26, 1866; Alexander A. Lomax Notebook (MDAH), December 30, 1865; January 6, 1866. John G. Jones performed ceremonies for slaves. See Jones Journal, p. 78. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, pp. 476-77; Gutman, Black Family, pp. 270-75.
slightest mitigate the abhorrence that the world has of negro slavery."\textsuperscript{35} Perhaps the legislators saw the futility of reforms in 1865 as the entire institution crumbled around them.

Eighteen allegations in the sample (9.4 percent) refer to other infractions of the slave code; these include disobedience, hiding runaways, rebellion, threatening a white person, and possession of a weapon. The largest number (fourteen cases) involve slaves who disobeyed their master. Frequently, the masters themselves brought charges before the conference. In 1858 John H. Oates, a member of Bethany Baptist Church, charged three of his slaves--Harrison, Pompey, and Minter--with disobedience and running away; all three were excluded without further investigation.\textsuperscript{39}

Four slaves in the sample were charged with hiding runaways. No doubt slaves saw this as an act of courage, loyalty, and friendship, rather than a religious transgression.\textsuperscript{40}

The charges of rebellion are vague, but probably refer to slaves who ran away to Federal troops. Other charges were of a more serious nature. In 1823 a black male member of Bethany Baptist Church was excluded for

\textsuperscript{35}Lyon Journal, pp. 112-14 (quotation on p. 114).

\textsuperscript{39}Bethany Baptist Church, May 1858.

\textsuperscript{40}Boles, Black Southerners, p. 42.
threatening his mistress. In 1827 a male member of Zion Hill Baptist Church was found guilty of possessing a knife; whether or not he threatened someone with the weapon is unclear, but such charges show rare but significant examples of black resistance.\footnote{Bethany Presbyterian and Zion Hill Baptist Church records in Casey, \textit{Amite County}, II: 315-52.}

The final category of amusements shows that slave men enjoyed some respite from their labors. Nine slaves (4.7 percent) were charged with dancing, while one slave was charged with playing the fiddle. Three others faced charges of playing cards.

Evidence demonstrates that blacks were disciplined at a rate higher than their percentage of the membership in some churches. The sample also shows how the disciplinary process sometimes worked as a control device. Still, less than half the charges (41.4 percent) were for offenses peculiar to or encouraged by the slave system,\footnote{Charges made in support of the slave code include running away, theft, disobedience, hiding runaways, rebellion, threatening mistress, and possession of a weapon.} and considering the length of time under consideration, the total number of cases was quite small. Evangelical support of the black family represented a more positive aspect of the system.

In this sample, only 9.1 percent of the charges were brought against black females. An examination of the
charges against black women shows that the most common allegation made against black women was adultery with eighteen examples (17.8 percent). The same charge accounted for only 1.3 percent of the charges against white women (two cases), and 5.8 percent (eleven cases) of those against black males. An additional 8.9 percent (nine cases) involved fornication while 7.9 percent (eight cases) concerned illegitimate births. An additional 2 percent (two cases) were against women who left their husbands. Taken together, these account for over one quarter of all charges against black women. In part, the high number of such cases against black women resulted from the slave code, which denied the legitimacy of the marriage bond. Perhaps more importantly, blacks held different ethical standards for unmarried women than whites; as historian Herbert Gutman wrote, "many slaves distinguished between prenuptial intercourse and 'licentiousness' and believed prenuptial intercourse and pregnancy compatible with settled marriage . . . ." Gutman's conclusion that blacks found no contradiction between prenuptial intercourse and faithful marriage is supported by the small number of cases against black women who violated the marriage bond.43

The contradictions between the evangelical belief in the sanctity of marriage and the realities of the slave

43Gutman, Black Family, pp. 63 (quotation), 61-62, 64-71.
system troubled congregations who heard testimony from black women. In 1824 the Bethany Baptist Church Conference asked another church to send delegates "to assist them in a difficulty relative to the marriage of a black sister . . . ." Conferences called for such assistance only in especially difficult cases, and the request demonstrates the importance the church attached to the case.\textsuperscript{44}

In 1849 the Bethlehem Baptist Church considered a difficult case involving a slave women belonging to James Woodson. She wished to join the church but had been excluded from another church because "she was ignorant at the time, that she was married to a man that had another wife." According to standard practice, she could not join another Baptist church without a letter of dismissal, but the members of Bethlehem sympathized with her and agreed "that the cause for which she was excluded was such as this church could not see was founded on justice." She was admitted to membership.\textsuperscript{45}

The second most common charge against black women was the same as that for black men--theft. No such allegation was made against a white female. There were fourteen such charges in the sample (13.9 percent). Since many husbands

\textsuperscript{44}Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, pp. 465-68; Sobel, Trabelin' On, pp. 229-31; Bethany Baptist Church, April 1824; Gutman, Black Family, pp. 63 (quotation), 61-62, 64-71, 18, 20-21, 35-36, 151-55, 158-59.

\textsuperscript{45}Bethlehem Baptist Church, November 1849; Gutman, Black Family, pp. 18-23.
lived on different plantations, the black woman was respon-
sible for providing for her family on a daily basis. Also,
because of their jobs, black women may have had greater
opportunity to take from the white folks.

The next most frequent allegations against black
females were general charges of disorder, misconduct, and
immorality (seventeen cases, 16.8 percent).

Running away accounted for 11.9 percent (twelve
cases) of the total charges against black women, a per-
centage only slightly lower than that for men (17.3 per-
cent). A surprising number of females ran away from their
master. Genovese estimated that at least 20 percent of
runaways were female. In this sample, a higher percentage
of runaways were female—28.3 percent. If we consider only
those slaves who fled during the Civil War when escape was
easier and the chances of success were very high, the
percentage rises to 30.3 percent.\(^\text{46}\)

The charges already discussed account for approxi-
mately 80 percent of those made against black women. The
remaining allegations can be divided into three categories:
other violations of the slave code, individual behavior,
and amusements.

Family*, p. 265. See also Clarence L. Mohr, "Before Sherman:
Georgia Blacks and the War Effort, 1861-1864," *Journal of
Southern History* XLV (August 1979), pp. 331-52.
Only four of the remaining allegations (4.0 percent) fall under other violations of the slave code. One woman was charged with harboring a runaway, another with disobedience, another with possession of a weapon, and another with striking her mistress. The latter case occurred in November 1865, and illustrates the tensions prevailing at the war's end.47

The case of the woman's slapping her mistress is one of many examples revealed here of slave women behaving in surprising and forceful ways. The general category of individual behavior contains other examples. Two black women were charged with assault. The case of Ursula provides a glimpse into the slave community. In May 1849 a committee appointed by Bethany Presbyterian Church gave its report on Ursula, owned by J. Dixion, who was charged with criminal assault against a fellow slave. On the morning of March 10, Ursula and several other slaves were working in their master's field, supervised by a slave driver. Ursula urged two other slaves, Charlotte and Mary, to help her kill the driver with their hoes. They refused to join her in the attack, even though she prodded them throughout the day. That night "she encouraged the same persons to make assault upon the slave person with axes . . . ." Despite Ursula's obvious hatred for the driver, she was unable to

47 Zion Hill Baptist Church Records in Casey, Amite County, II: 325-52.
convince others to help her, and she made no physical assault.\textsuperscript{48}

In June, Ursula pled innocent to the charge of criminal assault. The conference examined several other witnesses including Dixion and five slaves before finding her guilty. Ursula "then acknowledged her guilt [in encouraging an attack] and said she was deeply sorry and had prayed and would pray for forgiveness." Despite the severity of the charge, her punishment was light; the session "admonished her of her sin" and warned her against similar conduct. Many slaves of both sexes expressed their hatred of drivers and threatened to kill them, while some actually accomplished the deed.\textsuperscript{49}

There is one charge in the records against a black woman for fighting. It is the only example of one slave's bringing charges against another. Significantly, it occurred in 1816 when blacks enjoyed relative equality in the biracial churches. In March of that year, Seleh, a member of Zion Hill Baptist Church, charged her fellow member Hetty with "quarreling with her for giving her abusive language." The conference excluded Hetty in May after a careful consideration of the case.\textsuperscript{50} The final charge in this category is intoxication. Only one black

\textsuperscript{48} Bethany Church Records, Ibid., II: 189-90.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., Genevose, Roll, Jordan, Roll, pp. 371-373.

\textsuperscript{50} Zion Hill records in Casey, Amite County, II: 317.
woman was charged with drinking, the smallest number for
any group.

The general category of amusements contains only two
allegations, both for dancing. Other sources attest to the
popularity of dancing among slaves.\(^1\) Perhaps whites
turned a blind eye to the pastime, which seems unlikely, or
perhaps most women who joined churches gave up dancing.

Black women were disciplined at a higher rate than
white women and were far more likely to be charged with a
sexual offense. The sample shows black women in a variety
of roles—attempting to assault a hated driver, striking a
mistress, possessing a weapon, hiding a runaway, stealing
food or other goods from whites—roles that show they were
not simply passive victims.

Evidence suggest that black church members took the
disciplinary process and their church membership seriously.
When Sarah, a slave member of Fellowship Baptist Church,
was charged with having an illegitimate child, she appeared
before the conference and "stated that she knew she had
done wrong that she hoped she had obtained forgiveness from
the Lord for her Transgression and Requested the church to
forgive her." Her request was granted. In 1858 Stephen, a
male slave charged with lying at Concord Baptist Church,
"acknowledged his offence and begs the church to bear with
him as he is very sorry for what he has done. The church

\(^1\)Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, pp. 569-70.
agreed to bear with him."\(^{52}\) Whites considered cases against blacks carefully and sincerely wanted to help them lead a Christian life. Both blacks and whites had duties to perform, duties mandated by God and necessary for the creation of an orderly community.

Significantly, conferences did not automatically accept a white person's word against a black. For example, in 1842 and again in 1844 the Concord Baptist Church Conference found Carolina innocent of charges made against her. When Lewis, a member of Academy Baptist Church, denied the charge against him, he was exonerated.\(^{53}\) Again, these examples testify that the conferences attempted to treat blacks fairly, carefully considered their individual cases, and listened to black testimony with respect.

In some churches with large black memberships, slaves held separate services and met in separate conferences where they handled their own disciplinary cases under white supervision. Blacks at Concord held a separate conference beginning in 1845. In 1848 the white secretary made this entry into the church records: "Held conference with the Black members. The case of Tony was taken up [charged with gross misconduct] and he excluded [sic] . . . . Jack

\(^{52}\) Fellowship Baptist Church, January, February 1857; Concord Baptist Church, March 1858; Spring Hill Baptist Church, October 1866; Salem Baptist Church, November 1819.

\(^{53}\) Concord Baptist Church, December 1841; May 1842, January, February 1844, October, November 1846; September 1847; Academy Baptist Church, July, September 1849.
servant of Bro. S T Potts was reported as guilty of swearing and other misconduct on the vote being taken he was excluded . . . ." Blacks at the First Baptist Church in Louisville were given a separate conference in 1848; when blacks were charged with transgressions, they appointed black committees to investigate. In one such case a black committee visited Hardin, a slave charged with gross unchristian conduct. Hardin acknowledged "keeping out of the way of his master and refusing to be corrected by him, the charge of disobeying him in any other Respect he denies and wishes his mistress to be seen to know the certainty of the fact . . . ." The blacks asked a white man to interview his mistress. Her testimony was not recorded, but the blacks excluded Hardin at their next conference.54

While blacks may have felt more confident of a fair hearing from their peers, some blacks boldly stated their opposition to verdicts from white conferences. In 1852 the Antioch Baptist Church conference charged Abram with adultery. He told the committee "that he believed, there was none of the male members of Antioch Church, but what was guilty of the same act . . . he was Said to be guilty of . . . ." In 1832 New Hope Baptist Church granted a

54 Concord Baptist Church, May 1845; August 1848; First Baptist Church, May 1848; May, June 1849 (quotation); September 1849. See also Clear Creek Baptist Church, January 20, 1845; Bethesda Baptist Church, August 1849; March 1850; April 1854.
slave, Carey, the right to preach in public, but in 1834 they withdrew that right after concluding that he "was not called to the Ministration of the word. After words of insult offered to the church he was excluded from fellowship." In 1832 Peter, a member of the same church, was charged with gambling; he "did not deny gambling," but more importantly, "he did not appear to impress any sorrow but said he did not intend to come to church, whereupon he was excluded." Some slaves, at least, took an active part in the process, and boldly expressed their opinions, others defended the validity of their gifts, even if whites denied them, and others simply withdrew from the biracial congregations rather than change their behavior. Slaves were not simply passive participants, nor did whites expect them to be.

While the application of the findings here to the South as a whole awaits further study, this sample clearly contradicts many earlier analyses of the disciplinary process. Disciplinary cases in Mississippi churches did not decrease during the antebellum period but reached their highest number from 1850 to 1860. The study also suggests that no discrimination existed against women in the

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55 Frances Allen Cabiness and James Allen Cabiness, "Religion in Ante-Bellum Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History (October 1944), p. 215 (first quotation); New Hope Baptist Church, Evans Memorial Library, Aberdeen, Mississippi, June 1832; June 1834 (second quotation); March 1832 (third quotation).
process. Like most men, most women were charged with minor
defenses. Indeed, if a double standard existed it operated
against white males and blacks, who were disciplined far
out of proportion to their numbers.

The process was sometimes used as a white control
device against slaves, as the large numbers of allegations
for running away and disobedience attest. But the process
was also used to give religious blacks an arena for moral
growth, supported black family life, and was sometimes
under black control in segregated services. When evangeli-
cals adopted the Biblical defense of slavery, they agreed
that certain duties were required of both slave and master.
The incredibly low number of cases in the records against
masters who violated these precepts may suggest that blacks
were held more strictly accountable, but if conditions for
slaves improved in the antebellum period, as most
historians agree, then evangelicals must receive much of
the credit for that improvement. The large number of cases
against blacks for violations of "white" concepts of proper
sexual behavior cannot properly be considered discrimina-
tory, since whites in large numbers were also tried for
the same offenses. When blacks chose to join the churches,
they vowed to uphold its teachings. White evangelicals
cannot be blamed for expecting them to do so, or for refus-
ing to accept black definitions of proper sexual behavior
when these contradicted evangelical beliefs. Clearly,
evangelicals of both races struggled to uphold the strict evangelical moral code. It is surprising not that so many failed, but that so many others succeeded.
Chapter IV
Let Both Grow Together: The
Biracial Evangelical Experience, 1800-1860

Black participation in mixed congregations has been noted in previous chapters, but the significance of the biracial church in the South and in Mississippi throughout the antebellum period merits a closer examination of these churches. As John B. Boles wrote, "Historians have sufficiently recognized neither the role of the slave in the so-called white churches nor the role of those churches in the lives of the slaves." Blacks joined Mississippi churches from their inceptions, and, until the 1830s, most churches were remarkably egalitarian. The exact nature of this egalitarianism and its limits will be discussed below. As white evangelicals embraced slavery, and as more slaves joined the churches, barriers, both physical and psychological, began to rise between the races. Often congregations separated entirely, sharing perhaps a minister and a building, but not meeting together as a congregation. The eventual division of the churches along racial lines after the Civil War was a logical outcome of this trend. The egalitarian current within the churches waned but survived in many churches and in the hearts of many evangelicals. The following discussion will show that the biracial
religious experience was a diverse one throughout the antebellum period.¹

As noted in Chapter 1, blacks often joined whites in organizing churches on the frontier and were treated much the same as white members. Blacks and whites were received into the church in the same ways, either by letter or experience. People who joined by letter moved their membership from another church, while those who joined by experience were new converts who related their conversion experience before the entire congregation. In Baptist churches prospective members related their conversion experience publicly, and members then voted whether or not to receive the individual based on the experience and on the convert's understanding of the faith. Presbyterian churches also held conferences or sessions where prospective members publicly related their experience and where their knowledge was tested. Methodists did not require a public recitation of the conversion experience, but, as noted in Chapter I, the experience was a crucial part of Methodist lovefeasts, and class meetings. The Mars Hill Baptist Church records show that "Sisselea, a member of coulour," joined the church by letter, and along with twenty other members subscribed to the church's "covenant articles of faith & Rules of Deseplin . . . ." Churches

examined black letters of dismissal with the same care they gave to whites. When a slave, James, asked to join Salem Baptist Church he told the conference that "he belonged to the African Church Lexican [Lexington] Kentucky but had no letter - was advised to remain as he is at present - Clerk ordered to write to . . . Lexington to ascertain the facts and procure a letter."  

New converts related their conversion experience and then received the ordinance of baptism. In 1813 "Sister Lizie, a woman of color," joined Jerusalem Baptist Church by relating her experience. The members of Clear Creek Baptist Church "heard the Christian experience of Virgin a Coloured boy belonging to Mr. Howell who was unanimously received & baptized." Blacks and whites were sometimes baptized together; in 1812 the members of Zion Hill Baptist Church met "at the water side" and baptized two white women and "Jacob a man of color." The centrality of the

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2 Albert E. Casey, comp., Amite County, Mississippi, 1699-1865 (2 vols., Birmingham, Ala., 1948), II: 413 (first quotation), 316; Salem Baptist Church, Jefferson County, September 1830 (second quotation); August 1823; April 1826. David Bailey erred when he wrote, "Diverging from the tendency in Virginia and the Carolinas, few Baptist churches required evidence of conversion experiences from their communicants . . . ." See Bailey, Shadow on the Church: Southwestern Evangelical Religion and the Issue of Slavery, 1783-1860 (Ithaca and London, 1985), p. 36.
conversion experience for evangelicals made the relating of the experience especially significant.\(^3\)

If congregations were not satisfied with a prospective member's conversion or understanding of the fundamentals of the faith, their membership might be delayed. For example, "Bob a servant of Mr. Waddell & Ben a Servant of Mr. Harris, who were taken under the care of Session at the last communion again presented themselves" to the members of Montrose Presbyterian Church. The blacks had "a full & free conversation with the Session" and "it was thought prudent to admit them into full membership . . . ." Bob and Ben were willing to undergo such examinations until their membership was granted.\(^4\) Their experience illustrates that white evangelicals often saw slaves as individuals, important additions to the religious community, whose full understanding of membership was vital, especially considering the high moral expectations evangelicals placed on new members regardless of color. When new converts gave their witness before other Christians, their experience was validated, and the common conversion experience united evangelicals of both races.

\(^3\)Casey, Amite County, II: 215 (first quotation), 315, 316 (third and fourth quotations); Clear Creek Baptist Church, Washington, Miss., April 24, 1836 (second quotation); John B. Boles, The Great Revival, 1787-1805 (Lexington, Ky., 1972), p. 131.

\(^4\)Montrose Church, Jasper County (MDAH), October 12, 1844 (quotations); Concord Baptist Church, May 1843.
Evangelicals cherished the memory of their conversion and baptism. Autobiographies by white evangelicals contain detailed descriptions of their salvation, and obituaries in the religious press routinely carried information on the conversion of the deceased. The anniversary of the experience often provided an opportunity for soul-searching or thanksgiving. Perhaps the event remained so fresh in their minds because they so often shared it with others. As Anthony F. C. Wallace observed, any opportunity to "relive" the experience was a part of the maintenance process.\(^5\)

Although the evidence for blacks is less plentiful, the slave narratives contain examples of black Christians who placed special emphasis on their conversion and baptism and remembered them in detail. Pet Franks, an ex-slave in Monroe County, recalled "I knewed I had 'ligion when I got baptized. Dey took me out in de river and it took two of...

dem to put me under but when I come up I told dem to turn
me loose I believe I could walk right on top of de water."
Westly Little of Smith County vividly recalled his conver-
sion at a biracial antebellum church service:

We went to church at de white folks meetin' house. One Sunday when I wuz jes' a strip ob a
boy de preacher preached on how man wuz made from
de dust o' de earth an' would return to dust. I
wuz converted at dat sermon. He open de do's
[doors] ob de Church, but nobody went up, den he
ask if any ob de darkies in de back part ob de
Church wanted to jine. I wanted to so bad but
didn't go. I worried all de way home. I wuz all
tore up an' went an' tole Miss Sally [his mis-
tress]. She talked to me an' told me to pray an'
jine de nex' time which I did.⁶

As evangelicals of both races looked back over their lives
the conversion experience stood in high relief.

Wesley Little turned to his mistress for spiritual
advice and consolation, as did other slaves. Little also
received religious instruction from his mistress; he said,
"I can remember yet how's Miss Sally taught me de Lords
prayer. I wuz powerful little an' has prayed dat prayer a
many a time since den." George Washington Ramsay
remembered that his master often read the Bible to him, and
when asked what religious songs he sang, he produced "my
old mistis' hymbook." Manda Boggan desribed her master,
Isham Brown of Simpson County, "He wuz a preacher an' sho'

⁶George P. Rawick, ed., The American Slave: A Com-
posite Biography (Westport, Conn. and London, 1977), Supp.,
Series 1, vol. 7, Part 2, p. 797 (first quotation); vol. 8,
Part 3, p. 1321 (second quotation); vol. 9, Part 4, p.
did live his religion, an' taught us slaves ter walk in de straight an' narrow way." Brown often led services himself in the quarters: "Eber Sunday mornin' Mars went to de slave cabins an' read de bible an' prayed. He come in de cabins wid a smile." The slaves were stricken by his death: "One ob de saddest days of us' lives wuz when Ole Mars died. He wuz de bes' friend us all had or eber will hab." Masters, too, often showed real concern for their slaves' salvation, a concern that was often expressed as slaves lay ill or dying. Methodist Bishop Robert Paine had such a relationship with a trusted slave. His daughter described the episode:

One old family servant, to whom he was much attached, was very low with the measles. He nursed her day and night, and when he discovered she must die, he informed her of her danger, [and] prayed with her . . . Just before her last she did raise her hand toward heaven, and said in a feeble voice: 'Master, all is right!' My mother, who witnessed the scene, said father shouted and praised God for such a victory."

These examples are not intended to suggest that such scenes were typical, but only that religion sometimes served as a bridge between black and white evangelicals. The individual nature of evangelical religion encouraged whites to see

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blacks as persons with souls equal to their own. As Paine's example illustrates, some masters celebrated a slave's conversion. Ideally, slaves were a part of the master's family, and by extension, a part of the family of God.

The conception of the biracial religious community as a family of God is reflected in the use of familial nomenclature by evangelicals. Ideally, secular distinctions disappeared once members were ushered into the fellowship; in the words of St. Paul, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" [Gal. 3:28]. The apostle, of course, expressed an ideal seldom if ever achieved in any Christian community, but the egalitarian spirit clearly existed in the frontier biracial churches. Bethlehem Baptist Church, like many others, demanded that "The appellation of brother shall be used in the church by members in their address to each other." As earlier examples demonstrate, blacks and whites were often called "Brother" and "Sister" in evangelical churches. While the use of familial nomenclature does not imply complete equality, it does suggest that white evangelicals

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*Bethlehem Baptist Church, Choctaw County (MSU), Rules of Decorum 1835; Boles, Black Southerners, p. 160; New Hope Baptist Church, Monroe County (Evans Memorial Library), Rules of Decorum, 1819.*
recognized that blacks had souls equal before God despite the badge of color and the bonds of servitude.

Another ritual, extending the right hand of fellowship, followed baptism. When a person joined the church, the members filed past, shook the new member's hand, and welcomed him or her into the Christian fellowship. The act was an important symbol of acceptance, a public declaration that this individual now belonged to the religious community. When "Adam a black brother" joined the Louisville Baptist Church he "came forward and related to the church what the Lord had done for him, the church being satisfied, unanimously received him a member and extended to him the right hand of fellowship." A comparison of his reception with that of a white woman shows that blacks received an equal reception: "Sister Susanah Bary came forward and related to the church what the Lord had done for her, the church being satisfied gave her the right hand of fellowship." An 1851 revival at Liberty Baptist Church added several new members, both black and white. Their Sunday baptism was followed by an emotional service that demonstrated the symbolic importance of the right hand of fellowship. After the baptism, the new members and the congregation returned to the church building "where bro. Armstrong preached, after which br. Denson delivered a short lecture to the church, the members just baptized, to moaners [mourners] and also to sinners. The church then
gave the right hand of membership to the members received
during this meeting, and to moaning Souls (and one another)
the hand in token of our renewed covenant in prayer." In
many churches, the right hand of fellowship was extended to
both blacks and whites throughout the antebellum period.⁹

Of course, racial distinctions existed even in the
early churches. While blacks and whites attended the same
services, blacks generally sat in the rear of the church or
to one side. William Winans's journal reveals that
biracial services were common in the early Methodist
Church. At an emotional biracial class meeting held in
1821, two whites and three blacks offered themselves for
membership. In 1823 Meredith Renneau delivered a sermon to
a biracial congregation "followed by singing, prayer and
some noise."¹⁰ In services such as this one, characterized
by singing, shouting, and emotional intensity, the exchange
between blacks and whites took place. Segregated seating
in a small log church did not prevent such interaction
between the races.

⁹First Baptist Church, Louisville, Miss. (SBHC),
August 1836 (first and second quotations); Liberty Baptist
Church, Jackson, Miss. (SBHC), August 1851 (third quota-
tion); Mars Hill Baptist Church, Summit, Miss. (SBHC),
October 15, 1864; East Fork Baptist Church Records in
Casey, Amite County, II: 21.

¹⁰Winans Journal (Cain Archives), June 1, 1821;
February 22, 1821; July 10, 1821; June 14, 1823 (first
quotation).
Winans's journal also shows that separate services for blacks were fairly common even before 1830. In 1821 Winans "met the black Society" in Washington, Mississippi, "and baptized three of their children . . . ." Later the same year at Washington he "met the blacks in love feast order" and observed that "Many spoke well." Sometimes whites attended such services and joined their black brethren in worship. In 1823 "we met the Blacks at the M[eeting] House" in Woodville, "and held love feast. This was quite a refreshing season. Many of these poor people appeared happier than kings (unless the kings new [sic] the love of Jesus) and some whites that were present were very happy also."\textsuperscript{11} Obviously, blacks and whites found the same message edifying. Even the services aimed particularly at blacks were far more than simply "slaves obey your masters"; such a sermon would not have created a "refreshing season" among either blacks or whites.

Not only did blacks listen to sermons from white ministers, whites heard sermons from black preachers. Joseph Willis, a free black and a licensed Baptist preacher, began his ministry in the Natchez region in 1798. He moved to Louisiana in 1804, organized the first Baptist church in the state, and served as the first moderator of

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., February 11 (first and second quotation), April 1, August 12, July 22, 1821 (third and fourth quotations); July 22, 1823 (fifth and sixth); Robert B. Alexander Diary (MDAH), March 12, 1854.
the Louisiana Baptist Association. The passage of Poindexter's Code in 1822 temporarily interfered with the activities of black preachers since it required that services be conducted by a white minister. In 1822, for example, the members of Zion Hill Baptist Church considered licensing Smart, a slave, to "exercise his gift" to preach but delayed their decision "in consequence of an Act passed in the Legislature." Winans's revision of the Code permitted blacks to preach, and in 1826 Zion Hill allowed Smart to "exercise his gift within the bounds of the church as far as the Lord may direct him." A year later the church allowed him to exercise his gift outside the church. Additional restrictions were imposed on black preachers in the early 1830s as a consequence of Nat Turner's rebellion. The new laws forbade preaching by free blacks and allowed slaves to preach only on their master's plantation and prohibited the attendance of slaves from other plantations. In 1838 the church asked Smart's master if he would allow the preacher "to exercise his gift in public . . . ." His master did not object "if the laws of the state did not forbid it . . . ." After considering this question the church concluded "that it was not agreeable to the laws of the land . . . ." 12

After the late 1820s, black preachers increasingly suffered from discriminatory laws, white suspicion, and harassment. In 1825 the Hopewell Baptist Church allowed "Br. John . . . to sing & pray and exhort among the people of his own color . . . ." Two years later the church imposed restrictions on John's ministry. In one instance he was charged with striking a fellow slave with a whip. In 1829 the church ordered him to stop preaching because of "Sunday reports against" him. The Bogue Chitto Baptist Church allowed "Bro. Jessee" to preach. He became so popular that nearby Salem Baptist Church requested that he be allowed to preach to them. In 1827 he was cleared of an adultery charge, but dismissed from the church in 1828. In 1830 the New Hope Baptist Church resolved that the slave preacher Peter could "no longer exercise in publick, further than to sing, [and] pray amongst his own colour . . . .", and in 1832 he was charged with gambling. In 1832 the church allowed Cary to preach within the church, but two years later they questioned his gift and concluded that he was not called to the ministry. They allowed another slave, Jerry, to preach until 1839 when they determined that the state laws prohibited slaves from preaching "any where else but at home;" thereafter they stopped any slave

Casey, Amite County, II: 315, 321 (first and second quotations), 323 (third quotation), 324, 330 (remaining quotations).
member from preaching. In 1853 the Magnolia Baptist Church charged that a black "by the name of Jeffrey (Styling himself a Baptist minister) has . . . been preaching to the colored population of Port Gibson and vicinity, teaching strange doctrine." Whether or not Jeffrey's "strange doctrine" was revolutionary in nature is unclear. Whites were especially disturbed by slave preachers like Alfred Oates who was charged for "holding Publick meetings and teaching the Collard People that it was not Right to obey there oners [sic]." 13

Other blacks, however, carried on successful ministries even after the 1830s. In 1833 the Methodist Annual Conference ordained Gloucester Simpson, a free black, who subsequently emigrated to Liberia. In August 1845 Winans "Walked to Midway, and heard Isaac, a Mulatto slave, deliver a very interesting discourse. I have heard Presiding Elders who could not equal his performance." Issac preached to biracial congregations; Winans wrote of a later service, "Isaac . . . addressed the coloured people (of whom there was a great crowd) much to the gratification

13Hopewell Church, Franklin County (MBHC), November 1825 (first quotation); July, November 1827; October 1829 (second quotation); Bogue Chitto Baptist Church, Pike County (MBHC), September, December 1827; February 1828; New Hope Baptist Church, December 1830 (third quotation), March, June 1832; June, November 1834; September 1839 (fourth quotation); Magnolia Baptist Church, Claiborne County (SBHC), April 1853 (fifth quotation); First Baptist Church, Louisville, August 1851; Bethany Baptist Church, Jefferson Davis County (SBHC), June 1858 (final quotation).
of many of the white people who heard him." A state Baptist newspaper praised Jack Hinton, a slave preacher, in an 1858 obituary. Hinton, a North Carolina native, came to Columbus in 1836 with his master. He was a member of the Baptist church there, and "recognized as a preacher to the blacks." He was considered "earnest and effective," and the whites knew that "His influence with the negroes was almost incredible, while with the white people he was esteemed and highly respected."\(^{14}\)

Some black ministers managed to walk a fine line that allowed them to carry on an open ministry, but the number of licensed black preachers apparently declined after the 1830s. An 1860 article in the Methodist press stated:

Negro preachers were formerly very common in the South, and many of them were very useful. We have listened with delight and profit to many a sermon from preachers as sable as ever came from Africa. Indeed, there are many of them yet, preaching more or less every sabbath. . . . Had there been no anti-slavery party, no free states, so called, no fanaticism, no abolition excitement, this state of things . . . would have increased and improved. But now it is on the decline. But few colored men are now allowed to preach. It cannot be otherwise, under the circumstances.

\(^{14}\)Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi*, pp. 219, 220, 223, 224, 234; John G. Jones, *A Complete History of Methodism As Connected with the Mississippi Conference* . . . 2 vols. (Baton Rouge, 1966), II: 300; Beulah Baptist Church, Tippah County (SBHC), May 1859; Winans Journal, August 3 (first quotation), August 24 (second quotation), 1845; *Mississippi Baptist*, August 26, 1858 (remaining quotations); Robinson Diary, January 1, 1859.
White discrimination prevented most blacks from preaching to biracial congregations after 1830 and encouraged the growth of the "invisible church" in the quarters where black preachers continued to exert great influence.\textsuperscript{15}

Discrimination against black preachers is one aspect of changing attitudes toward blacks in the biracial churches. As noted previously, many churches accepted blacks on relatively equal terms throughout the antebellum period; they worshipped together, were baptized together, received the right hand of fellowship from one another, and used familial terms in their address. In the majority of churches, however, barriers between the races rose in the late 1820s and 1830s. In a variety of ways black members were treated differently from whites, and separate services became common.

Beginning in the late 1820s, many churches provided separate accommodations for blacks partly as a result of growing black attendance. In 1829 the Bethany Baptist Church Conference "Took under consideration the situation of the Black people who attend preaching at this church . . ." They appointed a committee of five white men "to devise a plan of building an addition to our Meeting house for their accommodation . . . ." Their plan was not

recorded, but perhaps it resembled Mountain Creek Baptist Church which had "an enclosure the whole length of one side with an opening through which the slaves could see and listen to the services." In such churches, blacks and whites continued to hear the same sermon, but the physical separation of the races and the suggestion of black inferiority that accompanied it show a waning of the early churches's egalitarianism.

In most churches, the building of a shed or gallery provided only a temporary solution. In 1839 the state Baptist Convention found "that some few of our Churches, and some of our Methodist friends, have adopted the plan of holding separate meetings for the blacks; and that such a course is generally attended with an increased interest among them . . . ." Separate services for blacks resulted both from a desire on the part of whites to physically separate blacks, and from a black preference for segregated services. No doubt blacks preferred a segregated service to a discriminatory biracial one. Like

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16Bethany Church, May 1829 (first and second quotations); J. L. Boyd, Sr., "History of the Baptists in Rankin County," Journal of Mississippi History XII (July 1950), p. 165 (third quotation); Z. T. Leavell and T. J. Bailey, A Complete History of Mississippi Baptists, From the Earliest Times 2 vols. (Jackson, 1904), I: 77; Jesse Laney Boyd, A Popular History of the Baptists in Mississippi (Jackson, 1930), p. 70; Mt. Moriah Baptist Church (MSU), April 1848; Bethesda Baptist Church, November 1848.

many whites, blacks preferred an emotional worship style and a congregational ministry. As more and more churches abandoned these traditional styles of worship, blacks preferred segregated services where they could exert more control over the services. Perhaps, too, slaves, who preferred more emotionally demonstrative services, felt inhibited by the presence of whites and hence preferred separate worship.

The number of churches holding separate worship services for blacks increased throughout the antebellum period. Whites occasionally consulted blacks before holding segregated services; for example, the white members of Clear Creek Baptist Church "met . . . to confer with the Black Brothers and Sisters . . . to make some Raingment [arrangement] for them . . . William Whilden a greed to supley them as they had to look up to the church for there surport for preaching [sic]." Whilden, who also preached to whites at Clear Creek, had great success attracting black members. Blacks and whites often heard the same preacher, though occasionally a white lay speaker ministered to blacks. Typically, the white congregation met on Sunday morning, and the blacks gathered together in the afternoon.¹⁵

¹⁵Clear Creek Church, January 20, 1845 (first quotation); May 1846; Concord Baptist Church, Choctaw County (MSU), January 1846; February 1854; Academy Baptist Church, July 1848; April 1850; Dr. John Hunter Diary, p. 2 in Jackson First Presbyterian Church Papers (MDAH); Bethesda
The degree of control whites exercised over the separate black services varied. Liberty Baptist Church appointed a group of seven white men "to attend said meetings and act as police . . . ." At Concord Baptist Church "Brethren be requested as many as can do so to be present during service to them." Probably few black meetings went unsupervised since state law required that whites be present at such services. At the Aberdeen Baptist Church slaves sat in the rear of the auditorium until their numbers grew too large. Blacks then had separate services and heard both black and white preachers. Supervision seems to have been light; "About once a month members of the white church were appointed to attend the negro church meetings." According to Dr. J. M. Heard of West Point, blacks attended both the morning service and a later segregated service; he wrote that "The negroes all belonged to the same church with their owners, sitting in the rear of the church at 11 o'clock, and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon they had the whole church to themselves."\(^{19}\)

Church records and the slave narratives indicate that most slaves attended church with their masters. An 1851

\(^{19}\)Liberty Church, June 1860; Concord Church, February 1854; Sydnor, \textit{Slavery in Mississippi}, p. 55; W. A. Evans, \textit{A History of First Baptist Church, Aberdeen, Mississippi, 1837 to 1945} . . . (Aberdeen, 1945), p. 25; "Reminiscences & Stories: No. 11, Dr. J. M. Heard" (Evans Memorial Library).
membership list from Bethesda Baptist Church shows that of thirty-seven slave members, twenty-one belonged to white members of the same church. The growing black membership in the biracial churches resulted in part from the growing wealth of the white evangelicals; for example, Edgar and William Potts requested letters of dismissal from Concord Baptist Church for themselves, their wives, and twenty-one slaves. Perhaps the wealthier evangelicals were more anxious to segregate themselves from their slaves than their poorer brethren. Some more affluent evangelicals attempted to separate themselves from their less fortunate brethren of both races by buying or renting pews. The Methodist Conference condemned the practice in 1838, but debate continued into the 1850s. When the Holly Springs Methodist Church opened its new building in 1837 the stewards voted to rent pews. The presiding elder, Robert B. Alexander, objected on the grounds that pew rental discriminated against the poor. When the stewards overruled him, he rented most of the choice pews himself and distributed them among the poor.\textsuperscript{20} Like separate pews,
separate services were another indication of the increasing stratification among evangelicals and the declining egalitarianism.

While most of these separate services were supervised and held in the same church building used by whites, other black congregations grew large enough to support a minister and build their own churches. An African Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at Aberdeen had 437 members in 1845, the largest congregation in North Mississippi. In 1847 the congregation built a church to seat 300 people. An African Methodist Episcopal Church also functioned in Vicksburg from 1846 to 1858. An Episcopal priest in Jackson, the Reverend James W. Hoskins, wrote, "I have ... made several attempts to get a congregation of negroes, but have failed because they have a house of their own, where they go to make as much noise as they please. They do not believe in a religion that is not noisy."21 These quasi-independent churches existed only in the state's towns and therefore did not reach most slaves who lived in rural areas. As important and visible as these churches were, they affected only a few thousand blacks at most. The

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majority of blacks worshipped either in segregated or biracial services.

As the quote from the Episcopal priest suggests, slaves sought to control their worship services, and they held to the traditional ways of the early church. As more white evangelicals and ministers abandoned shouting, congregational singing, and active involvement by the laity in worship, blacks who attempted to exercise their gifts in the noisy traditional ways in biracial services were criticized. At an 1853 service attended by Winans, "There was a good deal of disorder, which I reproves severely." On another occasion Winans wrote, "When I was closing a negro man in the Gallery made a great noise, which occasioned much bustle among the whites." John G. Jones found that a black woman who shouted during his sermon so disturbed the congregation that it "appeared to destroy or prevent all the good effect of my discourse." Partly because of the blacks' refusal to change their style of worship, many ministers were relieved to have them in separate congregations. Samuel A. Agnew, a Presbyterian minister in north Mississippi, wrote after a Sunday service, "My congregation was better than I have yet had, that is there was more whites though fewer negroes."

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22Winans Journal, January 22, 1853 (first quotation); January 9, 1842 (second quotation); Jones Journal, June 7, 1835 (third quotation); Agnew Diary (MSU), March 16, 1857.
As sectional rivalry and abolitionist attacks on southern religious institutions increased, Mississippians used the example of biracial services to deflect criticism of their churches and their peculiar institution. In 1858 the editor of a state Baptist newspaper visited Mound Bluff Baptist Church and recorded the following scene:

One sight we saw, and it was not a new one there, nor peculiar to that Church, which we would that many of the deluded and fanatical of abolitiondom would behold. . . . we allude to the great number of servants that crowd the pews on Sabbath. The noble and chivalrous son of the South . . . sat in close proximity to his well fed and well clothed servant, to listen to the word of life, and at the word both knelt in prayer at the same altar . . . . There sat ladies of refinement too, and on adjoining seats sat their household and farm servants, devoted in their attachments, and more proud of their owners than the pampered menials of Courtly halls ever dreamed of . . . .

Much of what the editor described here was highly romanticized. By 1858, blacks would have had a different view of these biracial services where their position as "menials" was clearly defined.

Even in churches where blacks and whites attended the same service, discrimination against blacks occurred. For example, the significance of extending the right hand of fellowship has already been discussed. In early churches, and in some later churches, this ritual was extended to both blacks and whites. Other churches, however, followed the practice described in a Baptist newspaper. Members of

23 Mississippi Baptist, April 8, 1858.
a Baptist Church wrote the newspaper with the following query: "Suppose a church, in which there are half a dozen colored members, - and suppose they never have any separate service . . . but unite with the white members in all their services . . . . Then suppose you were Pastor, and a white person should be received into the fellowship of the church, would you invite the colored members to extend the hand of fellowship? or would you pass them by?" The editor responded that the ritual was not a church ordinance and did not affect the validity of the reception. "As to the colored members," he wrote, "we would invite them as a body only when a colored member was to be received." He assumed that blacks would not perceive this as being passed by, though as we will see, blacks understood and resented the implications of such unequal treatment. Churches appointed committees or gave the pastor the responsibility of extending the hand of fellowship to blacks.24

Unlike the right hand of fellowship, communion was a church ordinance. Methodists held separate communion services for blacks in the 1820s, and the Baptist and Presbyterians also segregated communicants by race. In 1849, for example, the church conference at the Louisville First Baptist Church decided that "It would be best to Administer the sacrament [sic] of the Lords Supper to the

24Ibid., January 7, 1858 (quotations); Casey, Amite County, II: 294, 230, 307, 24, 29, 309.
Coloured Church separately and apart from the white portion of the church . . . ." In an unusual move, Academy Baptist Church resolved "that Daniel, a colored brother, be appointed to wait on the blacks on Communion occasions." The church records offer no explanation for the separate communion services, although at Louisville the change was suggested by the white lay person who ministered to the blacks. Whether the suggestion came from the lay preacher or the black congregation is unclear.\footnote{Winans Journal, August 12, 1821; First Presbyterian Church, Holly Springs, Miss. (MDAH), November 7, 1842; Louisville First Baptist Church, June 1849 (first quotation); Academy Baptist Church, December 1859 (second quotation).} Again, such separation of blacks and whites struck at the heart of religious egalitarianism and shows the barriers rising between the races.

Churches also appointed special committees, usually composed of slaveholders, to regulate blacks' behavior, to receive black members, and to hear their testimony. The creation of such committees marked a dramatic departure from past practice; the Committee set blacks apart and further illustrates the barriers rising between the races. The new committees had important implications for biracial worship. In 1854 Academy Baptist Church appointed a committee "to regulate the conduct of Blacks on Sabath [sic] of our church meeting . . . ." A similar committee at New Providence Baptist Church was "to have an over sight
of the blacks & have them disperse after preaching." A committee at Bethany Baptist Church ordered blacks to leave the church grounds immediately after services and warned that "If the said cullard [sic] people do not comply with the . . . Rules we do request that pateroles to . . . take them and chastise them according to law . . . ." While the threat by whites at Bethany to have "pateroles" discipline slaves was unusual, the attempt to regulate black behavior at services was not. The social aspect of religious services was important for both blacks and whites, especially in Mississippi with its widely dispersed population. Sunday services provided slaves from different plantations with a rare opportunity to gather together, yet whites at least on some occasions attempted to deprive them of this opportunity, an act which inhibited the formation of a black community within the white-controlled churches.

In more egalitarian churches, all members heard the conversion experience of a member; as described above, the experience was central to the evangelical belief system and an important unifying element in a congregation. Special committees appointed to receive black members heard their

26 Academy Church, July 1854; Casey, Amite County, II: 300 (second quotation); Bethany Baptist Church, August, October 1833 (third quotation); Behesda Baptist Church, January 1856; August 1849; Magnolia Baptist Church, August 1853; Liberty Baptist Church, August 1853, March 1858, January 1860. Frank Hughes, an ex-slave in Clay County, remembered "patarollers" policing separate black services at biracial churches. See Rawick, American Slave, Supp., Series 1, vol. 8, Part 3, p. 1062.
experience, not the entire congregation. Whites continued to share their experience before the congregation and receive the right hand of fellowship. In Magnolia Baptist Church, for example, "The com[mittee] on experience of colored persons reported that they had examined and received" a new black member.\textsuperscript{27}

An important corollary of separation and discrimination, one probably unanticipated by whites, was an increased black autonomy within the churches. In 1845 the Concord Baptist Church decided that since blacks held separate services conducted by their white minister, they should also hold a separate church conference. They authorized their "Pastor in connection with the white brethren present on such occasions, to hold conference, with the black members, for their special benefit, and that each couloured [sic] member be entitled to a vote in the reception, rejection & exclusion of those of their own coulour." Liberty Baptist Church appointed two slave men "as watchmen to report to this church any of our colored members who may become disorderly. Also to stimulate them to Christian duty." A Methodist circuit rider in the state observed that white supervision of separate black conferences was light. While the white minister usually chaired the meeting, the conference was actually conducted

\textsuperscript{27}Magnolia Church, August 1853 (first quotation); Bethesda Baptist Church, August 1849.
by the black secretary who apparently wielded great influence. The secretary acted "'as the presiding judge of their church trials' and was 'the umpire to whom is referred not only the minor difficulties of the church members, but of the colored people at large.'" Whether blacks in such positions were chosen by whites or elected by blacks is unclear, but the result - an increase in black autonomy - was the same in any case. By either allowing or forcing blacks into separate congregations and by giving them control over their members, whites unwittingly helped pave the way for the post-bellum division of the churches along racial lines.\textsuperscript{25}

Despite the increase in autonomy, many blacks resented the churches's abandonment of the egalitarian tradition and their unequal treatment in the churches. A white Methodist church member asked a "pious old negro man why he did not enter into the spirit of the services" at a revival meeting. The black man, drawing on his agricultural expertise, replied, "Ah master . . . there is not much in the outside row." As the white man explained, the elderly slave "had occupied the black seat in the church from necessity during the meeting, and finding himself after several days still unblessed . . . he compared his

\textsuperscript{25}Concord Church, January 1845; Liberty Church, May 1854; Milton C. Sernett, Black Religion and American Evangelicalism: White Protestants, Plantation Missions, and the Flowering of Negro Christianity, 1787-1865 (Metuchen, N.J., 1975), pp. 98-97 (final quotation).
case to that [of] a reaper in the outside row, and very philosophically concluded that the back seats in the church resemble the outside row in the field" where the yield was very low.²⁹

The slave narratives clearly show how deeply blacks resented segregated seating and how they preferred their own services in the quarters. Mattie Dillworth, an ex-slave from Lafayette County, recalled that "befor' de surrender I had to sit on a back seat, but dere cum a time sho Lord when I cu'd sit rite spang on de fron' seat."

Jake Dawkins of Monroe County said, "The only time I 'member going to a meetin' was when de marster took all de slaves over to de white folks church at New Hope and had a white preacher to preach to us. But Lawd, he never did much preachin'. His text was, 'Obey your master and mistress', and he never told us a word about savin' our souls from hell fire and damnation." Another former slave, Jack Jones of Oktibbeha County, recalled that according to the white preacher even heaven would be segregated: "He stated that the white preacher enjoined the Negro to be . . . good slaves. As a result they would go to the Negro Heaven, or kitchen heaven. Uncle Jack laughed and said that anyway the slave thought, they would get plenty to eat."³⁰

²⁹ New Orleans Christian Advocate, August 23, 1856.

³⁰ Rawick, American Slave, Supp., Series 1, vol. 7, Part 2, p. 615 (first quotation); vol. 6, Part 1, p. 157; vol. 7, Part 2, pp. 757, 744, 784, 623, 537, 345, 749, 594-
Many of the slaves who remembered attending biracial churches accompanied their masters to serve them at church. Vinie Busby, a former slave in Rankin County said, "We went to Church at de white folks Church. We waited on de white folks a totin' water an' seein' bout de horses an' buggies an' tendin' to de chillun." Frances Willis of Montgomery County recalled bitterly, "I'd go wid de white folks to church to brush dur shoes when dey got there, but dey sho' didn't never read de Bible to me. Back in dem days us niggers was taught nothin' 'bout a Savior for our souls. We was treated mo' like de work animals folks use today." Like Augusta H. Rice who traveled to church in a carriage with a black driver and nurse, these masters and mistresses were concerned for their personal comfort, and perhaps interested in showing their wealth, but not in their slaves' salvation.31

Some churches expected blacks to continue in their role of servants at church. In 1842, for example, Concord Baptist Church requested its deacons "to appoint some colourd member to attend to the sweeping of the meeting

95 (second quotation); vol. 8, Part 3, pp. 1212 (third quotation), 1325, 1197, 1171, 1128-29, 1062, 845; vol. 9, Part 4, pp. 1588-89, 1567, 1411, 1381; vol. 10, Part 5, pp. 2410-11, 2370-71, 2337, 2315, 2251, 2237, 2233, 2107-08, 1984.

31 Ibid., Supp., Series 1, vol. 6, Part 1, p. 310 (first quotation); vol. 10, Part 5, p. 2358 (second quotation); vol. 7, Part 2, p. 764; vol. 9, Part 4, p. 1390; vol. 10, Part 5, p. 2370; Alexander Diary, January 9, April 17, 1859.
No communal feeling was likely to develop among blacks and whites in churches where blacks were not treated as individuals but continued in their prescribed roles.

A few slaves, however, recalled a more positive experience in the biracial churches; additional evidence that the egalitarian tradition continued in some churches throughout the antebellum period. Ex-slave Jim Allen of Clay County described a "neighborhood church" attended by both blacks and whites. He recalled that "Dere was a white preacher and sometimes a nigger preacher would sit in de pulpit wid him. The slaves sat on one side of the isle and white folks on de other. I allus liked preacher Williams Odem and his brother Daniel De slidin elder." In a Webster County church blacks "were allowed to go there and shout just like the white folks." Another ex-slave from Webster County said "we was allus welcome" at the local church. George Washington Miller described a Presbyterian Church that had "pews for the white and for the black, and often the leading negro deacon 'Uncle Dick' sat in the pulpit. Everybody liked him. I remember preacher Reed, whom I thought almost was God hisself."33

32 Concord Church, May 1842 (first quotation); First Baptist Church, Louisville, February 1851. Rawick, American Slave, Supp., Series 1, vol. 9, Part 4, p. 1472.

33 Ibid., Supp., Series 1, vol. 6, Part 1, pp. 58-59 (first and second quotation), 285 (fourth quotation); vol. 9, Part 4, pp. 1772 (third quotation); 1488 (fifth quota-
Despite the churches's wholesale adoption of the proslavery ideology, not all evangelicals either black or white, accepted the idea that Christianity justified slavery and racial discrimination. James Bond, a charter member of Palestine Baptist Church in Hinds County and a member of a pioneer Baptist family, asked in 1834 to be excluded from the church because "He was opposed to the views of the church with respect to church discipline among the blacks," which he considered discriminatory and severe. Isham Howze was only half convinced by the Biblical defense of slavery. After he became angry and whipped a slave, Nathan, he wrote, "I have Sinned this morning in getting angry. May the Lord forgive me for all my transgressions. 

. . . I do not consider the relationship, per se, sinful, yet I would be truely glad not to have any thing to do with it. 

- I feel, now, worse than Nathan." Howze did not own slaves, but acted as a trustee for his sister and held the slaves for her.34 He was, therefore, unable to dispose of them, and was forced by family duty into a difficult and troubling relationship.

Other evangelicals shared Howze's sentiments. Patrick Sharkey, a Methodist planter near Vicksburg, owned 2,000 acres of land and 75 slaves by 1860. Despite his

34T. M. Bond and Family Folder, Biography Files (NBHC, first quotation); Howze Journal, January 24, 1854.
holdings, he "never believed slavery was justified by reason or Christianity." His wife shared his sentiments. Perhaps state laws restricting the emancipation of slaves prevented Sharkey from taking that step. The Reverend Jeremiah Davis Mann, a Methodist minister in Aberdeen from 1837 to 1863, overcame the legal obstacles and freed his slaves a few years before the outbreak of war in 1861. Henry Gibbs, an ex-slave of Clay County, remembered that "Parson Ellis," a Baptist preacher, also freed his slaves. Gibbs said, "I don't know how come, but he got where he didn't want any slaves. He just concluded to turn em all over to Mr. Seth Pool, and he stayed with Mr. Pool until he died after the surrender [sic]. Mr. Pool was a deacon in his church."35

The extent to which southern slaveholders felt guilty over their ownership of slaves has been the subject of scholarly debate. David Donald is probably correct in asserting that "it is impossible to demonstrate the presence - or the absence - of widespread guilt feelings which, by definition, are unconscious." He is incorrect in

35George C. Osborn, "Plantation Life in Central Mississippi as Revealed in the Clay Sharkey Papers," Journal of Mississippi History (October 1941), p. 279 (first quotation); "Biographical Sketch of Rev. Jeremiah Davis Mann" in Bertie Shaw Rollins Papers (Evans Memorial Library); Rawick, American Slave, Supp., Series 1, vol. 8, Part 3, p. 818 (remaining quotations); Jonathan C. Burney to B. M. Drake, April 10, 1833, Drake papers (Cain Archives); Will of John W. Hundley, October 16, 1829 in Mary G. Barker, Navi's Oliver Feltus, and Diane A. Stockfelt, comps., Early Will Records of Adams County Mississippi (n.p.,m 1975), p. 77.
assuming, however, that ambivalence over slavery disappeared after the 1830s. As the above examples illustrate, some evangelicals were troubled by the institution up to the eve of the Civil War. Perhaps evangelicals were more prone to feelings of guilt than others because of the introspection and soul-searching that accompanied their religious life. But no doubt many evangelicals were like Robert B. Alexander, owner of Happy Hill Plantation in north Mississippi. A Methodist, he regularly attended worship services; for example, on one Sunday in 1856 he attended a church service, a prayer meeting, and a class meeting. He sometimes acted as class leader, and recorded his moving experiences at such services. At one 1856 prayer meeting he "had a glorious time," and on another occasion he reported that "We had a delightful love feast one of the best I have seen for Many a day." He sometimes took a few of his slaves to church with him (he owned over twenty bondsmen), but he whipped his slaves without any apparent remorse. During the cotton picking season in 1854 he "paddled 9 or 10 of my hands they improved very much." 36

36 David Donald, "The Proslavery Argument Reconsidered," Journal of Southern History XXXVII (February 1971), p. (first quotation); Alexander Diary (MDAH), April 30, July 20, 1854, August 20, 21 (second quotation), 22, September 3 (third quotation), 1856; October 27 (fourth quotation), November 30, 1854; January 9, April 17, July 23, 1859; July 12, 1861; February 28, 1862. See also William W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836 (New York, 1965); Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation (New York, 1969); and Roll, Jordan, Roll,
It does not press the evidence too far to say that while many slaveholders like Alexander were convinced by the Biblical defense of slavery, many others were not.

Many slave Christians continued to believe that slavery violated the laws of God. Charlie Moses, an ex-slave who, significantly, was also a preacher, said:

> When I gets ta' thinkin' back on them days I feels like risin' out o' this heah' bed an' tellin' everybody 'bout the harsh treatment us colored folks was given. My Marster was mean an' cruel an' I hates him, hates him. The God Almighty has condemned him to eternal fiah', of that I is certain.

Riley Moore, a former slave in Montgomery County, believed that white ministers who preached the Biblical defense of slavery to slave congregations "ought to have been hung fo' preachin' false doctrin'. They was no such thing in the Bible."\(^{37}\) For many slaves, a wide chasm divided them from the white evangelicals around them.

Evangelicalism sometimes bridged the gulf separating black from white, master from slave. Egalitarianism was too much a part of southern evangelical ideology to be erased by the proslavery ideology, a weaker and more flawed concept. Perhaps many masters reconciled Christianity with slaveholding, but as the above examples illustrate, many

others were unable to do so. Blacks and whites who wor-
shipped in biracial services sometimes, at least, looked
beyond skin color or status. In 1836 the members of Clear
Creek Baptist Church mourned the death of a fellow member:
"Mary a Coloured Sister belonging to Mrs. Miner departed
this life last March leaving behind the most cheering
evidence both in her life & in her death that she has gone
to the Socty [Society] of the Spirits of the just made
perfect in heaven." Clear the white member who penned
this tribute to Mary expected to meet her in that egalitar-
ian society of the just. There was no suggestion of a
separate "kitchen heaven" here.

While the diversity of the biracial religious
experience in antebellum Mississippi makes generalizations
difficult, the broad pattern was one moving from relative
egalitarianism to segregation and discrimination. This
overarching trend should not obscure the fact that many
churches held to the traditional evangelical style of
worship. Blacks and whites continued to worship together,
to be baptized together, to shout and sing together, and
met on a common ground where race could be temporarily
transcended. The discriminatory practices of many churches
held an unforeseen advantage for black Christians. For the
first time since the early 1800s, blacks enjoyed the
opportunity of worship with little or no white supervision.

36 Clear Creek Church, April 24, 1836.
Blacks demanded and usually received a service in keeping with their theology. A few blacks were able to gain leadership positions in the biracial churches, especially in churches with segregated services. Despite legal obstacles and white harassment, black preachers continued to minister to members of both races. Separate services were a valuable training ground and helped prepare blacks for postbellum religious independence. As John B. Boles observed, "In the churches black men and women found persuasive reason to live as morally responsible adults, discovered arenas for the practice of black leadership, and experienced a far greater degree of equality with the surrounding whites than anywhere else in southern society. No wonder the church was the dominant institutional force in the lives of so many black southerners throughout the antebellum period and into our own time."  

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39Boles, Black Southerners, p. 158.
Chapter V

Reap the Whirlwind: Evangelicals in the Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1876

The outbreak of war in 1861 brought drastic changes to the evangelical community. The orderly society they had labored to create soon began to unravel under the strains of war. Evangelicals as a group did not lead the secession movement; in fact, they were surprisingly reticent on this vital issue. By adopting the proslavery ideology, by dividing along regional lines themselves, and by harshly criticizing northern abolitionists, they made their sympathies clear and contributed to secession. Many evangelical ministers opposed secession and the war, but few of them made that opposition public. Though their exact numbers can never be known, they should not be overlooked. Many churches filled with women in mourning as thousands of Mississippians died on the battlefields. Federal raids and occupations disrupted many churches. Biracial churches also lost many black members who fled to freedom during the conflict. Despite the horrors and disruptions of the war, or perhaps because of them, many other churches enjoyed periods of revival during which large numbers of new black and white converts joined the churches. The Confederate defeat and the abolition of slavery led to periods of soul-searching among many white evangelicals who had accepted
the Biblical defense of slavery and believed that God favored the South in the struggle.

For blacks, however, the war was an answered prayer, which may explain the growth of the black membership in many biracial churches during the war. An important consequence of the Confederate defeat, one that marks a sharp break between the antebellum and the postbellum South, was the division of the churches along racial lines. As noted in the previous chapter, the roots of the division lay in the segregated services common in many biracial antebellum churches. The division did not occur immediately after Lee's surrender, however; blacks and whites continued to worship together until the 1870s. Only from the vantage point of the modern South can the revolutionary change in church life be appreciated. As barriers between the races fell in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, Mississippi author Willie Morris, a perceptive social critic, wrote, "The churches will be the last institutions to integrate, of course . . . ."1 Perhaps Morris and many modern southern evangelicals would be surprised to learn that completely segregated churches appeared only after the Civil War.

Neither evangelical ministers nor the religious press openly advocated secession, but their defense of slavery and attacks on abolitionists increased sectional tensions

and did nothing to soothe the troubled waters. A writer in a Methodist newspaper said, "Were it not for the attacks of Northern papers, the organs of our church would never agitate any question connected with Slavery." But agitate they did. The writer continued, "Abolitionists are responsible for free negrodom - a growing social and political, disease . . . ." A Baptist newspaper article criticized "the fanatics of the North . . . ." and defended slavery "because of our honest conviction that it is socially, politically and morally right." Ministers like William Winans called abolitionists "fanatics - lunatics" and praised the South's "chivalric notions in regard to foreign interference in domestic concerns . . . ." Evangelical voices joined a growing chorus; one evangelical recalled the period before 1861 as one of "fierce and bitter political prejudices and fiery speeches of impassioned orators which had been multiplying and growing in heat for more than a generation, until the climax was reached in secess-

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When secession came, no doubt many if not most evangelicals favored it. The secession movement was powerful in the state, "more powerful than in any other state except South Carolina." Even in Mississippi, however, the voter turnout in the election for delegates to the secession convention was low, and the convention refused to submit the ordinance of secession to a popular vote.3

Though the convention's reluctance to allow the citizens to vote on the ordinance may have been unfounded, evangelicals support of secession was not unanimous. Thomas C. Teasdale, a prominent Baptist minister in Columbus, criticized "reckless, lawless filibusters," "daring political adventurers," "secular editors," and "a subsidized, profligate press," for their "open disregard of existing Statutes, both State and National . . . ." "If a law be unwise," he wrote, "let it be abrogated by the proper authority. But until it is repealed, let us submit to its behest." Teasdale and James A. Lyon, Presbyterian minister in Columbus, outraged the fire-eaters when they led a successful campaign to prevent the sale of a group of Africans illegally brought to the city in 1859. John A. Aughey, pastor of the French Camp Presbyterian Church

angered many in his congregation when he preached a sermon on the illegality of secession. He fled north after an attempt on his life.  

Like Lyon, Teasdale, and Aughey, John G. Jones believed that the laws of the land should be respected, and he thought that southerners should fight for their rights under the Constitution. In his autobiography he wrote, "I shall not have much to say about the war. I was utterly opposed to it . . . I was as much opposed to secession as I dared to be . . . ." He had faith in the Constitution "which guaranteed the perpetuity of slavery. Not that I wished to perpetuate slavery one day beyond the will of God, but I wished to be let alone, so that we, or our descendants, might dispose of it in away [sic] not to ruin either master or slave."

Bishop Robert Paine of the Methodist Church, South, was described as "a prudent Christian patriot." A resident of Aberdeen, Mississippi, a small, but wealthy cotton town in North Mississippi, he traveled across the South on the eve of secession in connection with his office.  

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presided over the South Carolina Conference of his church in 1861, and when resolutions were introduced in favor of secession, he declared them out of order. He also labored to keep politics out of the Mississippi Conference. Paine did not oppose slavery—he was a slaveholder himself—but he saw that slavery "became a wedge in the hands of impas-sioned partisans and uncompromising fanatics to rend and nearly destroy the boasted fabric of our national Union." More clear sighted than most, "He prepared himself for the defeat which he well knew was sure to come." In the early days of the war when victory still seemed possible "he visited Richmond . . . and sought to arouse the . . . President to a sense of the certain ruin that was soon to come to Mississippi, and then to the all the South."

President Jefferson Davis did not heed Paine's warning, of course. Paine spent the war years as quietly as possible, occasionally preaching to soldiers and fleeing Yankee raids. While some ministers may have encouraged war, Paine was proud of his opposition to it; he wrote, "The evils of it [the war] are inconceivable, and the responsibility for it must be decided by the only court of supreme jurisdiction. If I felt in any degree responsible for it, I think it would craze me. Thank God, I do not."  

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All of the moderate ministers described above occupied prominent positions in slaveholding districts. At least two of them, Jones and Paine, were themselves slave-owners. Their determination to keep political questions out of the church prevented them from speaking out more forcefully. The reluctance to engage in political debate was in large part a result of the slavery controversy. Recall that William Winans entered the political fray without hesitation in the early days of the church. These moderates agreed that a small group of southern radicals pushed the South to secession; they believed that a calmer consideration of the question would prevent much bloodshed. Their opposition to secession grew out of the tenants of their faith. Though evangelicalism could produce social revolution, it was basically conservative. As the 1810 covenant of Jerusalem Baptist Church read, "we will . . . conduct ourselves . . . in a peaceable and friendly manner towards mankind . . . and pay a conscientious regard to civil government." From the very origins of evangelicalism in Mississippi, religious men and women labored to create a society based on order and duty. Many evangelicals had no desire to see their stable communities upset by war. Many no doubt agreed with Jones that the Constitution protected southern interest and war was therefore unnecessary. Years
of sectional controversy had not destroyed the patriotism of men like Lyon, Jones, and Paine.\footnote{Albert E. Casey, comp., \textit{Amite County Mississippi, 1699-1865}, 2 vols. (Birmingham, Ala., 1948), II: 59 (quotation).}

Once war began, Jones and other evangelicals rallied to the Confederate cause, though often with some reluctance. Jones considered it his Christian duty to submit to the new government, but he "never could pray in faith for the success of the Confederacy." A Baptist minister from Ocean Springs on the Mississippi Gulf Coast volunteered in 1861 "to fight in defense of my country. (Not in defense of slavery, for I was opposed to slavery.)" Walter Tynes, who lived in southeastern Mississippi recalled, "My father and every man of his neighbors were unanimously against secession . . . but after we were plunged into war, our sympathies were naturally with our young men . . . our preachers all preached and prayed for the success of the Confederacy, - or were silent on the subject. Indeed it was a capital crime with a death penalty to do or be otherwise."\footnote{Ibid., p. 118 (first quotation); O. D. Bowen, \textit{Gospel Ministry of Forty Years} (Handsboro, Miss., 1911), p. 10; Samuel A. Agnew Diary (MSU), December 20, 1860; January 12, 1861, April 18, 1864; Lyon Journal, June 1861, pp. 39-41; Academy Baptist Church, May 1861.}

The Confederate government sought the blessings of religion by proclaiming public fast days, which churches observed. In June 1861 Robert B. Alexander, a slaveowner
in north Mississippi, "went to church [and] heard Rev. See preach or rather give a war Talk & a very good one at that . . . ." In 1862 he wrote, "To day we fasted, Negroes & all we went to Church heard Rev See deliver a fine lecture on the war . . . ." Fast days became regular events. President Davis proclaimed nine fast days, while "Congress, state legislatures, and denominational bodies designated so many more that a strict compliance with all might have saved enough food to feed Lee's hungry army." Compliance was not always strict; one group of well-meaning Mississippi church women celebrated a fast day with a church fair and a supper! Many religious southerners recognized the hand of God in the Confederate victories at Manassas, the Seven Days, Chancellorsville, and Chickamauga; all of which followed fast days. A woman in Crawfordsville, Mississippi, expressed her faith in the good effect of the observances when she asked the state government to proclaim yet another fast day: "From a thorough search of God's word I find no denial of peace to nations that humble themselves before God. Another fast day is absolutely necessary for the good of the land." The observances served the Confederate government as propaganda tools, an especially powerful one given the high visibility of many preachers and importance of church life for many southerners.9

9Robert B. Alexander Diary (MDAH), June 13, 1861 (first quotation); February 28, 1862 (second quotation); August 21, 1863; James W. Silver, Confederate Morale and
Despite prayers and fast days, churches quickly felt the effects of the war. Churches lost valuable lay leaders as men went off to war. Federal raids or occupations made regular services impossible. The records of Bethlehem Baptist Church for June 1862 provide a typical example of the disruptive effects of the war:

Note: owing to war there has not been much business during the past year. The pastor did not visit us for nearly six months. Only three or four conferences during the year and then no business of import could be handled there were so few members present.

The Reverend Samuel Agnew, a Presbyterian minister in north Mississippi, left a vivid account of the difficulties he encountered during the period. On one Sunday in 1862 he found a small congregation at church. "The males were principally pickets," he wrote. "The pickets now occupy the Church and feed their horses in the Church-yard. They use some of the benches for troughs." The following year he traveled to hold church services but "when I got to the Church I found only 2 persons ... There is too much excitement in the hills for people to go to Church."

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Church Propaganda (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1957), pp. 64 (third quotation), 65 (fourth quotation), 66, 95.

10 Beulah Baptist Church, Tippah County, January 1862; Bethlehem Church, June 1862, August 1861; Academy Baptist Church had no regular preaching or conferences from 1862 to 1864. Academy Church, November 8, 1864; Crawfordville Methodist Circuit (MSU), September 3, 1861; January 24, 1862; Liberty Baptist Church, May 1861; Agnew Diary, June 1, 6, August 31 (second quotation), October 26, December 21, 1862; February 1 (third quotation), August 12, 16, 1863; J. B. Cain, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, 1846-1870 (Jackson, 1939), p. 297.
Excitement of a different kind swept the black community. Many believed the war came in answer to their prayers for freedom. As Dora Brewer, a former slave, recalled, "When de niggers got sense enuf to pray for freedom den de war come." Another former slave, Dora Franks, said, "I started prayin' for freedom and all de rest of de women did de same thing. De war started pretty soon after dat and all de men folks went off ad left de plantation for de women and de niggers to run." With many men away at war and with Federal troops moving through the state, many slaves found it relatively easy either to ignore their owners or to escape to freedom. The Reverend Samuel Agnew found the slaves belonging to his family openly hostile and unwilling to obey orders; he said of one slave, "She does not conceal her thoughts but plainly manifests her opinions . . . ." Many of the Agnew slaves escaped. Mrs. Alfred Ingraham encountered the same situation on her family's plantation near Vicksburg: "The men are far more respectful and obliging than the women; the latter refuse to come and work one and all . . . ." With Federal troops nearby, the Ingrahams could neither keep their slaves on the plantation nor exact obedience from those who chose to remain. Slavery disintegrated across the South; historian James L. Roark observed, "on some estates power shifted from the 'big house' to the slave
cabins." As noted in Chapter 3, disciplinary actions against slaves for running away rose dramatically during the war.

While many blacks rejoiced at the opportunity to escape to freedom, many whites lost their enthusiasm for the war. The Reverend Walter E. Tynes described "a great revolt in public sentiment" in 1863. He wrote.

New Orleans had fallen into the hands of the Federals the year before, and now with the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, the Mississippi River was wholly in the control of the Federals from one end to the other, and then that most disastrous defeat of General Lee's splendid army at Gettysburg, all forced overwhelming conviction that the cause was a failure, and that further bloodshed was useless. Added to this was the passage of a law by the Confederate Government conscripting all men between certain ages, excepting only a few, but especially every man who owned as many as twenty Negroes. This law provoked much criticism and the charge that it was a 'rich man's war and a poor man's fight.' Many men both in the army and out lost all enthusiasm for the cause. Then it was also learned that President Davis and Vice-President Alexander H. Stephens had disagreed about the conduct of the war. . . . It was a time of general demoralization, beyond description . . . .

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12Tynes Diary, p. 11. See Roark, Masters Without Slaves, pp. 55-58.
That demoralization became evident among evangelical ministers and congregations.

For many ministers the fast day sermons became a sore trial. In Columbus the Reverend Lyon delivered a fast day sermon only because the Baptist minister was away and the Methodist minister "plead indisposition." Lyon, never a supporter of secession, suffered from the general malaise. He wrote:

I had no comfort to give the people - no flattery for them or their rulers - their sins, their violations of God's law had brought the sword upon the land - and the only hope was in repentance . . . Three gentlemen . . . left the house, in away [sic] that showed that they were offended - but I could not change my tone. My text was the 1st verse of the 58 chapter of Isiah [Cry aloud, spare not, life up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.] . . . I will not be compelled to preach 'smooth things.'

The fast day sermons changed from the "war talks" Alexander described at the war's outset to jeremiads in which ministers castigated southerners for their transgressions and blamed Confederate defeats on a sinful people.

Lyon's refusal to preach "smooth things" and his outspoken opposition to secession and war won him many enemies. In 1863 Lyon was accused of leading a

13 Agnew Diary, p. 30 (quotation); Isaac A. Duncan to W. E. Duncan, June 10 [1862-63?] in Maude Morrow Brown, "What Desolations! At Home in Lafayette County, Mississippi, 1860-1865," unpublished typescript, (MDAH), p. 61; Anonymous Diary, July 14, 16, 28, September 20, November 25, 1863; Allan Hargrove to Mary Hargrove, April 16, 1864, Hargrove Papers (MDAH); Myra Smith Diary in Eunice J. Stockwell Papers (MDAH), December 1, 1861; April 13, November 16, 1862; December 23, 1863.
"Reconciliation party" in Columbus. His son Theodore wrote a letter in response to that allegation in which he blamed "reckless politicians" and "demagogues" for the war. Leading politicians in the city who had led in the secession movement were understandably outraged and saw an opportunity to attack their old foe through his son. Lyon's son was arrested and barred from attending a public meeting on the issue. Lyon spoke in his stead, and his speech was interrupted by cries of "treason, treason, treason!!" Theodore ran for the state legislature and received one quarter of the vote despite threats against his supporters. Because of his words and actions, Theodore, who served in the Confederate army, was reduced in rank, separated from his regiment, sent to Virginia, and deprived of $700 in back pay. Lyon concluded, "There never was on the face of the earth a more absolute despotism, than that which now prevails in the land." Lyon and his family escaped lightly; a Unionists minister in Macon, Mississippi, the Reverend James Phelan, was murdered for his views.\(^\text{14}\)

The malaise that swept the state in 1863 did not always express itself in Unionism. Most evangelicals

agreed with Lyon, however, on one point; failure resulted from sin, and repentance offered the only hope. When the congregation of College Hill Presbyterian Church met in 1863 they issued the following eloquent statement of their sorrows:

Resolved that those present deem it their duty to place on record for the benefit and information of posterity some facts as history which will show the dealings of God with us as a church and congregation . . . . We would first note that a large number of members at the first call of our country enlisted in her cause for whose preservation, safety, and spiritual welfare many sincere and fervent prayers have been offered up to Almighty God . . . . Some of these loved ones have . . . fallen on the field of battle bravely standing up in the defense of their country . . . . A melancholy gloom overhangs our beloved community . . . . The hearts of many of our members as they weekly enter the sanctuary are bowed in sorrow . . . . But acknowledge the hand of a sovereign God in these sore afflictions and submissively kiss the chastening rod and say thy will be done, O Lord.

The community was spared the ravages of war until late in 1862 when 30,000 Federal troops moved into the area. They occupied the church, took food, animals, and other goods, burned some homes, and encouraged slaves to leave their masters. The Presbyterians estimated the loss at $200,000.

Such is a mere outline of the heavy calamity which God in his providence has seen fit to inflict upon our community. To say that there were good reasons for this . . . is saying what the Bible and the providence of God in all past ages has taught the nations of the earth. . . . the sin for which punishment is inflicted in this life is brought to our knowledge by the penalty inflicted upon us. Thus our sin . . . is not honoring God to the full extent of our duty . . . . Then it is our duty . . . to humble ourselves, repent in the dust, plead for his mercy, his grace, and the light of his Holy Spirit to enable us henceforth to devote ourselves, our powers
of body and faculties of mind, our callings and property to the service of the church and benefit of the world.\footnote{15}

Many evangelicals, like the Presbyterians at Church Hill, internalized the lessons of the jeremiads and bore a burden of guilt over Confederate losses and Federal incursions; clearly southerners had been tested and found wanting. Such sentiments helped fuel a widespread revival movement among Mississippi evangelicals.

In 1863 reports came from across the state of a series of revivals. The Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Church showed impressive gains, especially in churches west of the Pearl River in central Mississippi. Membership on one charge rose from six to 115 in 1863. In September 1863, a woman in Scott County reported that she had attended revival meetings continuously for over three weeks. In the same year ministers from several denominations held successful revivals in Starkville, Mississippi, lasting over three weeks. An 1864 revival at Spring Hill Baptist Church in Choctaw County added thirty-five new converts. The Aberdeen Baptist Association in north Mississippi reported that "some of the churches of our

\footnote{15}College Hill Church Records reproduced in Brown, "What Desolations!," pp. 105-08. See also Smith Diary, April 13, 1862; December 23, 1863; Anonymous Diary, July 14, 16, 28, 30, 1863; T. L. Mellen, ed., In Memorium: Life and Labors of the Rev. William Hamilton Watkins, D. D. . . . (Nashville, 1886), p. 48; Allan Hargrove to Mary, April 16, 1864 and same to same, undated [1864?], Hargrove Papers; Mary Vaughn to Louisa Clark Boddie, February 22, 1863, Boddie Family Papers (MDAH).
Association have been blessed with precious revivals of religion; . . . abroad we hear of extensive revivals, and from the army the revival news is glorious." Troops stationed in Mississippi towns sometimes participated in revivals. The Rev. George Shaeffer, a Methodist minister in Columbus, wrote early in 1865: "We are holding a meeting for the soldiers in our church in Columbus every night. The soldiers appear interested . . . many of them evidence a desire for salvation . . . ." A religious newspaper observed that "the period of the war was remarkable for extensive revivals of religion throughout the armies and States of the South."\footnote{Cain, Methodist in the Mississippi Conference, p. 339; Minutes of the Twenty-first Anniversary of the Aberdeen Baptist Association . . . 1864 (n.p., 1864), Appendix B (first quotation); Spring Hill Baptist Church, Choctaw County, October 1864; Sophie Hays to "Sister Lit," October 28, 1863, Hays, Ray, Webb Collection (MSU); Drew Gilpin Faust, "Christian Soldiers: The Meaning of Revivalism in the Confederate Army," Journal of Southern History LIII (February 1987), pp. 63-90. Shoefler quoted in Miller, "North Mississippi Methodism," p. 157; John K. Bettersworth, Confederate Mississippi: The People and Policies of a Cotton State in Wartime (Baton Rouge, 1943), p. 293; Lyons Journal, October 9, 1863; Bethesda Baptist Church membership rose from 87 whites and 82 blacks in 1861 to 103 whites and 113 blacks in 1865. Bethesda Records, 1861 list and 1865 list. Lucy Irion Journal (MSU), January 20, 1861; New Orleans Christian Advocate, January 27, 1866 (final quotation).}
boredom. Chaplains had easy access to large, enthusiastic crowds. On the home front, however, churches were destroyed or used as hospitals, ministers served in the army, and families relocated to escape federal troops. State and local religious bodies seldom met during the war or lacked funds to publish proceedings, leaving a gap in the historical record. Certainly, the history of home-front revivals is more difficult to chronicle, a difficulty that led historian Drew Gilpin Faust to write: "Curiously, the evangelical fervor of the Confederate troops was not paralleled by enthusiasm at home . . .," but evidence from Mississippi suggests that especially in areas spared the ravages of war, powerful revivals took place.

Revivals and a deepening of individual religious faith helped many Mississippians at home withstand the difficulties of war. The strict evangelical moral code meshed well with the rigorous demands of wartime. By demanding "order" and "duty" from members of both races, churches attempted to maintain stability; as one historian wrote, only the church during war-time, could "exercise a direct and guiding influence on the conduct of the individual citizen."  


18 Silver, Confederate Morale, p. 64 (first quotation). For examples of hardships at home see John K. Bettersworth, ed., Mississippi in the Confederacy: as they saw it (Baton Rouge, 1961), pp. 286-316.
The revival affected members of both races, though perhaps for different reasons. An 1864 revival in New Providence Church added seven black and fifteen white members. In 1861 this church had twenty-nine slave members and sixty-four white members; by 1865 thirty-eight black and eight-one white members belonged to the church; a 27 percent increase in white membership and a 31 percent increase among blacks. Following a revival in August 1864, the Zion Hill Baptist "church congregation met at the river . . ." where twenty-nine whites and eight slaves were baptized. Black membership in the Aberdeen Conference increased from 655 in 1861 to 761 in 1864, while white membership declined over the same period. Black membership in the Mississippi Presbytery rose from 493 in 1859 to 728 in 1863. Agnew found in 1864 that "the negroes seem to manifest more interest in the meeting than the whites."19 No doubt the traditional order and stability offered by the churches appealed to members of both races during the

19 Casey, Amite County II: 307, 308-10, 348, 349 (first quotation), 350, 91, 92, 245-46, 249-50, 48, 75; Minutes of the Eighteenth Anniversary of the Aberdeen Baptist Association . . . 1861 (Greensboro, Miss., 1862); Minutes . . . 1864. Some churches in the Association showed impressive gains in white membership suggesting that the revival was not universal and that some churches suffered greater disruptions than others. Agnew Diary, September 8, 9, 10, October 9, 1863; August 14, September 28-October 2 (second quotation), 24, 1864. At Port Gibson in 1863, "The white congregation does not promise very favorably: promise of good among the Blacks. Minutes of the Quarterly Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Port Gibson Station (Cain Archives), February 28, 1863; Bettersworth, Confederate Mississippi, pp. 300-02.
troubled times; many families, both black and white, were disrupted and uprooted; sickness and death knew no color; but unlike whites, blacks rejoiced to see their prayers for freedom and a Confederate defeat answered.

Biracial churches continued to hold services for blacks, but the war virtually destroyed the mission to the slaves. Henry P. Lewis, Methodist missionary to slaves at the Cayuga colored mission, wrote, "Slaveholders were afraid to have their slaves preached to. One good man . . . wanted me to remain on the work and preach to his negroes. But after consulting with my presiding elder and prominent men of the work it was thought best not to attempt to organize . . . ." No slave mission in the Mississippi Conference showed a gain in membership in 1863, and many of them were abandoned altogether. The shortage of ministers, Federal occupation of the large mission areas along the Mississippi River, lack of funds, and the escape of many slaves from the plantations brought about the collapse of the missions.

When the war ended in 1865, many evangelicals must have shared the sentiments expressed by the Reverend Tynes and his neighbors; "we were all grieved and broken-hearted over the loss of so many thousands of our brave young men, yet there was a feeling of great relief that the cruel war

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was over." With that relief came a period of soul-searching for many white evangelicals. One evangelical wrote, "One is tempted to fear that we are a 'God-forsaken' people. . . . the religion of the country has been weighed in the balances, and found wanting." When the members of Unity Presbyterian Church assembled in July 1865 they acknowledged that "much of this church is in a cold & luke warm state forgetful alike of its duties to itself, the world & to God whom it professes to love & worship . . . ." They added, "deeply deploring our past in gratitude [sic] in neglect of duty, [we] do turn from our backsliding, confess & repent of our sins & renew our engagement to our covenant . . . ."²¹

Some evangelicals believed that God had abandoned them as punishment for the evils of slavery. The Reverend James Lyon wrote that slaveowners "vilely abused" slavery and used it "only for selfish and sordid purposes, regardless of the natural rights of the slave . . . ." He listed thirteen fallacies expressed by the demagogues he held responsible for the war; one of which was, "Slavery is right - our cause is righteous and a righteous God is bound to guarantee our ultimate success, & c & c." When a Baptist Committee on the Colored Population met in 1866, they acknowledged that not "all has been done for their

²¹Tynes Diary, p. 11 (first quotation); New Orleans Christian Advocate, January 27, 1866 (second quotation); Casey, Amite County, II: 40 (third quotation).
evangelization that ought to have been done . . . ." As they reviewed their pre-war efforts on behalf of the slaves they found grave deficiencies; "we mourn that our time, and talents, and wealth, (when we had it) had not been more sacredly devoted to the advancement of human happiness, and the promotion of the Redeemer's Kingdom . . . ." among slaves. 22

At the close of the war the state of the churches appeared grim indeed. Church buildings had been burned and desecrated, thousands of members were dead, ministers were few, congregations were scattered, and the association of evangelicals with a defeated cause sowed seeds of doubt in many minds. As Walter Tynes wrote, "A fratricidal civil war, involving Christians and Christian ministers on both sides in a bloodthirsty strife over political issues, and the extremes of prejudice and hatred in the professed followers of the Christ, led me to doubt . . . in all religion . . . ." An article in the religious press described the dismal situation: "Many churches had been

burned, and in the principal [sic] cities . . . those that remained were occupied by Northern Methodist ministers . . . ." The Methodist General Conference of 1866 left twenty-three charges unsupplied; most of them were colored charges. Emancipation and the collapse of the plantation economy spelled the final end of the missions to the slaves.23

Evangelicals looked to religion to provide "some stabilization out of the chaos that was so prevalent after the close of hostilities." They saw instability within themselves, in their personal lives, and in the larger society. Mrs. Myra Smith lived a comfortable life before the war, but the end of the conflict "finds me a houseless, homeless widow with an afflicted family . . . The war that has desolated our land for over four years has suddenly come to a close, bringing with it defeat, and bankruptcy to very many, we among the number . . . I am brought very low in regard to this world's goods, my wants are known only to God, from whom cometh all my help." Like Mrs. Smith, Walter Tynes turned to religion to overcome his mental anguish.

The most far-reaching cultural change involved the status of the newly freed slaves. Tensions ran high. In one area of northern Mississippi, for instance, whites were

23 Smith Diary excerpts in Eunice J. Stockwell Papers (MDAH), December 23, 1863; May 28, 1865; Tynes Diary, p. 11 (first quotation).
so afraid of a black uprising that they searched freedmen's homes and took their weapons. A white man in Monroe country wrote, "I fear there will be a war between the negroes and white people . . . ." The Rev. Agnew described the "antipathy between the two races" in 1865.\(^\text{24}\)

A period of lawlessness and disorder followed the war; men often took the law into their own hands. In December 1866 two white men were excluded from New Zion Baptist Church "fur having bin in company with a set of Lawless fellows going from house to house ordering our citizens from their homes with intention to whip Rob Hang & Murder their Brethren and neighbors." Conflicts occurred between blacks and whites, and organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan appeared, adding to the racial antipathy and disorder.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{24}\)New Orleans Christian Advocate, January 27, 1866 (second quotation); Minutes of the Quarterly Conference, Port Gibson Station, June 18, 1864; October, December 1865; Liberty Baptist Church, August 1865; Cain, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, pp. 358-59, 390-91, 409-10; Jones Journal, 1866; Agnew Diary, July 20, 23, 1864; "Free Grace Baptist Church, Colored Organized 1869," (first quotation) in Bertie Shaw Rollins Collection (MSU), Smith Diary, December 23, 1863; May 28, 1865; January 13, 1868; Tynes Diary, p. 13; Agnew Diary, November 24, August 18, 1866 (third quotation); W.H.C. Shaw to B. B. Butler, December 27, 1867 (second quotation), Rollins Collection.

\(^{25}\)New Zion Church, Choctaw County, December 1866; Agnew Diary, February 23, July 21, 1870; May 15, 1871; July 21, 1865. On Reconstruction violence see George C. Rable, But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction (Athens, Ga., 1984). On Reconstruction in Mississippi see William C. Harris, The Day of the Carpetbagger: Republican Reconstruction in Mississippi (Baton Rouge, 1979).
Such individual and societal tensions shaped evangelical activities in the post-war period. The Reverend James Lyon, perhaps more outspoken than most, challenged those whites who blamed blacks for postbellum problems, who considered blacks inferior, and who refused to treat blacks justly. He told his congregation "that the great sins of the South were connected, directly or indirectly, with slavery - [I] set forth the great fact that the negro, so recently our slaves were now 'God's poor' at our doors, and must be regarded & treated as such, if we would avoid still further chastisements." He challenged whites "to be . . . instrumental in elevating the black race . . . in the scale of christianity & civilization." The "radicals" in Columbus responded "by ridicule, brow-beating and scorn . . . ," but Lyon followed the dictates of his conscience. The Reverend Mr. Agnew was also criticized for his efforts on behalf of blacks; he wrote, "many people say hard things about me for preaching to the Blacks. It matters not what people say or think. Duty is duty and I am going to do my duty . . . ." 26 Given the larger tensions in society, and the hostility of many whites toward blacks, the evangelical efforts to maintain biracial churches, although clouded by paternalism and racism, carried a special significance.

26 Lyon Journal, pp. 140-41 (first quotation), 142, 143 (second quotation), 210-11; Agnew Journal, August 27, 1870.
In the midst of these hardships, the revivals that began in 1833 continued to spread like wildfire. Anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace observed that religious revivals often occur in disorganized societies torn apart by civil war, invasion, and cultural change. He called such revivals "revitalization movements" and described them as attempts to restore individual and cultural harmony.\textsuperscript{27} For whites, the revivals grew out of their profound sense of loss and disillusionment, and the perception that their social, cultural, and economic lives had been overturned. Blacks, too, saw tremendous disruptions in their lives, confronted white hostility, and searched for order and stability in the changed society. Revivals continued throughout the troubled Reconstruction period. The Methodist Mississippi Conference reviewed the hardships of the period in its 1874 report:

Any view of our ecclesiastical condition which should ignore or disregard the peculiar infelicities of our political status would be unjust alike to the ministry and laity of our church. We live under governmental oppression grievous to be borne, amid financial disasters and pecuniary death, and groan beneath a burden of taxation which paralyzes our energies and exhausts our resources. Yet our people have not abandoned the work . . . .\textsuperscript{28}


\textsuperscript{28}W. B. Jones, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, pp. 84 (quotation), 118. For examples of revivals throughout the period see Jones, passim.
From across the state came reports of great revivals at the war's end. Unlike the origins of the Great Revival, which began in Logan County, Kentucky, and radiated from that nucleus, the post-war revivals broke out simultaneously all over the state. No doubt many Mississippians shared the sentiments expressed by Allan Hargrove in a 1864 letter to his wife, Mary: "My humble prayer is that this cruel war may soon come to a close & we be permitted to return home to worship God under our own vine and fig tree . . . ." The revival tradition was well established; the end of the war and the return of weary troops accelerated a revival movement already underway. At Crystal Springs, Mississippi, "the whole community is in a blaze of religious fervor. The church has been crowded twice each day . . . a crowd of mourners knelt . . . some were praying aloud, some shouting, and many weeping bitterly." A "meeting of days" at Spring Hill Baptist Church in October 1865 added fifteen new members, half of whom were black. White membership in the Salem Association rose from 836 in 1865 to 1362 in 1872, an increase of 63.7 percent. White membership also rose dramatically in churches in the Aberdeen District; at Pontocola white membership rose 103 percent (35 to 71) from 1865 to 1868, while Shiloah showed a 93.1 percent increase (58 to 112) over the same period.29

29New Orleans Christian Advocate, September 8, November 24, 1866; Spring Hill Church, October 1865; Bethlehem Baptist Church, July 1868, August 1869; Philadelphia Mis-
Samuel Agnew's diary records the beginning of the 1865 revivals in his area and will serve to illustrate the general pattern. Almost immediately after the Confederate surrender, congregations at local churches increased dramatically. Religious interest and expectations rose throughout the year until the revival season arrived in August. In that month he noted revivals in progress at several area churches and wrote, "Protracted meetings seem to be the order of the day . . . ." Revivals ended in October, but large crowds of both races continued to attend regular worship services.  

In August 1866, revivals began again, and again with enthusiastic crowds in attendance. In late August he estimated that from 400 to 500 people had converted. A visiting minister, Dr. R. Burrow, "created quite an interest in the Millenium, which he thinks just at hand . . . ." At a September meeting "there have been 43 professions and 29 of these joined the Baptist Church." The same pattern repeated itself; meetings ended in the fall  


30Agnew Diary, May 14, 18, June 4, August 19 (third quotation), 24, 28, 29, September 6, 8, 9, 10, 16, 24, October 3, 30, 1865; April 1, 1866.
and began again the following summer. At an 1867 biracial
meeting a black preacher joined the Baptist church and was
ordained to preach. It was an emotional service; "Several
mourners went up, and from their sobs I judge they were
much exercised . . . after his reception by the church [the
black preacher] indulged in a 'holy laugh.' It seemed to
me to be unnatural, but mayhap I err."31

The same religious cycle continued through the follow-
ing years. By 1869 blacks held their own revivals,
though whites, including Agnew, often attended and joined
in worship. Blacks organized separate churches, but
biracial services and separate services in biracial
churches continued as well. When members of Bethany Pres-
byterian Church organized a subscription drive to build a
new church, black members enthusiastically joined the
effort and pledged over $100. Agnew wrote, "Blacks are
taking hold of the new church with the right spirit, I am
glad to see such an interest taken in the church . . . the
Blacks will give the church enterprise a better life than I
hoped for." Later that year the white building committee
refused "to receive the negro subscription for the Church"
after a heated discussion. Following that decision blacks
purchased a building site and even contemplated leaving the

31Agnew Diary, August 18, 19, 24 (first quotation),
28, 31, September 1, 2, 6 (second quotation), 30, 1866;
June 30, 1867 (third quotation); Line Creek Baptist Church
ordained a former slave in 1866. See Casey, Amite County,
II: 82.
Presbyterian Church for the Methodists. Blacks at Bethany, like former slaves across the South, tested their new-found freedom and sought a more equal footing in society, an attempt that many whites resented and angrily repulsed.\textsuperscript{32}

Black attendance at Bethany declined sharply after the whites refused to accept their subscription. Agnew wrote, "They are offended I suppose." In August 1874, Agnew and a black member "took the name of 12 [blacks] who adhere to the Church. The names of the balance will be erased from the roll. This is a sad duty . . . but no other alternative is left . . . They have persistently neglected their duties for 18 months . . . This action takes from our rolls the names of 44 persons . . . I cannot but think that a rooted antipathy of race is the source of this conduct of theirs."\textsuperscript{33}

Some variation of Bethany's experience occurred in churches across the state. Everywhere, the position of blacks became a central issue of concern. Some blacks apparently expected that political equality would also translate into social equality. As historian Leon Litwack

\textsuperscript{32}Agnew Diary, July 21-24, August 3, 19, September 8, 24, 29, 1867; April 19, August 9, 23, 1868; April 18, June 6, July 4, August 8, 16, 29, October 30, 31, 1869; April 10, July 20, 30, 31, August 21, 27, September 20, 23, 1870; April 2, 17, July 29, 30, October 28, 29, 1871; February 15 (first quotation), December 14 (second quotation), 1872; Leon F. Litwack, \textit{Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery} (New York, 1979), pp. 252-61.

\textsuperscript{33}January 14, March 2 (first quotation), 1873; August 2, 1874 (second quotation); April 18, August 1, 1875.
observed, "This was the appropriate time, some of them [blacks] thought to give substance to their new status, even to challenge and revamp the traditional and seemingly inviolate code of racial etiquette." Charlie Davenport, an ex-slave in Adams County, remembered that "De shawl-strop folks (carpet-baggers) . . . tole us we had a right to go to all de balls, church meetings en entertainments de white folks give," but whites refused to attend with blacks who broke racial etiquette. At an 1866 Baptist revival in Corinth attended by Elizabeth Irions, "there was an old nigger woman who went all thro the congregation shaking hands. Before she got to us . . ., I vowed I wouldn't shake hands with her. . . . so we folded our arms and pretended not to see her. But the first thing we knew she was 'grabbing' at our hands, and Addie Myers just bursted right out laughing!" 34 Not all whites found black efforts to redraw racial boundaries amusing. The young Elizabeth made no attempt to understand the elderly black woman's motives. Perhaps the black woman expected a return to the more egalitarian services of her youth, or perhaps she simply hoped to force the whites to acknowledge her as an individual and to recognize that a new day had dawned. The

blacks at Bethany and the elderly black woman in Corinth attempted to meet whites on terms of equality. Certainly Bethany's black members showed a willingness and a desire to continue biracial worship, but only if a new relationship could be established.

Most whites, of course, had little interest in breaking down racial barriers either inside or outside the churches. Some whites hoped to use the biracial churches to exert control over the freedmen, and to prevent blacks from joining the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, or some other northern-based institution. An 1866 meeting of the Starkville District of the Methodist Church discussed "the importance of immediate zealous action upon our part to save the negro from the clutches of those who, under pretext of laboring for his welfare, only enable them to . . . swallow . . . up the M.E. Church, South." Former slaveowners attempted to use the church courts to shore up their weakened control over the freedmen. For example, in September 1865, three black members of Academy Baptist Church were excluded for disobeying their former masters.35

35Cain, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, p. 433; Boles, Black Southerners, p. 201; New Orleans Christian Advocate, August 11 (first quotation), December 15, 1866; Academy Church, September 1865; Philadelphia Missionary Baptist Church, Choctaw Co. (SBHC), June 1866. See Katharine L. Dvorak, "After Apocalypse, Moses," in Boles, ed., Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord.
Whites were often puzzled, angry, and hurt by the blacks' desire for autonomy. When Nancy Robinson's former slaves refused to sign contracts with her and prepared to leave, many of them to seek out relatives in other states, she wrote, "I was troubled for them many I had raised from infancy watched over their orphan childhood & reared them to manhood . . . Poor Creatures you still need the White Peoples care and protection."  

William Venables, a native of England and early associate of Lorenzo Dow, settled in Mississippi in the early 1800s and became an active lay leader in the Methodist Church. He was described as "a plain, unostentatious" man considered blest by the Holy Spirit and gifted in prayer and exhortation. Perhaps these qualities account for his success among the slaves; he was licensed to preach and spent the last fifteen years of his life ministering to slaves. John G. Jones described Venables' experience after the war:

at the close of the late war he had in his vicinity two hundred colored members under his pastoral oversight. But a negro seems to be constitutionally incapable of what we call gratitude. As soon as they found themselves at liberty to do so, they all, with but few exceptions, turned their backs upon their faithful old pastor and went into some newly intro-

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36 Robinson Diary, August 1, 1865 (first quotation); Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 179-212.
duced colored organization. This was a grief to the old patriarch . . . 37

Jones' rather bitter attitude toward the former slaves can be explained by his own experience. He, too, spent many years preaching to slaves, and considered himself a kind and honest master. His former slaves remained with him for two years, but then left. He wrote, "I feel that my responsibility about those negroes was ended forever. . . . I am told that most of them have joined an independent negro Baptist church but whether they are christians or not is doubtful." 38 Not only did the blacks leave him, they also left the Methodist Church, a double blow to Jones.

As Jones suggested, some black churches did not conform to white theology. The revivals and the establishment of new churches also resulted in a revitalization movement that helped some blacks create a religious life peculiarly suited to their postbellum needs. While blacks often joined in the post-war biracial revival services, they also held separate revivals. In 1866 Agnew noted that blacks had separate revival services; "There is an antipathy between the two races and the whites crowd them out of the Church . . . the negroes prefer having their preaching to themselves." Agnew wrote that 500 blacks


attended an 1869 meeting in Guntown. Mollie Edmonds, a former slave from Coahoma County recalled, "After surrender we held our meetings in big tents and had a preacher, what could tell us the word of God." On some occasions, at least, blacks heard a different message in their separate services, and many ex-slaves recalled that Christianity spread among the freedmen. Mollie Edmonds said that before the Civil War "there wasn't much Christianity amongst us."

A remarkable former slave in Grenada County, Cindy Mitchell, led one group of freedmen known as "Cindy's Band." A brief outline of her doctrine shows how well-suited it was to the freedmen's new condition: "Among the things she taught her fellowmen were cleanliness in home and person, thrift, industry, self-respect, and unity among members of the Band." By the 1890s, at least one hundred families belonged to the Band. In a bit of irony, whites who attended her services occupied the back seats or sat outside by the windows. Of course, the great majority of blacks joined one of the mainline denominational churches, but even these blacks tailored theology to suit their needs. When in 1871 Bethany Baptist Church appointed a committee to visit to black churches nearby, the committee reported that the black churches' rules and
regulations were "wholly unknown to Regular Baptist Churches."\(^{39}\)

At the war's close blacks had the freedom to control their religious life. As the above examples illustrate, many blacks left the biracial churches and organized independent, segregated churches. Others, however, chose to remain in the biracial churches for several years after the war.

Whites were not always hostile to blacks who wanted to organize separate churches. With regard to blacks, the Methodists in the Starkville District agreed that "where they desire it, and their numbers justify, to organize them into separate congregations . . . ." As Methodists in the Mississippi Conference acknowledged, "It must be evident to the most casual observer that the old plan of involuntary provision for them [blacks] will not answer. They feel that it is not of their own choice, and hence, . . . they set up for themselves . . . ." The conference resolved to "encourage and help the colored people to build churches

\(^{39}\)Rawick, American Slave, Supp., Series 1, vol. 9, Part 4, p. 1151; Bethany Baptist Church, May, July (quotation) 1871; Agnew Diary, August 18, 1866 (first quotation); April 18, June 6, July 4, August 8, October 30, 31, 1869; Rawick, American Slave, Supp., Series 1, vol. 9, Part 4, p. 1601; vol. 7, Part 2, pp. 671 (second and third quotations), 615, 345; vol. 8, Part 3, p. 868.
"..." The Methodists General Conference set up a separate Colored Conference in 1867.\textsuperscript{40}

Often, however, blacks did not seek white approval or assistance; they simply left the churches. In 1866, for example, New Providence Baptist Church appointed a committee to visit the "colored brethren who have absented themselves from the church for mos. [months] past." In 1864 Jerusalem Baptist Church had sixty-five black members, but all of them were gone by 1866. As former slave and postbellum preacher Charles Moore recalled, "I didn't spec' nothin outten freedom septin' peace an' happiness an' the right to go my way as I please. An' that is the way the Almighty wants it."\textsuperscript{41}

In other churches, biracial services continued after the war, though often blacks gained more autonomy. Blacks continued to be a part of Academy Baptist Church after the war, but they met separately and had a black preacher. In 1869 the church called a conference "for the purpose of organizing the colored people of Academy into a separate church by a unanimous request from them ..." Though organized as a separate church, the blacks used the Academy

\textsuperscript{40} New Orleans Christian Advocate, August 11, 1866 (first quotation); December 15, 1866 (second and third quotations); Cain, Methodism in the Mississippi Conference, p. 441, 457.

\textsuperscript{41} Casey, Amite County, II: 310 (first quotation), 56-76; Rawick, American Slave, Supp., Series I, vol. 9, Part 4, p. 1601 (second quotation); Bethany Church, July 1871.
church building until the 1870s. In 1867 the members of Magnolia Baptist Church met and the following business transpired: "On motion before the white members present it was Resolved that all the colored members of this church have the privilege of formally withdrawing from this Church to unite with the church about to be constituted." Blacks used the church building until December 1871 when the whites withdrew that privilege. In Liberty Baptist Church whites agreed to allow blacks to choose their own minister and use the meeting house one Sunday in each month. In 1867 the church licenced Jerry Blow, a black preacher. Later that year, the old slave gallery was removed. Blacks were allowed to use the building until 1872.42

It should be stressed that blacks withdrew from—they were seldom pushed out of—the biracial churches, and generally the separations occurred amicably. At Bethesda Baptist Church in 1865 whites appointed a committee of seven white men to oversee black members. The committee included former masters. Whites allowed blacks to use the church once each month and selected a white preacher for blacks. In 1866 the committee suggested that a former slave, York Horton, who had joined the church in 1855, be licensed to preach to blacks. Undoubtedly, the white

42 Academy Church, November 1865, August 1869, August 1870; Magnolia Baptist Church, July 1867; December 23, 1871; Liberty Church, May 1866, July, August 1867, May 1872; Hopewell Baptist Church Records (MBHS), August 1871.
committee acted on requests from the blacks; the appointment of a black preacher was apparently the committee's last act and marked a new level of black autonomy within the church. In 1867 the church agreed to ordain Horton. In 1868 blacks organized a separate church and agreed to pay $30 annually for use of the meeting house. Whites assisted blacks in organizing the church and appended the following statement: "be it resolved by the White portion of the church, that no objections [sic] is entertained or obstacle thrown in the way of a mutual and christian separation and having great sympathy and christian desire for the spiritual and temporal welfare for our colored breth-ren." Blacks continued to use the building until 1870.43

This gradual separation of the blacks and whites prevailed in the states' biracial churches. The Salem Baptist Association in Jasper County met in 1870 and recommended that where black members "are of sufficient numbers as to form churches and can procure preaching, and wish to form churches of their own, that they should be dismissed in order and assisted in doing so, but where they wish to remain with us as heretofore and are orderly, we think they should be allowed to do so." In 1872 the Association suggested that separate churches should be organized. Black membership in the Salem Association's churches

43 Bethesda Church, March, November 1866; April, May, August, November, December, 1867; January, October 1868; December 1869; Boles, Black Southerners, p. 202.
declined from 206 in 1865 to 122 in 1870. As late as 1872, 81 blacks continued to worship in biracial churches in the Association. Blacks continued to appear in the records of Fellowship Baptist Church as late as 1876.  

The Civil War brought dramatic changes to the biracial churches, and accelerated a trend toward separation that began in the antebellum period. The death of many members, the flight of slave members, the destruction of church buildings, and the dislocations caused by the conflict closed many state churches. Others, however, experienced revivals and added both black and white members. The Confederate defeat and the resulting problems endangered evangelicalism, but a powerful revitalization movement beginning in 1863 and continuing after the war renewed church life for both blacks and whites. A revitalized religious life enabled many whites to accept the realities of the post-war period and brought a sense of healing and comfort to those who had suffered because of the war. Blacks, however, created their own religious institutions and forged an identity and religious life suited to their needs as free people. Racial separation  

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44 Minutes of the Ninth Annual Session of the Salem Baptist Association . . . Jasper County, Mississippi . . . 1870 (Lauderdale Station, Miss., 1870), pp. 6 (quotation), 11; Minutes . . . 1865, p. 11; Minutes . . . 1872, pp. 7, 11. See also Statistical Tables in Minutes of the Aberdeen Baptist Association . . . 1865; Minutes . . . 1868 (n.p., n.d.); Fellowship Baptist Church, May 1874; January 1876.
was a natural result of this process one usually achieved harmoniously and often after several years of cooperation, no small feat during the troubled Reconstruction period.
Epilogue

From their rather inauspicious beginnings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, evangelical churches expanded dramatically and set the moral tone of society. The evangelicals' rise to social dominance was not accomplished without dramatic changes in their belief system. Early churches were founded on egalitarian principles by members of both races. Whites welcomed slaves into the churches, often opposed slavery, defended slaves' religious freedom, and showed a genuine sensitivity to the slaves' plight. Together, white and black evangelicals shaped religious practice on the frontier.

But the rapid expansion of slavery, the movement of slaveholders into the churches, and the growing wealth of the membership presented evangelicals with a serious moral dilemma. Continued ambivalence or opposition to slavery threatened the very existence of the churches in the South. As sectional tensions rose and the debate over slavery intensified after 1830, most evangelicals embraced slavery. Perhaps realistically they had no other choice, but there was something tragic about their Faustian bargain. After 1830, religious leaders articulated the most widely accepted justification of slavery, one based on Biblical teachings. Evangelical religion played a vital role in transforming the perception of slavery from a necessary evil to a positive good, and in spreading that doctrine
across the land. The Biblical defense of slavery also placed a greater emphasis on the spiritual welfare of slaves; after 1830 evangelical efforts to minister to blacks increased, and black membership in evangelical churches grew.

The adoption of the proslavery ideology was not the only change experienced by the churches after 1830. The churches entered a period of steady growth and stabilization. As they moved from sect to denomination, churches became more hierarchical. As they came closer to achieving social dominance, evangelicals often abandoned their egalitarian ideals. Ministers sought a higher social position, increasingly distanced themselves from their congregations, and placed a greater emphasis on the ministerial gift. Lay participation in worship services was discouraged, a trend opposed by many white and most black evangelicals. Because of their preference for a different style of worship and because of white discrimination, blacks often preferred to worship in segregated services and thereby gained a degree of autonomy within the churches.

The decline in egalitarianism and white discrimination against blacks has led some historians to characterize biracial churches as simply another white control device against slaves— an unfair assumption that fails to recognize the complexities in biracial churches and questions the validity of what members of both races
believed to be an avenue to maturation and spiritual renewal. Evidence from church disciplinary actions demonstrates that whites sometimes used church courts to punish violators of the slave code, but over half the charges against blacks involved the same human frailties that confronted whites—profanity, intoxication, and sexual misdeeds, for instance, knew no color bounds. The examination of the church courts also shows that many slaves willingly engaged in the evangelical struggle to contain individual passions and thereby win personal salvation and create a more orderly community.

This common struggle served as an unifying cord between all evangelicals, and helped keep an egalitarian sentiment alive within many evangelicals and within some churches. The centrality of the conversion experience is another example of the communal bonds that transcended race and class.

The coming of the Civil War, however, highlighted the divergent goals held by black and white evangelicals. With varying degrees of enthusiasm, white evangelicals lent their support to sectionalism, secession, and war. The terrible suffering and dislocations that resulted from the conflict, compounded by Confederate defeats, brought about a crisis in the churches; many ceased to function altogether, leaders left for war, and churches were destroyed. Yet out of that malaise grew a spirit of
revival in many churches. The Confederate defeat caused many evangelicals to question their faith, but the revival movement accelerated and became part of a revitalization movement that brought tremendous growth in post-war churches.

For blacks the war carried different implications. Many blacks saw the war as an answer to their prayers for freedom. This vision of the war as an answered prayer combined with disruptions in the slave community brought blacks into the Civil War revivals, and the Confederate defeat only fueled blacks' faith. For blacks, too, the war and postwar revivals served as a revitalization movement enabling blacks to forge a community and a set of beliefs suited to their new status as freedmen.

Perhaps the most revolutionary outcome of the war on evangelical churches was the separation along racial lines. It was a remarkable transformation occurring over the period from 1866 to the 1870s. The separations usually occurred after blacks requested a division and were generally accomplished amicably. The division was a mixed blessing. Black churches became focal points of the black community and driving forces in the black struggle for freedom and equality. But as long as blacks and whites worshipped in the same churches, whites were compelled to wrestle with the contradictions between Christianity and discrimination against blacks. The biracial churches were
never perfect institutions, but they brought blacks and whites together in a unique and significant way.

Increasingly as the years past, black and white evangelicals forgot their common history. So much so that what would have seemed natural to a southerner in the antebellum period--biracial worship--became anathema to many southerners of the following century. While the history of biracial worship holds a special significance for southern churches, still the most segregated institutions in society, the stories of individual struggles for personal growth and redemption within the confines of an oppressive, discriminatory society have much wider implications. The history of evangelicalism in Mississippi in the nineteenth century is a complex one, filled with contradictions, human failings, and occasional glimpses of Christianity's ability to bridge the gulf between master and slave. The churches were a mingled yarn, both good and ill together.
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MDAH - Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

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SBHC - Southern Baptist Historical Commission, Nashville, Tennessee.

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