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Salvation black or white: Presbyterian rationale and Protestant support for the religious instruction of slaves in South Carolina

Ramey, Susan E., M.A.
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1994

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SALVATION BLACK OR WHITE

PRESBYTERIAN RATIONALE AND PROTESTANT SUPPORT
FOR THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF SLAVES IN
SOUTH CAROLINA

by
Susan E. Ramey

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Department of History
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 1994
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ABSTRACT

This work examines the rationale used by South Carolina Presbyterians for the religious instruction of slaves and the connection between such education and the salvation of masters as well as slaves. Previous scholarship has largely ignored the issue of salvation in the ante-bellum South for Christians black or white.

To adequately explain the complex issue of salvation in a slave society, this research highlights Presbyterians in South Carolina, from the late Eighteenth Century to Reconstruction. To fully appreciate the depth of Southern commitment to slavery, religious education and salvation, general Southern Protestant support for this spiritual endeavor is presented first. To further aid in understanding its importance to Presbyterians as a denomination, an account of their institutional struggle is also provided. Ultimately, South Carolina Presbyterians fostered black religious education with a deeply held biblical rationale expressing equal concern for the souls of both slaves and masters.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

We are to lead this people into life eternal, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the will of God - this is our duty - the great duty of the Southern church. Grant us wisdom and power, and grace, O Lord, our God and Our Redeemer, to discharge it.

The above are the closing remarks of the Reverend Charles Colcock Jones, D.D., Presbyterian minister of renown throughout the South. In this 1817 address, Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the Southern States, Jones called upon all his Protestant brethren to join him in the vital work of preparing the slaves to meet their Maker. To this end, many denominations labored in the field of religious instruction. In his recent book, Arrogance of Faith, Forrest G. Wood states that much of the previous scholarship dealing with this subject views Southern concern as being primarily interested in white salvation rather than the temporal relief or salvation of the slaves.

Salvation for either race rested on a knowledge of the Bible as the true word of God and, in particular the message contained in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Consequently, religious instruction was a necessary prerequisite for a follower of Christianity to achieve everlasting life. If one acknowledges the general consensus amongst most white slave owners, that Blacks
were indeed part of the human race and, thus, were endowed with immortal souls and a God-given right to redemption, then concern with religious enlightenment would seem a moral duty. It is the intention here to view one denomination’s attempts to deal with this issue and ascertain the intensity of efforts at religious enlightenment. Also, to determine whether motivation was purely self-centered or if black salvation was also a consideration. The Presbyterian position is substantiated by the many specific and ongoing measures enacted in the area of instruction. These are highlighted against sectional interdenominational support and cooperation for this idea. In addition, a brief history of the church’s stand on slavery and black education provides a framework for the specific individual contributions and actual programs instituted towards this end.

While Southern Protestant support for religious education is important and valuable as an illustration of the seriousness with which this issue was viewed, space necessitates limiting the parameters to provide a more detailed picture. By concentrating on one denomination, the Presbyterians, in one state, South Carolina, it is possible to view events more effectively over time, and to observe even minor changes in personal or official doctrine. Consequently, while inter-denominational support aids in illustrating the importance of religious instruction towards salvation, the Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist and Lutheran efforts are presented in less depth.

Except for the Episcopalians, these denominations separated officially from their Northern counterparts over the issue of slavery. It is generally agreed that the international institutional hierarchy, which mostly mirrored that of the Roman
Catholic Church, was responsible for the Episcopalians remaining united. Forrest
Wood agrees that slavery was, indeed, a divisive issue but was by no means the sole
reason for Presbyterian schism.¹ In this case, members North and South faced
doctrinal issues that forced the initial breach. The ideology of the Second Great
Awakening in the form of millennialism and the need to spread the Word to the
frontier, led to New School participation in the Presbyterian-Congregational Plan of
Union of 1801, which called specifically for inter-denominational cooperation. This
left Old School members resentful over lax ministerial qualifications and a weakening
of Calvinist tradition. New School adherents also relied more heavily on free agency
as a way to grace, causing a serious dispute with conservative Presbyterians who
harbored a belief in the need for a return to a stricter doctrine based upon a literal
interpretation of the Bible.

Major sectional rift came in 1837 with the birth of the New School, making
two separate entities both claiming to represent American Presbyterianism. Concern
over slavery exacerbated this schism further and was responsible for the later
dissolution of the church into four separate institutions. In 1857, Southern members
of the New School branched off and founded the United Synod of the Presbyterian
Church in the United States of America. By 1861 the Old School followed suit and
called their Southern body the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of
America. By 1865 the two Southern entities merged creating the Presbyterian Church
of the United States, commonly referred to as the Southern Presbyterian Church. The
two Northern churches remained estranged over doctrinal differences until 1869 when they re-united once again as the Presbyterian Church of America.

Despite its internal difficulties, the Presbyterian example proves valuable because it provides information on several levels. Individually, there are laymen, clergy and the church as a single congregation. Several churches make up a presbytery, and several presbyteries hold membership in a larger brotherhood, the synod. Ultimately, the synods all participate at the national level with representation in the General Assembly.

As early as 1818, Presbyterians disagreed over slavery, but not all Northern communicants were particularly vocal in their dissent. As many historians have noted, immediatism was on the rise, and although it was a religious concern, it was not a church (institutional) movement. By the 1830's the abolitionists, while still a minority movement, were extremely vocal and succeeded in attracting ever greater numbers to their ranks. Immediatism was a cause for concern within the abolitionist movement itself but was considered too radical by many Northerners who remained disturbed by the prospect of millions of free Blacks streaming into their domain. Gradual emancipation represented the more mainstream ideology because it would free smaller numbers over a longer time frame. While the General Assembly of 1818 soundly condemned slavery, the church as an institution had no program for immediate release of the bondmen. This was left to the individual owner's personal conscience. Gradually, Southern ministers began to exert more influence causing historian Alice Felt Tyler to declare the Reverend James Henley Thornwell (South
Carolina) "the real leader of Presbyterianism in the United States." The Reverend Thornwell was also President of South Carolina College as well as the editor of the Southern Presbyterian Review.

As Southern Presbyterians became more prominent nationally, and their region's "peculiar institution" came under increasing attack from concerned citizens, particularly Northern abolitionists, Southern Christians became more united. Rent by doctrinal and theological differences for their entire history, all denominations found themselves finally able to unite over the issue of bondage. Their joint defense of slavery rested on biblical literality and further justified educating the black "heathen" for his eventual salvation. The ultimate expression of this unity appeared in the form of An Address to the Christians of the World. Published in the 1863, it contained the familiar and most quoted passages of the day, "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's." It is more often cited by historians for its list of signators than its content. Drafted by five ministers and signed by 96 Christian leaders from eleven denominations, the address represented every Confederate state with the single exception of Arkansas. It is considered by many historians to be the most significant pro-slavery document of the era. Spreading the Word to the "dark continent" by educating the bondsmen became the rallying cry of Southern Protestants.

To further diffuse criticism and validate their position that slavery was for the good of the slave, and, as such, ordained by God, Southern Protestants elevated the issue of African-American souls. The biblical defense of their position was based on the Calvinist belief in literal translation of God's word and predestination. While it is
clear that Protestant slave owners placed a premium on slave education, their motivation has been questioned. Was it out of a genuine concern for black immortality or simply out of fear for their own. Owners’ souls were endangered as a consequence of participation in an evil system or possibly by just condoning it. Slavery itself may not have been the evil, but improper treatment of this human property placed the master’s after-life in jeopardy.

The most easily documentable period of Southern religious defense of slavery is unarguably anchored securely in the period from the 1830s up to the start of the Civil War. This naturally coincides with the zenith of abolitionist rhetoric and enthusiasm. To do justice to the topic under discussion, however, the time frame herein is expanded forward to include the war years and also backward to trace the earliest possible references to black religious education. This longer chronology should render even subtle changes over time discernible. Looking at religious instruction will illuminate not only white concerns over salvation but also any intensification of such concerns caused by uneasiness over security in this life or the hereafter.

For many, slavery’s morality hinged on religious justification and was, therefore, extremely important. It was, however, also questioned on the grounds of American republicanism, constitutionality and humanity. Many Americans, including civil and religious leaders North and South, as well as South Carolina Presbyterians specifically, expressed their concerns on just such grounds. Problems in squaring the enslavement of a large segment of the population with the espousal of freedom,
equality and the inalienable God-given rights of all human beings, remained an unsettling dilemma for many. This concern with the natural rights of mankind prevailed from the pre-Revolutionary era ideology of the Enlightenment. While these concerns are important in their own right, they are peripheral to the matter at hand - religious rationale and support for the salvation of slaves.

In addition to dealing with problems of humanitarianism and the constitutionality of slavery, many Southerners, particularly those in South Carolina, also dealt with the matter of safety. In a state where the actual majority of inhabitants was black by 1720 and where on rice growing plantations the ratio of black to white residents reached as high as ten to one, it is not surprising that security remained a challenging issue to the minority in charge. Ultimately, the Presbyterians and Southern Protestants generally, viewed these concerns through a religious lens. Relying on the Bible as God's word, they defended the institution as divinely ordained, thus removing it from man's jurisdiction. This is particularly true of the Presbyterians with their strong tradition of Calvinism.

Dealing with one denomination in a specific geographic location over approximately 100 years should provide a definitive analysis of Presbyterian concerns with salvation for the slave. Elaborating both efforts at religious education and the justification given for its necessity, help illuminate that group's depth of commitment as well as any changes over time. This paper is presented in four additional chapters. The first deals with general Southern Protestant inter-denominational activity and support, confirming that the issue of slavery was of such importance that it overcame
doctrinal and theological differences. This provides proof of the depth of the commitment to religious education. A second surveys the impact of slavery within the Presbyterian church's institutional structure and follows the ensuing schism and formation of the two Southern entities that eventually comprised the Southern Presbyterian Church. The third deals exclusively with South Carolina Presbyterians and their specific programs in the religious education of slaves until approximately 1865. Lastly, the epilogue includes a brief discussion of how the Presbyterians dealt with the issue in the period of Reconstruction. This postwar perspective provides a fitting conclusion to the question of whether the concern of this group was restricted to self-redemption and the temporal benefits gained from Christianizing slaves, or if it included genuine concern for the souls of their bondsmen as well.
NOTES


2. Ibid., 298.

3. Ibid.
CHAPTER 2

General Protestant Support for Religious Education of Slaves in South Carolina

The Presbyterian Church was not alone in its long-standing concern over the religious fate of the bondsmen of its Southern membership. Educational interests first appear in the General Assembly records of 1818 and intensify over time, resulting in very specific duties for both masters and slaves. These duties were particularly important, resting as they did on Divine ordination. Failure to comply, called into question the validity of the system as well as the state of one's own soul. This issue of slavery as a divinely sanctioned relationship, provided such a strong point of defense in the South that all major Protestant denominations overcame doctrinal differences to unite in this common cause. Forrest Wood and other historians argue that this was possible because slavery was such an intricately interwoven part of Southern society generally. To substantiate or dispel whether Presbyterian concern with religious education of slaves was part of a larger belief that slavery was a religiously mandated institution, and specifically to see if this instruction related to the salvation of both races, warrants taking inter-denominational support into consideration.

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Inclusion of other denominations shows whether Presbyterian concerns in South Carolina were validated by other members of the religious community. This sojourn into sectarian Protestant ideology on the subject of religious education and its connection to white or black salvation, rightly begins with a look at the very early history of the colony. The first African arrived in South Carolina in 1671. The first slaves arrived from Barbados, imported by Sir John Yeamans to cultivate his property on the Ashley River, thus establishing a system destined to replace all previous forms of indentured servitude. As the great tobacco and rice plantations grew, a larger source of workers became necessary and African slaves, imported from the West Indies or directly from the West coast of Africa, provided the answer. By 1716 the number of slaves had increased sufficiently to cause concern for white security, particularly as their numbers were reported to be growing daily. This fear was enforced by reports of an Indian uprising in the same year. Provisions were made at this point to encourage white settlers, particularly servants. Every slaveholder of ten bondsmen was required to hire one white indentured worker and for every twenty slaves the number of indentures doubled.¹

According to this source, the ratio of black and white remained a concern throughout the Revolutionary era. In a report dated September 17, 1708, Nathaniel Johnson, the governor, and his council reported to the proprietors of the colony on the condition of the province, including a breakdown and number of the various segments of the citizenry. A grand total of 9,580 "souls" resided in South Carolina, of which 3,960 were free, white men and women. The remainder of the population
consisted of some 4,100 black slaves and 1,400 Indian captives. Growing concern over these figures resulted in a 1719 duty being enacted which added a surcharge of 10 pounds per head for all imported slaves from Africa and 30 per head for those coming from the West Indies.²

As early as 1669 and the writing of the first colonial constitution, British concern with white control is evident. Based upon the work of John Locke and the Earl of Shaftsbury (a proprietor), this document stated that every freeman of South Carolina "shall have absolute authority and power over his Negro slaves, of what opinion or religion soever." The significance of this statement is that the last words were intended to provide protection against any possible effects of conversion to Christianity or baptism. Due to this fear, many owners withheld the Gospel from their people concerned that Christianity would remove the very thing which allowed enslavement of the African - "heathenism."³ In 1722, fear of emancipation due to religious conversion resulted in passage of a statute giving slaves "convenient" clothes once every year and, more importantly, stating that no slave could become free by accepting Christianity. Negroes were declared real property and this remained in law until 1740 when they were declared chattel.⁴ Concern with religious enlightenment and its repercussions in the form of demands for emancipation were, seemingly, an ongoing concern in South Carolina. A provision from the above mentioned act of 1722 declared it legal for any slave, Negro or Indian, to receive and profess Christianity and, indeed, be baptized into their chosen faith. This law did not infer freedom; but rather it very specifically stated that the condition of a slave remained
the same. However, concern over possible misreading of this provision forbade its inclusion in the Act of 1722.

Final word on the problem awaited official opinion from the Earl of Salisbury and Lord Talbot, Attorney General and Solicitor General respectively. Concerned merchants in London, fearing interruption of the trade, secured the opinions of these two crown law officers who stated that colonists’ fears regarding freedom were groundless. Consequently, Dr. Gibson, the Bishop of London, in 1727 wrote a pastoral letter entitled, To Masters and Mistresses in all British Colonies, on British Plantations Abroad, to Encourage and Promote the Instruction of the Negroes in the Christian Faith. Dealing with the charge that bringing heathen slaves into the fold would result in insurrection and freedom, the Bishop countered:

that Christianity and the embracing of the gospel does not make the least Alteration in Civil Property or in any of these Duties which belong to civil Relations, but in all these respects it continues Persons in just the same State it found them. The freedom Christianity gives is a freedom from the bondage of Sin and Satan and from the Dominion of Men’s Lusts and Passions and inordinate Desires; "but as to their outward Condition, whatever that was before, whether bond or free, their being baptized and becoming Christians makes no manner of Change in it."\(^5\)

St. Paul in I Corinthians vii, 20 and 24, spoke to this same issue by stating that to remain in God’s good graces required acceptance of the position to which one was born.

Black numbers continued to climb causing fear of insurrection in the smaller white community.\(^6\) Ultimately, the Stono Rebellion erupted in 1740 at which time the Black population numbered approximately 40,000. Probably inspired by a similar
uprising in Florida, a number of South Carolina slaves assembled at Stono and killed two white men in a warehouse containing guns and ammunition. Arming themselves and choosing a captain to lead them, the slaves headed toward Florida with "colours flying and drums beating". Reports of plundering and killing white inhabitants accompanied them. All blacks encountered along the way were forced to participate in this march to freedom. The rebellion was put down when rioters were surrounded by a group of Presbyterians alerted in church by a fellow worshipper named Golightly.7

The importance of the Stono Rebellion, for the purposes under discussion, is that while more stringent provisions against black assembly were forthcoming, other measures were more favorable to the slaves. Most of these improvements concerned work hours, food and general treatment, however, the missionary arm of the Anglican Church (the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) received twelve newly arrived missionaries with instructions to render all possible assistance to convert the heathens. Their success remained small in the early days owing perhaps to the "rudeness of the Negroes", the objections of the owners or the negligence of the missionaries.

Samuel Thomas, the very first missionary in the field, arrived in 1702 at Goose Creek where he ministered until 1706. His first report listed five converts who rapidly increased to thirty-two. He was also responsible for teaching twenty of those under his care to read. Thomas's replacement, the Reverend Dr. LeJeau, reported that parents and masters in the area were much inclined to have their children and
their slaves taught the Christian religion. LeJeau personally instructed and baptized many black and Indian slaves.

In St. Andrew's Parish in 1713, the Reverend Taylor (no first name available) wrote to the Society of the work of a Mr. Haig and a Mr. Edwards who diligently instructed many Negroes in the principles of Christianity, resulting in the reclaiming of their souls for God. This "wonderful success" encouraged the Reverend Taylor to examine the work of these two missionaries under his direction. The results showed the slaves in question were able to recite the Apostle’s Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer. The parson was so impressed by the bondsmen’s responses that he felt compelled to agree to their requests for baptism. He performed the ritual the following Sunday. Rev. Taylor also admonished local masters for their failure to "concur with the ministers", feeling their participation in practicing the Christian faith would encourage the slaves to do likewise. In many cases, the report continues, owners remained angry with attempts to Christianize their property. In 1711 the people who most zealously encouraged religious instruction were listed as: Mr. John Morris of St. Bartholomew’s; Lady Moore, Captain David Davis, Mrs. Sarah Baker, and several others of Goose Creek; Landgrave Joseph Morton and his wife, of St. Paul’s; Mr. and Mrs. Skeene, Mrs. Haig, and Mrs. Edwards and the governor (Robert Gibbes) are recorded as the most zealous.8

The Anglican church, along with its missionary arm, the SPG, accepted slavery as a necessary form of labor and part of life in British colonies. In fact, in 1710 the church accepted two plantations in Barbados with the full complement of
three hundred slaves each. The funds generated from these plantations were used to support a number of scholars and professors living under vows of chastity and obedience thus allowing the proper study of medicine and divinity. By doing so the clergy hoped to gain the confidence of the slaves by "having the opportunity of doing good to men's souls while taking care of their bodies." In South Carolina, church leaders went a step further and purchased additional Negroes to educate for the advantage and edification of the other slaves under their care. These black teachers were "country born" and taught to read the Bible along with the most important concepts of Christianity and then placed under the direction of appropriate trustees and allowed to instruct other slaves. Some $226 was raised to build a school house on the grounds of the church near the rectory. This particular school existed for 22 years with classes containing between 55 and 70 students in the years 1746 to 1757. The school flourished until the death of one of the two teachers and the incapacitation of the other due to illness. These two instructors were the first two students of the school and were given the Anglican names of Andrew and Harry upon completion of the necessary studies. They then remained for another 21 years passing on their knowledge to future classes. Anglican concern with religious instruction was controversial well before the pressure of abolitionism and sectional concerns called the system of slavery itself to national and world attention. The colony, under the proprietorship granted by the crown, also acknowledged the right of slaves to receive the Gospel and Christian instruction. It is important to remember, however, that this
seeming religious equality was tempered with a strong proviso forbidding manumission as a result of conversion.

The Anglican Church also showed an early and ongoing concern with the issue of religious education in South Carolina. By 1823 an anonymous South Carolinian who referred to himself as "an extremely religious fellow" and member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, presented a paper to the South Carolina Association, *Practical Considerations Founded on the Scriptures Relative to the Slave Population of South Carolina*. Noting the sensitivity of the subject, but feeling compelled by a sense of religious duty, he argued that slavery was not biblically forbidden but religious instruction to "our Negroes" was demanded by God. He further declared himself a decided advocate of this latter course as Jesus Himself commanded His Apostle's to "preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark, XVI, 47) and "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke XXIV, 47)

Very importantly, this writer explicitly addresses the issue of his own salvation. "Can I then, withhold my prayer to heaven, that the whole human race, without distinction of colour or nation, may be brought to a knowledge of God their Redeemer, and be saved? God would have all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus. (I Tim. 2,4) (Eph. IV. 21) God, then, requires it; and, I think, our own comfort, as well as theirs, require it." He also expresses concern for souls of both races while acknowledging the need for prudence in the pursuit of these goals so as not to disturb the social status quo.¹⁰ Manumission
brought forth evil as no slave could maintain himself by honest labor. At the same
time he acknowledged the need for slaves as white South Carolinians lacked the skills
to cultivate the low-lying rice fields. In addition, the ever-growing number of slaves
due to natural increase, showed that the system was not severe making for a labor
force of 62,347 bondspeople during the ten years immediately following the
prohibition of the trade.

While this writer did not believe in manumission, he insisted slaves originally
enjoyed the same state of immortality as the white man. However, biblical truth
proclaimed that Blacks had forfeited that privilege by disobedience and sin. This
writer based this loss of rights on the curse of Ham. (Ham looked upon the
nakedness of his drunken farther, Noah, and in return Noah cursed this youngest
son's progeny - Canaan) The Arabic version of the curse reads thus:

I. Cursed be Ham, the father of Canaan; a servant of servants
shall he be to his brethren.
II. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and Ham, the father
of Canaan, shall be his servant
III. God shall enlarge Japheth; He shall even dwell in the tents
of Shem; And Ham the father of Canaan, shall be his servant.11

The meaning of Ham is black or burnt.

Noah's curse was responsible for his descendants' settling in Africa and the
consequence of their color. It was also the cause of their slavery both in Africa and
America. The New Testament gave the author ample proof of the compatibility of
slavery and Christianity as well as equally strong evidence of the religious duty
charged to believers in the form of religious instruction including these "sons of
Ham". "Let every man, abide in the same calling wherein he was called," said St.
Paul. If a slave converted, a slave he still remained. However, instruction enabling conversion was a duty placed on slave owners. The word of God, the Gospel, could not be improper for any man regardless of condition: "the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Further, all scripture, as the holy word of God, was useful for the instruction of righteousness and therefore adaptable to the various conditions of mankind. "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman." In Cor. VII 20-23, slaves are admonished to be obedient to their masters with fear and trembling as servants of Christ, doing the will of God. Biblical quotes too numerous to mention are used as further proof of the need to educate slaves religiously and showing that conversion to Christianity was not a threat to the status quo.

If this educational process was carried forth correctly, and God’s word and meaning were not changed, good could be the only result. Without teaching the evil (slaves) how to change and live righteously, they could not be expected to understand the duties imposed upon them as slaves. Indeed, true Christian knowledge was "peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, chastity, and obedience." (Gal. V22.23)

The results of religious knowledge supposedly made masters kinder and slaves more obedient. Slaveholding brought with it moral guardianship over those in bondage, for which owners were accountable on the day of retribution.

Think reader, what delight it must give to the pious heart in that awful day, to hear these people welcomed as disciples of our common Lord and Saviour, Think of the joy we must feel to know, that it was through our instrumentality, and the grace
of God, that they were brought to that happy state.........If we can make one slave a better man, we serve our country; if we can save but one soul from the wrath to come, we glorify god.

While the above may be self-serving, it also shows concern for black salvation and, at the very least, enormous satisfaction with white performance of religious duty.13

Another short passage from this source also addresses the equally important aspect of white salvation. "And oh, reader! Hearken to the declaration of God by the mouth of His holy servants: He which converteth the sinner from the error of this way, shall save his soul from eternal death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." James V.20. "And they that shall be teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars are for ever and ever." Dan.xii.3 What an inducement for Christians to labor for the conversion of the ignorant and the wicked!"14

Having laid a strong biblical case for religious education and the promise of salvation of both races, the author then calls on masters and slaves to unite behind the Christian scheme to convert the religiously ignorant. He felt there were enough ministers in South Carolina of every denomination with sufficient learning, piety, judgement, patriotism and willingness to take this duty seriously. Any difficulties could be overcome by perseverance and God's blessing. The technical aspects of appropriate instruction were then addressed. First, interesting moral tracts needed preparation. Utilizing any slaves who could already read provided a way to pass these lessons on to those less literate. Practical lessons from the Bible and in particular Psalms, Proverbs and the New Testament merited inclusion as did the
proper prayers adapted or composed to their (the slaves) condition. The object was to present the bondsmen with a proper representation of their condition. To do otherwise led to their destruction in this world as well as the next.

Secondly, to ensure they received appropriate instruction required regular attendance at settled places of public worship within their own neighborhoods, but preferably in the church attended by their masters. Under no circumstance were slaves allowed to hold separate meetings or services or be taught by those of their own color. To leave them unattended would have led to "an excitation of the passions."¹⁵

In 1823 a black conspiracy rocked the white community of Charleston. However, the Anglican church reported that not one of the participants was a member of this denomination. Credit is given to the superior moral condition of black members which due to the "sober, rational, sublime and evangelical worship" to which they were exposed. Therein, was nothing to inflame feelings and, very importantly, nothing left to the "crude, undigested ideas of illiterate black class leaders." Nor were black leaders allowed to expand on the scriptures nor preach their own composition.

The result of exposure to appropriate religious instruction was meaningful because the services were both pious and decorous. At the time of the incident there were 316 black or colored communicants of this persuasion in Charleston, all above reproach. In addition, there were 200 slave children enrolled in the Sunday school. These Sabbath schools were taught by elderly black members under the direct
supervision of the minister. The church school was credited with providing a good foundation in moral and religious training for many years (it was founded prior to the American Revolution). A statement by the renowned Baptist minister, Dr. Furnam, on the same subject provides further evidence of the positive aspects of religious training. He said:

It is also a pleasing consideration that in the late projected scheme for producing an insurrection among us, there were very few of those who were, as members attached to regular churches, who appear to have taken a part in the wicked plot, or indeed, to whom it was made known; of some churches it does not appear that there were any.16

Seemingly, membership in white Protestant churches proved an effective deterrent against participation in slave conspiracies. There is little question here that the author, albeit a self-described religious man, places the importance of religious instruction both clearly in the temporal worldly life as well as the everlasting realm to come. The latter part of this paper stresses the effects of appropriate moral and Christian education on the behavior of slaves in knowing and accepting the duties assigned their position by God. An added and important benefit was their trustworthiness and loyalty in not participating in racial unrest. Earlier in the piece the subject of salvation is broached, and there remains little doubt that the souls of both races were in jeopardy if God’s word was disobeyed. So, while the author was not a man of the cloth, as an active member of an established denomination, he provides a good example of a concerned layman expressing the need for living by Holy Writ and establishing the necessary restrictions to allow black participation for the ultimate good of both races.
By 1834-1835 the Reverend Nathaniel Bowen, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church had composed a pastoral letter on the very subject of religious instruction including appropriate scriptural lessons. Prepared at the request of a convention of the Diocese, the resulting letter was distributed to all churches and laity in South Carolina. The attached scriptural selections were also made available to any clerical or lay member of the colored population. The subject of religious education of slaves was of special importance to these Episcopalians as their denomination contained one of the largest slaveholding memberships, especially in the low country. As a consequence, the Bishop felt it was the church’s responsibility to provide sufficient enlightenment to "make them wise unto salvation." To do so with a humble reliance on God’s grace, resulted in a "harvest of abundant blessing to the Church and her members, both now and at that day, when we shall be called upon to give an account of our stewardship." 

The Reverend Bowen believed that all Christians, including distinguished planters and even influential members of the House of Representatives should acknowledge the importance of conveying God’s word to the bondsmen. Denying Christian knowledge condemned them to an even greater condition of moral hopelessness than they encountered in their aboriginal state. In Africa there was always the slight possibility of God’s word reaching them. In America slave owners, endowed with the temporal power vested in an unequal relationship, could make the decision to deny the knowledge needed to gain everlasting life. Thus, the slaves chances of redemption were lessened even further. Christian instruction was
necessary to resign them to their place in life and lighten their earthly toil by offering the promise of heavenly reward.

After giving reasons for the necessity of making Christianity and hope of salvation available to slaves, Reverend Bowen continued by giving prescriptive information to carry forth this work. Believing the best ordered plantations, the most flourishing to be those "where true religion flourishes", he offers several examples. The two which follow belong to Presbyterian owners. (Their inclusion in an Episcopal pastoral letter offers further evidence that concern with religious instruction and salvation crossed denominational lines and, indeed, became a Protestant concern.) The first example relates the efforts of slave owner Clay who actually produced a pamphlet on the subject. Bowen was sufficiently impressed to recommend its incorporation in his general plan because it showed success was attainable. Further, he viewed it as required reading for those masters concerned with the moral and religious improvement of their slaves. The reported happy condition of Clay's slaves proved enough to "silence the cavils of the Northern fanatic and abolitionist." These bondsmen shone brightly enough to cause a visiting advocate for the American Colonization Society to declare that, if all bondsmen were as well disciplined and instructed, he would rather bring all the Africans to Mr. Clay than try to relocate them back to "the Dark Continent".

Fiscal improvement also proved an enjoyable secondary result of his efforts at religious edification. Another plantation owner, who was also a minister in the church of St. Luke's Parish, provided an apt illustration. In this case, assembling
slaves for family prayers every morning and evening, made the plantation one of the most smooth running and lucrative operations of its size. In addition to these two examples, Bowen also included a reference to the positive results enjoyed by other denominations. Using the same methods, Methodist ministers in St. Helena's, St. Luke's and St. Bartholomew's Parishes, located along the Santee River, also had results which encouraged their owners to continue with instruction.21

The Reverend Bowen remained concerned primarily with the effects of religious enlightenment on the bondsmen, not necessarily with the reported numbers attending religious worship. Had the position of the slave improved? Was he kinder, more considerate? and, very importantly, happily and cheerfully conformed to the necessity of his condition and through the steady, diligent, faithful, peaceful performance of all its duties, seeking, as the disciple and servant of Christ, to work out his eternal salvation?

While reports reached the church's committee of those slaves who professed to follow Christianity, most were negligent of their duty and often proved to be the most unmanageable. However, Bowen emphatically stated his belief that such behavior could not possibly result from the religion of Jesus but was, rather, due to a "want of true religion". When masters left required instruction to unqualified people and allowed slaves to gain knowledge wherever they could, the result was abuse and poor behavior. To produce positive results like the examples given, required exertion by the master.22
Believing he had fulfilled the committee's request for illuminating the need for religious education of slaves, Rev. Bowen then outlined a plan of action. The first order of business was to find the appropriate people to do the job. The main responsibility belonged to the clergy and their Sunday School Assistants followed by lay catechists who were necessary because of the relatively small number of clerics. Lastly, the owners of the slaves or their agents or overseers, with the assistance of their families, were called into action.

The primary function of the first group, was watching over dangers to the soul and warning every man of the danger of living without Christ in the world. Rev. Bowen said individual clergy or their assistants were "to proclaim to all within the reach of his instruction the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified and risen Redeemer, to guide, direct immortal souls in the path of duty." Owners, due to their more advantageous worldly position and literacy, were able to find the road to redemption themselves while their slaves relied solely upon the instruction of others. Advantage and literacy notwithstanding, numbers also played a pivotal role in the necessity of Sunday schools. The large number of low country slaves rendered the available clergy inadequate to minister to black religious needs. Consequently, Sabbath schools became a viable option for spreading the necessary information. Weekly meetings prior to morning services were touted as the ideal. Recommendations as to content included the use of Catechism #2 of the Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union, with additions prepared by the Bishop. Scripture cards or portions of the Scriptures illustrated with engravings provided visual
reinforcement. Reverend Bowen’s plan also encouraged the use of Watts’ *Divine Moral Songs* and the Ten Commandments along with *Our Saviour’s Golden Rule*. The Sunday School began and ended with a prayer adapted from *Short Prayers for Morning and Evening*, published by the Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union. For adults, an additional work was recommended to explain appropriate bible passages with time allowed for questions to follow. A meeting on a convenient weekday was also recommended at which time the assembled slaves received directions to help them in their work. Instruction was completely oral, teaching slaves to read and write was against South Carolina law.

The ministerial shortage also required that clerics oversee the care of seven or eight plantations. There were over 6,000 bondsmen in St. Luke Parish alone. These represented children and adults between the ages of 10 and 100, with many at the advanced age of 70 or 80 who had never heard the word of God nor the "glad tidings of salvation." Consequently, the church employed lay catechists to fill the void. The hope for the future lay in procuring ministers to specialize in missionary work. Meanwhile, lay persons taught the catechism and were required to report to the minister of the parish or the Bishop of South Carolina. Bowen recommended that all be licensed by ecclesiastical authority.

While clergy and lay catechists were extremely important agents in spreading the Gospel and message of salvation amongst the slaves, the primary links were the masters and their families. For the first two groups to succeed, their cooperation was critical. Since religious information of some kind would inevitably reach the slaves,
it seemed prudent to Dr. Bowen that slave owning members of his Congregation provide it themselves thus making things "good and profitable for them." Christian duty demanded pastoral care of slaves, and the Protestant Episcopal church forbade outside interference. The clergy was charged with considering the slaves in their parishes as part of their pastoral flock, and the slave owning families were similarly charged.

A CIRCULAR LETTER

Ten years after Reverend Bowen's Pastoral letter of 1835 the Proceedings of the Meeting in Charleston, S.C. on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes provides further evidence of multi-denominational support for Protestant unity regarding the question of slave education. By the antebellum era Southern Christians were working toward a common goal. The Circular Letter sent to interested Protestant gentleman in all parts of the state was intended to shed light on religious instruction of bondsmen and its results. The questionnaire announced a meeting on May 13 and encouraged attendance, but urged written responses from those unable to attend. (The Presbyterian respondents appear in the following chapter.)

Responses to the "Citizens of South Carolina" circular reflect slave owner's various approaches to religious instruction and how they were achieved on an individual basis. Although they do not specifically address salvation as such, it is important to note that the condition of the souls of both races was of paramount importance to the committee and, in fact, the reason for its inception and the ensuing
survey. Consequently, while redemption is not specifically mentioned, the responses themselves implicitly speak to the question of salvation for both black and white.

While space does not permit the inclusion of all respondents, it is possible to gain insight from representative writers. The first response considered is from C.C. Pickney Jr., who places the number of Negroes in his district of Greenville at four to five thousand, a large percentage of whom, belonged to the Baptist and Methodist persuasion. There was no minister engaged in slave instruction but there were some "colored" teachers. Slaves held prayer meetings throughout the area with no white interference. Specific "colored" services were held in the village on a "seasonal" basis by ministers of the named denominations. An Episcopal Sunday School was in its fifth year with fifty students enrolled. Slaves were universally granted permission to attend white services but there were no specific plans for black churches. While Pickney reported some cases of moral improvement, he thought more practical preaching was necessary.25

Also reporting from Greenville was Thomas P. Brockman who seconded Pickney's belief that the Baptist and Methodist churches contained the largest slave congregations while there were "not so many Presbyterian." This reflects the denominational ranking in the state generally. Brockman also reported that the number of Blacks and Whites in congregations of his district was about equal. He noted a few black preachers who faced their congregations infrequently, remaining subordinate to the white clergy. Interestingly, he gave the most credit for instructions to the slave owners and their wives, who, by paying more attention to
slave's spiritual needs, had many "well ordered slaves." Masters in Brockman's
district discerned a great difference between those raised as Christians and those who
were not. Thomas Raye reported a similar situation in Union District regarding
denominational numbers as well as the lack of a ministerial presence charged
specifically with serving the African community. Access to white churches was also
encouraged here and positive results were observed.

While echoing the statewide Protestant accommodation for black participation,
Fairfield District reported 535 black Methodist communicants out of a total of 12,517
slaves plus 73 "free persons of color." Church attendance ranged between 200 to
2400 in the Spring and Summer. A select group of eight or ten Negro exhorters
worked for the Baptist faith with the conduct of black attendees watched carefully.
Here, black preachers performed only in the presence of Whites.26

An Episcopal response from this district by J. Dyson, recorded a black
membership of 70 to 100 in St. Mark's church. This particular congregation also
employed a minister and a catechist who were engaged solely in imparting religious
instruction to the "colored" members. The catechist served ten plantations (420 adults
and 160 children) on a regular basis. Every Sunday the Rector of St. Mark's
delivered a sermon specifically for their benefit. Early results bore out the general
consensus of success, particularly amongst the very young. Time, it was hoped,
would provide a fuller answer.27

In the lower part of Richland District, commonly called Richland Fork which
lay between the Wateree and Congaree Rivers, were two Baptist, two Episcopalian
and one Methodist church with memberships of 523, 105, and 100 respectively. Over the preceding ten years (1835-45) each denomination at one time or another, had one minister engaged in the religious enlightenment of his Negro congregation. In addition, there were also two Episcopal and one Baptist laymen. These official representatives of the church were augmented by masters and families who catechized their slaves at home. The intensity of instruction varied over the decade but respondent, John Clarkson, made some specific observations. For example, the Episcopal minister generally gave religious instruction once a week, in the evening in winter and in the afternoon in summer. One unnamed plantation offered 30 minutes of school every day which resulted in the participants familiarity and knowledge of the catechism as well as appropriate hymns. William Curtis, pastor of one of the two, Baptist churches in the Fork, reported 372 "coloured communicants". Pastor Curtis was assisted in his duties by two black preachers in town, and four others on the larger plantations. They held evening services twice weekly. There were also three watchmen in town and one on each plantation (many respondents reported the use of watchmen who were charged with overseeing black exhorters and lay personnel, thus ensuring proper adherence to approved church curriculum). Curtis himself visited all the black members on their home plantations (with owner approval) every three months and held weekly evening services for them. Owners were generally amenable to such ministering as it proved a positive influence on behavior and spirit. At the quarterly meetings ministers received progress reports on slave behavior and administered the Communion of the Last Supper.
Further evidence of concern with religious enlightenment is provided by Lewis Pow of Lexington. His testimony supports the well-documented and general pattern of preaching to Negroes after Sunday services. He also mentioned two travelling Methodist preachers who instructed some sixty adult slaves at his home church as well as two additional Methodist missionaries on the Congaree River below Columbia. The planters in this region were recognized as some of the wealthiest and most respected in the state. Missionary work was supported by church members as well as "non-professors of religion", including some of the richest. Given the benefits they received, they happily paid for the religious education of their slaves.

This contributor to the Circular questionnaire is one of the few found in this time frame that spoke for the Lutheran presence and their concern with religious education. The account goes on to state that the Reverend J.F. Leppard, pastor of the local Lutheran church, led a congregation at Sandy Run in which he counted some sixty black communicants amongst his congregation. The Reverend explained the Scriptures and catechized them on a fortnightly basis. Many more slaves came to hear him preach. A large number of slaves, (no specifics given) were also ministered to in Lexington village by a theological student of that town's Lutheran Seminary. Oral instruction still prevailed and was credited with being both practical and responsible for creating a stronger bond between master and servant. Benefits from this denomination's efforts were also seen as positive, giving "bright and cheering evidences of the truth of religion and its happy influence on their hearts and lives, and their hopes for immortality."
It is already apparent that all denominations mentioned were clearly concerned with advancing black religious knowledge. A reply to this 1845 circular from Georgetown District clarified the depth of the Protestant commitment regarding this issue. R.F.W. Allston, whose family owned Clifton, Bellefield, Fairfield, Woodville, Waverly and Oatlands plantations with, 567, 290, 151, 184 and 215 slaves respectively, makes specific claims for interdenominational cooperation par excellence. Allston himself belonged to the Episcopalian church in St. George’s Parish along with approximately 300 slaves. He ascertained that the Methodists garnered the largest share of the area’s 13,000 slaves with a membership of 3,200. the Baptists followed with approximately 1500. The rectors of All Saints and Georgetown along with Methodist class leaders and black Baptist preachers all labored in the district to spread the "message of salvation" to the large black community.

Allston built a church on his home plantation for the express use of his slaves which was open to all denominations. The Methodists used it to preach every alternate Sunday and to catechize approximately 50 children. Both the Methodists and the Baptists held prayer meetings twice a week where they prayed and sang. They also held meetings every Sabbath, which along with his own denomination’s contributions, meant the building was well utilized. This prominent slave owner had followed this method of instruction for fifteen years with good results. The Methodists had catechized approximately, 1,000 of his slave children while 300 were attributed to the other denomination. The happy consequences of this endeavor prompted Allston to conclude that his slave force was greatly improved both in intelligence and morality,
particularly in domestic relations. He also echoes the belief of others of his class that the earlier in life religious education began, the better the result.\textsuperscript{30}

A further report from All Saint's Parish in Georgetown District, gives the slave population as approximately 4,000. 1,100 of these were baptized into the Episcopal church and 150 of them were communicants who came directly under the care of the Reverend Alexander Glennie, rector of the Parish. This information is provided by John H. Tucker, a Wacamaw planter whose family owned Litchfield, Pee Dee and Willbrook plantations with John, himself, in residence at Willbrook. He reported four ministers, including the Reverend Glennie, laboring amongst these slaves. Two were Methodists and the fourth was the sporadic presence of the Baptist faith.

On Tucker's plantations the number of slaves totalled 335.\textsuperscript{31} A literate slave taught the children the catechism and also read the lesson at the regular church service during the summer months. Reverend Glennie personally came to the plantation alternate Sunday mornings from November to May and three afternoons a week during the summer. Tucker also employed a minister for Pee Dee and built churches on his other two properties which were inter-denominational. He also hired a catechist for approximately fifty children. Once again, a positive result was enjoyed. The elder Tucker, (John's Father) however, was said to ensure attendance at Litchfield by having the overseer call roll after service. Any absent slave, not excused by sickness, forfeited a week's allowance of either bacon, sugar, molasses or tobacco.\textsuperscript{32}
The Tucker plantations were only a small part of Andrew Glennie’s flock. He had ten plantations under his care. His ministering included weekly meetings with a few chosen Negroes who could read and, who, after being taught the catechism, led Sunday classes for children. Adults were also taught liturgical responses and, with the master’s permission, met during the week using "only the service from the Common Book of Prayer." Rev. Glennie also held divine worship once every other week at all ten locations (four on Sunday and six on weekday evenings). During the summer months the minister moved to the seashore and was only able to conduct services at two plantations. It was usual for him to question the slave congregation on the content of the Sunday morning sermon as well as a portion of Episcopal catechism and, occasionally, parts of the Liturgy. The previous year 331 children received catechetical instruction. Once slaves reached the age of thirteen or fourteen Glennie tended to lose touch with these young slaves as adolescence brought them a light but regular work schedule. The only remaining religious contact was the Sunday morning church service. However, it was possible that some received further religious training as masters, or some family member, continued the childhood doctrinal tradition. Reverend Glennie saw positive results from his own and his church’s efforts and believed that masters felt the same.33

In his book, Down by the Riverside, Charles Joyner confirms that these South Carolina low country rice planters taught a selective form of Christianity stressing obedience in the here and now. In addition, he continues, they were involved in religious instruction out of a genuine concern for the slave’s salvation. Religion may
have provided a more humane method of control than brutality, but nevertheless, the state of black souls remained paramount. The Reverend Glennie emphasized the duty incumbent upon Christian slaves by means of a sermon which was part of his larger published collection entitled *Sermons for Negroes*. This selection was prepared for use by ministers and planters of his denomination.

Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bound or free.

Failure to do one’s duty as a servant by disobedience was offensive to the master and also a sin against God. Daily tasks were the will of God so to perform your work only while observed was futile because God was always watching. Ultimately, if the slaves lived life as obedient followers of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, they would, through Him, inherit everlasting life.\(^{34}\)

The Rector of St. Andrew’s Parish, J. Stuart Hanckel also ministered to the slaves of the whole parish. He was the only cleric involved in this mission and an Episcopalian. There were sixteen communicants in his congregation and "a number" of adult candidates for baptism. Instruction was given every two weeks in the parish church and at two other stations within easy reach of the surrounding plantations. Approximately 50 to 120 attended these services, directed toward an explanation of the Gospel and catechism. Results proved encouraging with only one communicant disciplined for immorality. However, results from "coloured" Baptist and Methodist
religious teachers were less positive according to the Reverend Hanckel.

N.R. Middleton, an owner in the St. Andrews district provides a telling example of participation on the plantation level. Middleton owned 116 slaves, of which, sixteen were full members of the Hanckel’s Episcopal church. Of these, one adult was a candidate for baptism while thirteen youngsters had been christened. Because Reverend Hanckel held service only once a fortnight, Mr. Middleton read the service and taught catechism every Sunday afternoon to all 116 slaves. Following family prayers on Wednesday nights voluntary instruction was available. Also, during the week, Mrs. Middleton, along with her sons, instructed those children who were already familiar with the basics of the catechism and some hymns. From this planter’s experience, he found children learned more readily than adults. Still, he noted a worthwhile and long-term participation amongst his older slaves. He also noticed an awakening of morality and lessening of "vicious habits", encouraging him to continue.35

Thomas Fuller, a white Episcopalian, reportedly found the conveying of religious knowledge to the slave population challenging. Impressing the minds of adults who grew up in ignorance with new ideas proved difficult. Children, on the other hand, seemed much more adaptable and consequently derived the most benefit as their improved behavior and intelligence showed. Adult behavior still left much to be desired. While slaves maintained appropriate dress and manners during service, afterwards they took advantage of the time away from the plantation discipline to resort to non-Sabbatarian activities and pastimes. The church’s solution to this less
than admirable behavior involved slaves receiving instruction on their plantations under the express guidance of a minister. Greater success in this area was seen on the island of St. Helena where owner, William Fripp, Sr., reported many resident slaves leading honest, upright and Christian lives. In addition to Sunday meetings at his church (Baptist), black members met two or three times a week in prayer houses on their own plantations where they sang, prayed and read the Gospel (providing there was someone in attendance who could read). Every evening a literate old black Christian man taught the Methodist catechism to the children with enormous success.36 Interdenominational support and cooperation is readily apparent in this example which uses Methodist literature on a plantation owned by a Baptist.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the largest response to the committee’s Circular came from Charleston itself. All participating masters agreed on the general improvement in behavior brought about by their slave’s exposure to Christianity; some specifically referred to their bondsmen as becoming "savingly acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus," showing concern with more than temporal results. J. Grimke Drayton, was one owner concerned with life hereafter for his slaves. He counted virtue, honesty and fidelity among the more tangible results along with a decline in theft and Sabbath breaking. Education on his domain consisted of adult catechism on Tuesday, and Thursday, evenings and, in summer, three times on Sunday. Only occasionally did the parish minister lend a hand. In teaching, Drayton used illustration and anecdotes to gain and keep interest. Of their own volition, his slaves grew a "missionary crop", valued at sixteen dollars all of which was donated to spreading the Gospel. Upon
learning from Dr. Hazelhurst, (a missionary to Africa) of the spiritual condition of
their African brethren, they also took up a voluntary collection to advance missionary
work in Africa.

In addition to two adult instructors, both Mr. and Mrs. Drayton met with their
slave children two evenings a week and Sunday afternoons to teach them Jones’
Catechism. The couple reported no actual conversions but felt God surely blessed
their hard work as evidenced by the improved behavior of their slaves.37

St. Peter’s Church, also in Charleston, had an eleven year history with black
Sunday schools dating from 1834. During its first decade the average enrollment of
children four to fourteen was 200. In 1845 three hundred students attended. They
were orally instructed in the catechism by the Rector after morning and evening
services; several were later accepted into communion with the church. Sunday
Schools were necessary for successful spiritual preparation of young slaves. This was
illuminated by the peace and happiness they enjoyed in living by His word. This
word was also responsible for the anticipation of happiness at death.

In the summer months adult classes were also held which produced two known
cases of conversion proved by this very means - joyful death. On a more ambitious
level, a daily summer school, staffed by rotating help contributed by female members
of the congregation, taught approximately forty slaves and "made considerable
progress". This Episcopal church, led by the Reverend W.H. Barnwell, had thirty-
three black communicants who all conducted themselves with propriety. Special
services were held by the Rector at sunrise on Sundays, one weekday evening, and
following the monthly Communion. There was a Sunday School attached to every Episcopal church in the Diocese, similar to the one at St. Peters'. Here religious instruction was given specifically to Negroes.\textsuperscript{38} No particular mention of the rate of success was noted, however, church membership was low (33) due to this minister's refusal to accept any but the truly converted.

Many of the plantations of these wealthy Charleston owners were located along the North Santee River and were home to some five to six thousand black slaves. The Ladson plantation dedicated its family church in 1842 and weekly services held in the Winter and Spring reached approximately 250 adults. The Methodists were once again a larger presence with 718 members and 255 children. This denomination also boasted a mission in the vicinity. There were a total of three ministers working the Santee plantations, one Episcopalian and two Methodists. The most common form of instruction was, once again, meetings for prayer and song - the most joyous religious occasion. Also, a religious service was held every other week by the minister and every Sunday by the owner himself. Consequently, morning and evening services were available every other week. The owner took his service directly from the Episcopal Prayer book after which he added a "familiar and affectionate" appeal of his own, often utilizing the Reverend Alexander Glennie’s Book of Sermons. The children were catechized on a weekly basis starting what the author believed was "a seed of Divine truth in childhood" which, it was noted made little progress in youth. Older children were distracted by the appeal of other activities, particularly the outdoors. As the earlier reference to children of thirteen and fourteen receiving a
light work load suggests, this age group especially cherished any free time. Behavior was improved, with most problems occurring in newly acquired slaves who lacked instruction.

Amongst the improvements recorded by Ladson was the lack of fighting, hatred or malice and improved child/parent and husband/wife relationships. Theft amongst the slaves was also almost non-existent. This phenomenon was noticed by a neighbor who remarked, "I know not how it is that I cannot keep a fence rail on one side of my settlement, whilst in that next to you, I never lose one." Nevertheless, Ladson deemed it prudent to lock his barn and granery rather than invite temptation.

Sunday was observed traditionally on Ladson's plantation and no labor was required. Also, Saturday tasks were kept short if possible and were followed by the distribution of rations. The plantation chapel built in 1836, had space for 110 congregants and a bell which was rung a half-hour before each service. This public call facilitated the arrival of slaves from nearby plantations should their masters allow attendance. Thus another planter characterized his slave population as well-ordered, happy, gay of heart, cheerful and readily obedient. As a consequence, no runaways were reported "within recent memory" nor were there any requests for sale.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The information provided by individual ministers and owners of the various denominations illustrates the depth of owner commitment to religious instruction as well as their pedagogy and the ensuing results. It is apparent that interdenominational
cooperation was widespread and the religious enlightenment of the slaves was a serious concern. By looking now at the official view of these Protestant denominations it is possible to see the depth of agreement at the institutional level as well as the degree of importance they attached to the task confronting them. The results achieved by their missionary endeavors are also available in these official expressions of church doctrine.

First, Episcopal concern with religious instruction not only crossed state lines but was also an ongoing part of church policy in the South since the early 1700s. In reference to evangelizing the slaves of South Carolina specifically, the diocese reported being heavily involved in work on behalf of the Negroes. In addition, there were several clergy and catechists involved solely in this missionary work. The entire force of Episcopal ministers was involved in varying degrees on the parish level. The laity, which included many distinguished and wealthy citizens, supported their efforts and, in addition to monetary generosity, often participated physically in their church’s work.

The Anglican church was not alone in responding to the religious welfare of the slaves in its jurisdiction. The Methodists too saw their church well represented in this area. This denomination estimated the total number of "colored communicants" in the slave-holding states at no less than 160,000. They utilized both travelling and local preachers to reach potential black members as well as serve those already in their congregations. In addition to these clerics, the Methodists had 80 to 90 missionaries in the South who cared for 18,000 slaves with another 100,000
prospective members attending services. Sixteen of these missionaries resided in
South Carolina. Catechizing children, using Dr. Capa’s Catechism, prepared
expressly for the purpose of teaching slave children, was a great part of their work
and in this state some 4,380 were participating. South Carolina’s share of the budget
for missionary work was $11,000 annually.41

Unlike the Methodists, the Baptist church was less specific enumerating the
slaves belonging to their denomination. They did, however, offer additional
information regarding the use of black preachers. They approximated black
membership at one seventh of the overall membership, which translated to 100,000
communicants. The respondent for the church noted "many" ministers who donated
at least part of their time to slave education as well as an unknown number
exclusively engaged in this venture. The Baptist church claimed the highest number
of licensed black preachers and black churches of any denomination, and boasted that
all the other participating denominations combined could not compete. The state
where they achieved the greatest success was Georgia with seven "coloured"
churches, four ordained ministers and a fifth licensed to preach. Of a total of 60,000
Baptist church members in Georgia, 45,000 were black. In 1844, church conventions
in South Carolina, Georgia and the South formally expressed their commitment to
impart the Gospel to the slaves by all available means. Both clergy and lay members
were encouraged to participate in this work immediately and efficiently. Since this
commitment was made at the General Meeting of the Slave-holding States, it was
hoped that more individual state conventions would follow the South Carolina and
Georgia lead.42

The authors of the Circular letter concluded what they felt was a very
successful survey. These written responses show a long range commitment to
religious education and some extraordinary individual efforts to spread the word of
God. South Carolina, they felt, was not atypical in this activity. Indeed, they felt
confident:

that if all the friends of the religious instruction of the Negroes
could be heard, even as fully, from every slave-holding state,
as has been from South Carolina, and the amount of their labours
told, their voices would be as the sound of many waters, and their
multitude and their labours would exceed our most sanguine expectations.43

There appears little doubt that all Protestant denominations participated in
religious education of their servants for both temporal and spiritual reasons. The vast
majority positively confirmed improved behavior in their slaves, showing that the
depth of the physical commitment, the general reliance on biblical truth and concern
with the spiritual well-being of both races was, indeed, important. This was an
ongoing concern and all major denominations contained slave members. For
example, the Presbyterians counted 38,000, Episcopalians, 7,000, Baptists 157,000
and the Methodists 151,000. In some areas the ratio of black membership was large
enough to justify separate organizations and buildings - Charleston amongst them.
State laws, however, required that these congregations be serviced by white ministers
and pastors, and applicants for membership were required to meet the approval of
members of the white parent organization.44 Those blacks who attended services with
Whites and took Communion with them were segregated within the building. They occupied pews in the rear or an upstairs balcony or an area cordoned off for their exclusive use.

As membership and attendance met white approval, so did the Gospel of the Lord. Generally, all Protestant denominations preached His holy word to their slaves designed with a dual purpose: to save their souls and, also, make them more obedient, harder working and better servants. Sermons taught the ultimate message: "slaves be obedient to your masters." It was their duty to work, be humble and patient. If this world was a place of trouble and sorrow, redemption awaited in the next. It was only by hard work in this life that one could appreciate fully the joys of life beyond the grave. Heaven was described as "better than a cool breeze, a splendid sunset or sunrise - a place that is never dark or gloomy, a place where man is free."

To desire freedom in this life was the devil at work. An excerpt from Plantation Sermons, #170, shows white concern with black obedience to owners. The author, Episcopal Bishop William Meade of Virginia, told his black audiences across the South that "Negro Protestants" were responsible for their souls even if their bodies were not their own. "The master was God's overseer and they must obey him as they would God."

Question: How are you to show that you love your neighbour as yourself?
Response: I am to show it by always doing my duty.
Question: Who is your neighbour?
Response: Everyone who lives with me, and around me and has control over me.
Question: Can you name some persons?
Response: My master and mistress and parents.
Questions: How are you to show love to them?
Response: I am never to lie to them, to steal from them, nor speak bad words about them; but always do as they bid me.47

There is no doubt that the defense of slavery as a divinely ordained institution was the one issue that proved powerful enough to cross denominational lines and unite Southern Protestants in a common cause. Salvation for both races remained an important concern; fearing for their own immortal souls may have been the overwhelming justification for many, but it seems doubtful that their rationale was totally self-serving. For many Southern Protestants it became a duty of ownership to provide for the slaves' lives in the hereafter even if that provision was only made as a prerequisite for one's own passage into Heaven. So, while a certain amount of selfish concern may have fueled black religious education, it seems unreasonable to assume that none of this enlightenment was a result of genuine owner concern for the future of black souls. Salvation for both races for both selfish and altruistic reasons seems to have been the prevailing ideology.
NOTES


2. Ibid., 637.

3. Ibid., 646.

4. Ibid., 653.

5. Ibid.


8. Ibid., 662.

9. Ibid., 664.


11. Ibid., 10.

12. Ibid., 22-3.

13. Ibid., 27.


15. Ibid., 28-9.

16. Ibid., 33.


18. Ibid., 4.

20. Ibid., 8.
22. Ibid., 22.
23. Ibid., 15-16.
24. Ibid., 18.
25. Charleston, South Carolina Meeting on Religious Instruction of Negroes (1845), 20.
26. Ibid., 21-3.
27. Ibid., 26-7.
28. Ibid., 32.
30. Ibid., 22.
31. Charleston, South Carolina Meeting on the Religious Instruction of Negroes (1845), 35.
32. Joyner, Down by the Riverside, 19-22.
34. Joyner, Down by the Riverside, 156-7.
36. Ibid., 49-50.
37. Ibid., 51.
38. Ibid., 52-56.
39. Many historians, including Eugene Genovese, Charles Joyner and John Blassingame, have argued that theft amongst slaves was always unacceptable, unlike theft from owners. In fact, theft from owners seemed justified if one accepts the
premise that slaves, as property of their masters, could hardly be held accountable for stealing their other property. Consequently, the morality behind not robbing a fellow bondsman may be more complex than accepting religious instruction as the single cause.

40. Charleston, South Carolina Meeting (1845), 68.

41. Ibid., 70.

42. Ibid., 71.

43. Ibid., 40.


45. Reverend Alexander Glennie, Sermons Preached on Plantations to Congregations of Slaves (Charleston, 1844), #85, #158.

46. Ibid., #109, #110, #170.

Before examining in detail the response of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina to the spiritual needs of the state’s slaves, one should look first at the turmoil slavery caused within the church as an institution. Surveying official policy provides important information on how Presbyterians dealt with the issue that eventually divided them in 1837. An added dimension of attempted amelioration and appeasement in trying to keep the church together is also included. Ultimately, these efforts failed and the final schism came in 1861 with the advent of the Civil War. The result was the formation of the Old School South, and this institution’s founding beliefs are also discussed as is its merger with the Southern Branch of the New School in 1865. This combination of Southern Presbyterians formed the Presbyterian Church of the United States which is still the official Southern denomination today.

In his book, *A Religious History of the American People*, Sidney Ahlstrom states that the New School was numerically superior in areas where abolitionism was the strongest, providing an ongoing record of concern and proving that slavery was still problematic to the group most likely to condemn it. For this reason the New
School North provides the best contrast to the Old School South, the predominant body in the slaveholding states. In South Carolina this denomination firmly staked its belief in the divine ordination of slavery. Consequently, these two entities become the vehicles for the two opposing views.

_Testimony of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America on the Subject of Slavery_ was generated by the New School North at its 1858 convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Because this meeting opposed slavery, its treatment of the system and religious education is enlightening. An attempt to view the church's position over time, from 1774 to 1857, it included information that was confined strictly to the official record of available church testimonies regarding bondage.

Of the nineteen or so contributors, the first broaches the subject of slavery at a synodical meeting convened in 1774.¹ In this instance two ministers sought approval for returning two native Africans to their homeland to spread the Gospel. The response to this request was positive, and conformed to the synod’s belief that the black missionaries’ return was the will of God. Consequently, the subject of slavery itself was brought up, however, the body deferred discussion of the issue until the next meeting due to "some difficulties attending the discussion of the second part of that overture." - how to accomplish their goal.²

In 1787 The Committee of Overtures observed that:

The Creator of the world having made of one flesh, all the children of men, it becomes them, as members of the same family, to consult and promote each others’ happiness. It is more especially the duty of those who maintain the rights of humanity, and who acknowledge
and teach the obligations of Christianity, to use such means as are
in their power to extend the blessings of equal freedom to every part
of the human race.³

During this meeting both the New York and Philadelphia delegations supported
abolition and maintained a belief in the necessity of religious education prior to
emancipation. While the defense of slavery, as divinely ordained, was not part of this
synod’s concern, it did express interest over proper education to allow useful
citizenship and recommended that any actions taken to end slavery be prudent and in
the interests of civil society. The Synod also encouraged the spreading of God’s word
by those who felt mission work to be a duty of Christianity.

The next contribution to this 1857 report is dated 1795 and discusses an issue
brought forward by the Committee on Bills and Overtures. It is part of a series of
responses to the slavery question by Northern synods and the General Assembly up to
1818. It is the first to consider complications arising within the church over slavery.
Specifically, it raises the dilemma of forcing those who found slaveholding morally
offensive, to attend church and take communion with slaveholders and it also called
into question the church’s own institutional morality. The 1795 General Assembly
responded by requesting forbearance and peace. And since difference of opinion
occurred in many areas of the church’s physical domain over a variety of issues, it
recommended that the church itself use all available options to encourage
emancipation.

In that same year in a message to the churches under its care, the Transylvania
Presbytery also urged a course of peace and understanding and included a plea for
making "the treatment of those held in bondage as mild as possible." An added resolution declared that those presbyteries that had disenfranchised slaveowners from pulpit and communion should cease such action. The church, having done what it could, then placed the issue of slavery under the auspices of the civil authorities.

While the question of church membership and slaveholding, as well as the morality of the sale of human property, occupied the meetings of several general assemblies, synods and presbyteries in the years 1795 to 1818, there is no reference to either the specific education of slaves or black or white salvation. There is only the request for amelioration of harsh treatment. However, by 1815, along with expressions of regret that slavery of Africans and their descendants continued in so many places, even amongst those within the pale of the church, were institutional urgings for religious education. The Assembly expressed its belief that the "rising generation of slaves fell within the bounds of the church" and so were entitled to such edification. Providing that knowledge helped ensure their readiness to enjoy liberty when God, in His great providence, opened the door for their emancipation. Once again freedom, like servitude, was not man's choice.

Beginning in 1818 in sessions held at Philadelphia, the church stated its aversion to human bondage while acknowledging that the abolition of this offensive system currently remained impractical. In some areas large numbers of slaves presented a threat to white safety; the happiness and security of both races was at stake. In order to facilitate eventual emancipation though the meeting recommended
that all members permit and encourage the instruction of their slaves in the principles and duties of Christianity. Suggested aids to instruction included slave attendance at Sunday services, particularly the preaching of the Gospel, and whenever possible, the formation of Sabbath Schools. The committee also thought it incumbent upon all Christians to communicate religious instruction to those under their care, to discourage insurrection and insubordination and encourage proper behavior. Worldly concern with white safety was certainly a primary fear at this session in Philadelphia.\(^5\)

**SCHISM**

In 1818 the General Assembly expressed concern with religious education, but by 1836 and the sessions held in Pittsburgh, this church body proved unable to advance the issue. Indeed, faced with the inability of reaching any kind of solution within the time frame of the meetings, the Assembly postponed it indefinitely. The measure to table passed 154 to 87.\(^6\) Confusion and distress continued to plague the church as evidenced by statements emanating from meetings in 1839 and 1840. In the first of these, the matter was declared more properly to belong to "lower judiciaries" since delegations in the General Assembly were made up of representatives of presbyteries from around the country encompassing many different points of view. Basically, in 1839 then, particular presbyteries decided whether slavery was tolerable to the churches within their domain.\(^7\) The General Assembly session of 1843 decreed that its body should not take any action whatsoever on the subject due to the number of differing opinions present. Any decision arrived at would have represented so few,
making it virtually worthless. Given that the issue of slavery was tabled, no specific report regarding slave education or salvation appeared in the information available. However, it seems important to include the struggle within the church over the issue. That Presbyterian leaders felt compelled to shelve it altogether speaks volumes for its importance.

While leaders were rendered incapable of reaching a decision regarding the church’s stand on slavery between 1818 and 1840, by 1846 the General Assembly made a renewed effort to deal with this divisive issue. That year its official statement declared:

The system of slavery as it exists in the United States. Viewed either in the laws of the several states sanction it, or in the actual operation and results in society, is intrinsically an unrighteous and oppressive system, and is opposed to the prescription of the law of God, to the spirit and precepts of the gospel, and to the best interests of humanity.

The official statement that prior Assemblies from 1787 to 1818 inclusively had condemned slavery and that their stand remained the recorded testimony of the church because after 1815 no meeting of this church’s governing body had considered the issue. In 1846 then, it was decided to officially express deep regret that bondage continued or was countenanced by any church or its members.

Further, the 1846 Assembly charged individuals to use their influence to remove themselves and their congregation from slavery’s sphere. Perpetuation meant that those not even directly involved were guilty of sanctioning an evil. Very important to the discussion at hand, is a reference to mitigating the severity of the institution by Christian or humanitarian feelings, as a way to lessen the wrong. At
this time, however, it was deemed unwise to try and judge the morality of those participating in the "peculiar institution." A judgement made in light of all the obstacles to emancipation prevented such a stand. The Presbyterians not only refrained from judging the morality of slaveholding, they also decreed participation insufficient reason to withhold Christian fellowship, particularly at the Lord's table. They feared banning owners from church services and sacraments would cause separation and secession within the General Assembly. Schism within the Presbyterian church was not seen as a way to solve slavery. By 1849 and the session in Philadelphia, the Assembly accepted some nineteen documents into the record. These consisted of papers from four synods, thirteen presbyteries, 1 church and several individuals. They shared a central theme - separating the Church from slavery. They did, however, vary in proposed action. Solutions offered by the participants included the use of discipline, a pastoral letter, separation of the offending slaveholder and possible reorganization of the Church into three general assemblies.10

The first action actually undertaken by this Assembly of 1849 was to reaffirm commitment to the sentiments expressed in 1815. Specifically, the document states:

The General Assembly have repeatedly declared their cordial approbation of those principles of civil liberty which seem to be recognized by the Federal and State governments of the United States. They have expressed their regret: that slavery of the Africans and of their descendants still continues in so many places and even among those within the pale of the Church, and have urged the Presbyteries under their care to adopt such measures as will secure, at least to the rising generation of slaves within the bounds of the church, a religious education, that they
may be prepared for the exercise and enjoyment of liberty when
God in His providence may open a door for their emancipation.\textsuperscript{11}

This quotation used in the General Assembly Report of 1858, and taken directly from
the 1815 minutes is important for its early and ongoing recognition of the need for
religious education, thus allowing the slaves the opportunity to seek God.

This first 1849 resolution recognizing the need for religious instruction to
ready slaves for possible and eventual freedom was followed by a second one calling
for reaffirmation of the principles expressed on the subject of slavery in 1815.
Succinctly put, this measure found slavery in violation of or inconsistent with the law
of God because it made immortal beings reliant and dependent on the will of others
for their religious instruction as well as for permission to worship or know God.
Originally part of the 1815 document, and repeated once again as part of this 1849
report, it stated:

whether they shall enjoy the ordinances of the Gospel; whether
they shall perform the duties and cherish the endearments of
husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbours and friends;
whether they shall preserve their chastity and purity or regard the
dictates of justice and humanity.\textsuperscript{12}

The third resolution was also borrowed, this time from the 1846 Assembly. It
declared the system of slavery as it then existed as an intrinsically unrighteous and
oppressive system. Ultimately, the fourth declared the previous three explicit, frank
and honest testimony against the evils of slavery and therefore urged all men to know
and read the document. This final resolution, in turn, consists of five parts and is a
brief restatement of the church's earlier position. For the purposes at hand, the
fourth and fifth points are the most important. Number four reiterated the ultimate
goal of Christianity in a slave society as emancipation. Other important duties for the slaveocracy included providing their slaves the appropriate religious instruction to attain this goal. Eventual liberty would be the result of practical knowledge necessary to assume the enjoyment of emancipation. Number five noted that the Assembly lacked information suggesting that current members of the Church in slave states were derelict in their duties or were failing to work toward the ends envisioned by the Assembly.

Also included in these nineteen documents accepted by the Committee were minutes from Presbyterians in Detroit (1850), Utica (1851) and Washington (1852). The first declared slavery deplorable and referred the question back to individual presbyteries for appropriate action. Utica graciously side-stepped the issue by accepting the last Assembly’s stand and quickly moving on to other matters. Washington, likewise asked to be excused from considering the issue as the last General Assembly had clearly defined the Church’s view. In 1853, Buffalo adopted Detroit’s 1850 stand with the added proviso that presbyteries in slave-holding states prepare a report for the next General Assembly in Philadelphia. This request was designed to correct any Northern misunderstanding of the situation and to include the exact provisions for the religious well-being of the enslaved. Sessions at St. Louis in 1855 recommended a pastoral letter to all churches reaffirming the testimony of past assemblies. It also called for the appointment of a committee to report to the next national yearly meeting on the constitutional power of the church over slave-holding church members.¹³
As a consequence of the St. Louis recommendation, a committee was formed consisting of the Reverend Albert Barnes, Asa D. Smith, William Jessup and Augustus P. Hascall. The ensuing report informed the General Assembly of 1856 (New York) of their findings, reinforcing the constitutionality of their institution which had no legitimate function expressly conferred by ecclesiastical law. To step outside those bounds was as "abhorrent to the genius of Presbyterianism" as the one-man power at Rome. The Constitution remained the sole bond of the denomination. Therefore, the committee felt no obligation to re-argue the question of slavery as no one part of the church was answerable for another. The Assembly of 1850 adequately dealt with the matter by declaring that slavery, unless mandated by state law, obligations of guardianship or the demands of humanity, was a disciplinary offense and should be treated as all other offenses. The Book of Discipline very specifically laid out the necessary procedure.

As a result of the recommendations of the committee and other memorials, the session in Cleveland (1857) declared that "the Presbyterian Church in these United States has from the beginning maintained an attitude of decided opposition to the institution of slavery." Going back to 1787 (two years prior to the first General Assembly) the Synod of New York and Philadelphia declared that they "highly approve of the General Principles in favour of liberty that prevail in America." Once again this General Assembly made reference to previous stands taken in 1815, 1818 and on up until 1837 and the division within the Church over theological issues. While it serves no purpose to repeat them here, suffice it to say they very specifically
expressed the need for the religious education of slaves and the performance of duty incumbent upon church members in this regard. Ending cruelty remained primary, particularly in the area of sales.

However, one important reference requires mention regarding the Presbytery of Lexington South. It contains important information on Southern slaveholders and was responsible for the current General Assembly’s 1858 expression of sympathy to owners who were attempting to do all in their power to ameliorate the treatment of bondsmen and prepare them for complete emancipation. The Lexington Presbytery reported that a number of ministers, ruling elders and church members under their care held slaves on principle and by choice, believing the relationship expressly sanctioned by the Bible.

Meanwhile, expressions of sympathy for the religious preparation of slaves for eternal life were of concern to Presbyterians on a national level, even those who abhorred the institution itself. It seems clear that the church as a body faced grave ongoing difficulties dealing with the issue of slavery. While religious education was not always on the agenda of every meeting of the General Assembly of the united church, or the New School North, even on the synodical or presbyterial level, this body did, nevertheless, come down firmly on the need for instruction if only for the goal of eventual emancipation.

NEW BEGINNINGS

By the year 1861 sectional strife abounded inside and outside the Presbyterian church. Internally, slavery was responsible for the schism between North and South.
(Earlier rifts had been primarily over doctrinal issues.) Meeting in Augusta on December 4th, 1861, the newly formed General Assembly of the Confederate States of America (Old School South) announced the renunciation of the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and dissolved ecclesiastical ties with its brethren in the North (Old School).

This act left South Carolina and Southern Presbyterians the majority of whom were Old School, without a national governing body. Consequently, commissioners were appointed from all presbyteries in the Confederate states and a new church hierarchy emerged. The previous one served as a model. The reasons for the break were the familiar ones of "rendering unto Caesar", or that church and state were perfectly distinct with neither having the right to usurp the other. The power of the church remained exclusively spiritual and its constitution, divine revelation. Slavery was declared the ultimate root cause of the difficulties. This new Southern religious body gave credit to the former organization for its conservative stand on scriptural policy and literal translation of the Bible. Indeed, this prior parent body had never declared slaveholding a bar to communion. Nevertheless, Northern abhorrence and antislavery activities served as a constant reminder of sectional strife. The new Southern entity relied solely on Biblical sanction, and its constitution, which rested on God's word, to defend the institution of slavery and remained confident in the belief that the decision remained outside the realm of mere mortals.14

Given the Old School belief that the Bible and the Church both sanctioned the system of bondage as it existed in the South, religious instruction and salvation of
slaves remained an important concern. Consequently, the real oppression to black souls clearly lay with Satan and sin, not slaveholders. Looking at earlier generations of slaves and the condition of those in Africa, it seemed providential indeed that such large numbers were brought to North America. As far as human rights were concerned, education provided a path to improvement and the possibility of liberty. The stated goal of this church was to "gather His elect from the four corners of the earth; and through the Word, Ministers and Ordinances to train them for eternal life."15

In 1861 the General Assembly of the Confederate States of America requested the Reverend Charles Colcock Jones to address the gathering on the subject of religious education of slaves. The Reverend Jones is credited with using his religion to humanize slavery and in establishing a basis for Christian salvation among Blacks.16 The subject was important enough to be the first order of business, and Dr. Jones was asked to prepare a pastoral letter, later made available to all churches under the auspices of the Assembly in time for discussion at the next annual meeting. The Committee on Domestic Missions seemed the appropriate group to handle this assignment.

The following year, as requested, the committee reported its findings to the 1862 General Assembly. Missionary work appeared "cheering" with encouraging reports on the positive results of evangelical laboring and the formation of new congregations and centers of religious learning. In the field of "the coloured population" a degree of success was viewed with great gratitude. Ministers were,
apparently, giving Gospel instruction to "immortal souls entrusted to our care and for whom we are accountable." This accountability was a crucial aspect of the perceived duties incumbent on masters and, as Christians, a necessary requirement toward their own salvation. Several districts reported a revival in religious enthusiasm adding many new black converts to the fold, proof that God smiled upon their efforts. 

Several new, large and exclusively Black, congregations prompted an expression of thanks. At the general meeting in 1862 the committee charged with the responsibility of preparing the pastoral letter was forced to ask for a year's extension due to failure to complete the task. However, they did mention that all reporting presbyteries accepted religious education as a necessary part of their agenda. Caution seemed advisable though as four million black souls remained wards of the Christian church and dependent upon it for all their knowledge of Christ. Fulfillment of this work was left to ministers, office-holders and church members. By 1862 when Dr. Lyon finally presented the committee's pastoral letter, he was pleased to note a growing interest in the subject at hand. At the same time, vindication for the system was offered through references to the generous provisions of masters for the temporal and spiritual well-being of their servants and the "affectionate and grateful service of those who enjoy their protection and care."  

By 1864 the positive results of Presbyterian missionary endeavors appeared event brighter. Efforts were underway to hire a full-time minister to tender to Afro-Americans in the community. The future appeared full of hope because when the South won its independence from the North, such missionary work could continue
unhindered. These Southern Presbyterians then felt they could "gather the fruits from this vast and inviting field."

An important section of this report clearly states the obligation of both clergy and masters regarding this task. The following partial paragraph illustrates the depth of concern with black Christianity. Failure to do one's duty as spelled out by Holy Writ placed one's own soul at risk:

As we receive their carnal things, they would also seem to have a special claim to receive freely, in return, of our spiritual things. God has permitted them to be brought from their own dark land, to be placed upon our soil and under our roof-trees, and to labour for our sustenance, and our wealth, and the obligation is obvious and imperative to do all that in us lies to illumine their minds with the light of the blessed gospel. The foreign mission problem here is reversed. Instead of having to send missionaries to heathen, the heathen are brought to us; thus affording the opportunity of doing a foreign missionary work on a gigantic scale, and under the most favourable auspices—a work altogether unique, and a work which the Church in any other part of the world might well covet. The Lord, in this part, hath set before us an open door; let us not fail to enter.18

Slavery and the necessity of religious education for slaves made the formation of a separate Southern church desirable, but the 1862 Assembly concluded on a note of caution in this regard. The use of "coloured exhorters" and teachers in the instruction of other slaves required careful monitoring. Ultimately, the General Assembly hoped a more suitable plan would supplant what was seen as a temporary solution. Increased interest in slave education was reported by all Presbyteries and brought about by the constant agitation of adversaries of slaveholding. The continual attacks were responsible for a deeper conviction of God's divine ordination of the system. The Assembly further stated, with great certainty, its mission to preserve the
institution of slavery making it a blessing to both master and slave. That solemn duty was not discharged until the church had used every effort to bring these four million black souls under the saving influence of Christianity. To accomplish this end, a statement from the Minutes of 1865 on our Relation to the Old School Church (North) concerned an enquiry from an elder of a Southern member church as to the correct procedure when contacted by a visiting minister. If the visiting cleric was a Presbyterian of the Northern persuasion or, indeed, a minister of any Protestant denomination, their reputation was the same, caution was recommended. Such a stand, it was hoped, would diffuse any attempts to cause unrest and division within the Southern Presbyterian Church, thus allowing fulfillment of its duty toward the slaves under its care. Once again the reliance on biblical literality and Calvinism, both reasons for the earlier internal doctrinal schism of 1837, seem evident.

That religious education was an ever-increasing concern to the Southern Presbyterians cannot be denied. However, the reason for their interest in black Christianity remains more difficult to discern. As a body, the Church viewed fulfillment of the duties implicit in slaveholding as a very heavy responsibility. Blacks were fellow human beings with immortal souls. If, as Presbyterians and Christians, these ministers, elders and congregants felt it important to educate African slaves to know the Gospel and God and, thus, be afforded an opportunity for eternal life, then it follows that failure to carry out one’s divinely sanctioned duties caused great concern over one’s own salvation. As reliance on biblical educt grew due to pressure exerted by opponents, so did concern over standing before God on
Judgement Day. As Dr. Lyon, chairman of the Committee of the Subject of Religious Education, stated at the 1863 General Assembly, "The best vindication of domestic servitude is the generous provision of masters for the temporal and spiritual well-being of those servants."

The history of American Presbyterianism contained in the minutes of the New School North provided a revealing overview to the continuing part slavery played in the Church even while it remained one body. It also shows the growing distress caused by this issue and the eventual need for separation and it provides background and an explanation for the stand taken by the Old School South and the eventual formation of the Southern Presbyterian Church. It is against this framework that our attention is now brought to the specific actions of South Carolina Presbyterians themselves.
NOTES


2. Ibid., 4.

3. Ibid., 5.

4. Ibid., 6-7.

5. Ibid., 7.

6. Ibid., 10.


9. Ibid., 15.

10. Ibid., 13.

11. Ibid., 14.


14. The Distinctive Principles of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Richmond, 1861), 18.

15. Ibid., 22.


19. Ibid., 69.

20. Ibid., 70.
CHAPTER 4

Presbyterian Rationale
Education-A Duty to God and A
Prerequisite to Salvation

Before explaining specific actions taken by individual Presbyterian churches, clergy and laymen in South Carolina, it is appropriate to survey that denomination’s early history within the state. This approach clarifies the church’s later efforts in the areas of religious education and personal salvation, black and white.

The first Presbyterian church in South Carolina can be traced back to 1687 and the arrival of the Huguenots fleeing French persecution. These Presbyterian pioneers were led by Elias Prioleau who was responsible for founding the first congregation. His was one of six French Protestant churches with Presbyterian polity and practice founded in the proximity of Charleston. These early religious entities eventually found themselves absorbed by the established Episcopal church and its missionary arm, The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. By 1710 a contemporary pamphlet listing religious affiliations in South Carolina gave the Presbyterians (including Congregationalists and Huguenots) a 45% share of the state’s religious population. These numbers dropped with the advance of Anglicanism. However, by 1722 there were three Scottish ministers of the denomination, namely,
Stobo, Fisher and Witherspoon (no first names available) who went on to form the first Presbytery. This new institution eventually became embroiled in bitter debate over acceptance of the Westminster Confessions of Faith which acknowledged God’s absolute authority and man’s inherent depravity. Scottish members left and went on to form the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston.

By 1788 there were eleven ministers of the denomination in the state, and by 1800 the Synod of the Carolinas was formed. The minutes of this first synodical gathering document a matter concerning slaves. The issue was an interdenominational request for a petition of the state’s legislature allowing for the gradual emancipation of slave offspring. The Presbyterians responded positively and signed the petition but saw no way to immediately accomplish that particular goal.

The Presbyterian church was never the largest group in South Carolina or the South. Ultimately, the Baptists and the Methodists proved numerically superior. However, as the Presbyterian church became a factor in the New World, it encountered internal strife resulting in division in 1837 and again in 1861. As seen in Chapter Two, Northern and Southern entities would, indeed, form their own institutional framework. In 1837, the original bone of contention rested in the debate over doctrinal orthodoxy in the form of ministerial qualifications regarding the knowledge of Christ. Advocates promoted a return to stricter Calvinist doctrine adopted by the Old School clergy and members. It is this branch that comes to predominate in the slave-holding states. The New School faction felt this resort to
stricter Calvinism was neither feasible nor advisable. The original schism, then, was unrelated, at least directly, to the issue of slavery.

Eventually the "peculiar institution" became a grave concern and in order to facilitate harmony, the Church had gone on record in 1794 declaring that slavery was "man-stealing". However, they failed to act further upon this pronouncement. Lack of a more definitive stand was also attributed to a church investment of $94,000 in a venture reliant upon the slave trade and one which guaranteed a large return in interest upon successful completion. As previously stated, slavery was the reason for the later division of the Old School and the formation of separate Presbyterian churches in the North and South.

Schism over slavery occurred in 1861 because members and ministers in the state, as in the South generally, felt the issue was beyond the church's bounds. As a political matter, the status of slavery rested solely with the civil authorities. The church had no right to involve itself with matters not delegated by God. The Bible, as God's word and law, required that church doctrine remain within its own sphere of authority. The Southern Presbyterians felt their brethren in the North defied holy writ by not following the biblical edict of rendering unto Caesar the things which were Caesar's. Instead, they had rendered unto Caesar the things which were God's. While slavery, as an institution, was off limits to Southern Presbyterians, God gave specific instructions as to how it should be carried out. Not surprisingly, with their strong reliance on the Calvinist tenet of biblical literality they felt particularly obliged to defend bondage on religious grounds. If God did not expressly forbid an
institution, then it could not be deemed sinful by mere mortals. Man placing himself above his Maker was an extremely serious breach of Presbyterian theology.

Growing Northern opposition, abolitionist or not, became a primary target of Southern ministerial wrath. People like the Reverends James Henley Thornwell and Ferdinand Jacobs expressed enormous contempt for perceived Northern manipulation of the Scriptures. That man felt he knew God’s work better than God, was abomination to their sensibilities. Extraction of the "spirit" of the Scriptures rather than the use of specific biblical quotations, was cause for further vexation and ridicule. The spirit of God’s meaning as defined by man, particularly one who did not live under the institution in question, was nothing short of ludicrous to Presbyterians in the South.

While Presbyterians were not the largest religious presence in South Carolina, they were heavily represented in the slaveocracy. For this reason and because of the multi-level institutional hierarchy and the prominence of their Southern clergy, a sufficient body of documents remains to assess the church’s efforts and rationale for the religious instruction of slaves. Thus, the words of the ministers, lay members and local church governing bodies now speak to that issue.

In the year 1799, the Presbytery of Charleston published a pastoral letter which expressed concern with neglect of public worship. It stressed a need for scriptural understanding and adherence to the literal translation of the Bible. It also expressed a growing realization of the need to provide proper religious instruction for young people and "others" under the care of church members. It does not deal with
slavery specifically, and is, primarily, a plea for renewed efforts within the church. The letter continued by describing religion as the cement of society which strengthened all aspects of life. It also mentioned the need for attendance to those external institutions of religion necessary to the preservation and spreading of religious knowledge amongst mankind.³

When the General Assembly met in 1818 they dealt specifically with the institution of slavery by declaring it "a violation of the precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the laws of God and ...totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ." Slavery created a moral paradox by making accountable, rational human beings reliant on others for the means to procure their own salvation.⁴ The General Assembly then proceeded to praise the denomination’s effort (in concert with most others) to end slavery. However, while abhorring the institution, they also stated their "tender" sympathy for their slave-holding members as the majority were "the most virtuous part of the community." The large number of badly behaved and ignorant Negroes prohibited immediate or universal emancipation due to the regard for the happiness and safety of both master and slave. Africans were brought to America against their wishes and into slavery, constituting one injury; to compound it further by setting them free to cause harm to themselves and others, was not considered prudent or worthy.⁵ Having thus stated its views, the Assembly recommended a plan of action to end involuntary servitude. First, it encouraged support for the American Colonization Society and its attempts to repatriate these African-Americans back to their land of origin. Second, all
Presbyterian slave-holders were charged with facilitating and encouraging religious instruction covering the principles and duties of Christianity by allowing familiarity with the Gospel. Sabbath Schools were also suggested. All forms of cruelty were to end and, especially the sale of this human property to areas or masters who would deprive them of religious enlightenment. Correct instruction led to less insubordination and insurrection rather than more. Adoption of these suggestions was recommended as a big step toward removing the evils attached to the system of slavery. It also diffused Northern demands for abolition by starting down a path towards gradual emancipation.

By 1833 the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia selected a committee to report on the subject of religious instruction of the "coloured" population. This session was held from December 5th through the 9th in Columbia and its report was published the following year. This document clearly addressed the issue of slaveholding and its biblical precedents. There was united Protestant belief in the South that God had allowed slavery from the beginning of time, starting with Abraham where the unequal relationship of master and slave appears in the Holy Book. Since the Synod’s report is the earliest available account specifically dealing with religious instruction of slaves, it seem appropriate to discuss it in some detail. It expresses some basic beliefs which can then be compared to later pronouncements on this issue. It also clarifies the church’s position vis-a-vis that of the state. South Carolina had passed a law to govern this issue as early as 1740. It reads as follows:

Whereas the having of slaves taught to write, or suffering them to be employed in writing, may be attended with great inconvenience,
Be it enacted, That all and every person and persons whatsoever, who shall hereafter teach, or cause any slave or slaves to be taught to write, or shall use or employ any slaves as a scribe in any manner of writing whatsoever hereafter taught to write, every such person or persons shall, for every such offense, forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds current money.

The law automatically and emphatically prohibited the written religious education of slaves and, consequently, all such endeavors rested on oral instruction.

By 1800 a further law made its way through the state Legislature dealing specifically with physical constraints upon religious worship. Here South Carolina’s concern with safety, due to the large Black population in the state is apparent:

It shall not be lawful for any number of slaves, free negroes, mulattoes, mestizoes, even in the company with white persons to meet together and assemble for the purpose of mental instruction or religious worship, either before the rising sun or after the going down of the same. And all magistrates, sheriffs, militia officers, etc. are hereby vested with power, etc. for dispersing with such assemblies.

The committee’s report began by declaring,

all believers in Divine Revelation require no arguments to prove to them, that the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is designed for the whole family, nor that it is the duty of those into whose possession, in the sovereign mercy of God, it has come to make it known to others who may be destitute of it.:- "The field is the world" - "Go ye into the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

This familiar admonition was used again as the opening salvo of the Synod of South Carolina in Charleston in 1854, showing that the concern expressed in 1833 and even earlier, was not fleeting. In the Act of Atonement Christ gave his flesh for the life of the world. As His disciples, these Presbyterians believed they were called to live their lives toward the salvation of the world by spreading the Gospel and not showing preference for one nation of people over another.
The committee also registered its concern over the serious disregard of the general rule implicit in Christ's command to impart the Gospel, with its accompanying blessings, to those fellow creatures most dependent upon believers for enlightenment - the slaves. These bondsmen in the hands of Southern Presbyterians were "perishing" for the need of the Gospel and dependent on their Christian owners, clergy and laymen for all enlightenment. Over two million souls remained heathen and in peril. Indeed, the committee continued, failure to impart the knowledge of Christianity condemned the church and its members in the eyes of God. It was Christian duty to meet the needs of the enslaved.

Ultimately, the intent of this document was clarification of the church's duty regarding evangelizing the African. It was a charge to "the whole church of Christ in the slave-holding states in all her denominations." Certain criteria must be met, for example, free access to the Scriptures, a real Gospel ministry, houses for public worship and the means of Grace in their (the slaves) homes. The first concern posed a problem as slaves were forbidden to learn to write by law. Consequently, it was incumbent upon the ministry to provide oral enlightenment. The few clergymen versus the large number of slaves presented an enormous obstacle. To the best of the reporter's information there were only twelve ministers or authorized laymen specifically involved full time with black religious education. Simple mathematics proved that each religious leader was responsible for 170,000 "heathen" souls.

The ratio of Presbyterian ministers to slaves was not the only problem. The plantation system employed in South Carolina and the state's large geographic area
coupled with the lack of ministers, also created a logistical nightmare. By the time ministers had discharged their duties to white congregations little time remained for black ones. A further hindrance was the lack of black ministers who remained almost non-existent due to mistrust. Black numerical superiority further exacerbated this dilemma. Staple crop production of rice, indigo and cotton, all requiring huge amounts of labor, added to the problems. So did many owner's part-time plantation residency, which resulted in the already great racial disparity becoming even further skewed.

Another related problem identified by this committee was the lack of black understanding of white religious leaders and their message. It was feared such confusion would be a deterrent to attracting slaves to established Christianity. So adoption of the following measures was recommended as a solution: servants (slaves) should not be separated into a distinct and independent church but, rather, remain under the care and discipline of the present institution. However, separate instruction and sermons were suggested. In 1833 there were but five churches built expressly for the use of Blacks in all the slaveholding states. Four of these were Baptist with the fifth being completed the previous year by a member of the synod under discussion. It might be added that it was constructed at the minister's own expense and that a sum of $300 to $400 was necessary to complete such an undertaking. The cleric in question also "supplied the pulpit himself - gratuitously". This example was one which warranted aspiration. More generally the back pews or a gallery provided seating for the slaves, depending upon space. All else failing, the committee reported
that "negroes who attend church must catch the Gospel as it escapes by the windows and doors."13

While space and content for African-Americans in white churches presented problems, so did attendance in general. In all probability, less than 1/20th of the slaves attended services. Little wonder these Christians expressed grave concern over the vast unchurched majority.14 It must be remembered that even this small percentage; however, would have provided a large black congregation given the uneven racial balance.

The 1833 report further underscored the lack of opportunity for religious instruction on the plantations. Once again, vast numbers excluded most slaves from family home worship. At best, domestic servants participated and then only with the indulgence of a kind master.15 A partial solution was seen in the area of plantation discipline and labor. While behavior itself was not a religious undertaking, a master’s duties did extend beyond the opportunity to worship. Discipline and good work habits were also part of God’s overall design and occasionally members reported that a particularly conscientious master also provided an evening of Scripture reading and praise.

Having documented the general unavailability of religious instruction, committee members discussed the duties of owners and clerics. Foremost, was the "obligation to extend the privileges of the Gospel to the Negroes, immediately in a judicious and efficient manner." The slaves were here as immortal and accountable human beings just as white South Carolinians were. However, care was made to
deny responsibility for bringing the Africans to the state. Masters were not liable for their inheritance and, most importantly, they were not responsible for the creation of the relationship.\textsuperscript{16}

Since slaves were property according to law, their persons and services belonged to their owner. The church therefore drew a broad and important distinction between ownership of their bodies and their souls. Although their physical beings were owned by another human being, their souls belonged to God. The very first duty of masters then, was to ensure slave salvation by bringing them to their Maker. The Lord bestowed this duty by admonishing the white man, who possessed the Gospel, to give it to those less fortunate. One of the Great Laws (the Fourth Commandment) charges that we must love our neighbors as ourselves. If all men belonged to the same great family, it was all but impossible to deny the millions who dwelled in the homes of Christian owners and clergy the status of neighbors at the very least. The aforementioned Commandment was certainly not the only Divine Writ on which Christians were basing the need to educate their slaves. Other often used Scriptural quotations were "all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." "Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in Heaven." The committee declared that slavery had not changed since these biblical edicts became known to man and that God was charging them personally.

Having established the basis for continuation of biblical slavery and the acceptance of all men as part of God's family with the possibility of salvation, the
report then turned to the role of masters. This group was charged with taking particular care of bondsmen as they too faced accountability in Heaven. Should the owner fail to discharge his duty, he met with God's severe displeasure. Furthermore, the privilege of presenting the richest gift of God to the slaves was worthy of being cherished. The kindest return for wearing out their bodies to supply the planter elite with the luxuries of this world as well as the necessities should end in salvation through the Gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.17

If the institution of slavery required certain behavior and duties by the slaveocracy, then the privilege conferred upon the status of ownership provided the necessary method to accomplish the same. Religious instruction provided the answer. The benefits of such an undertaking were clearly in the interests of the master. The efforts of the previous thirty-four years of religious education were negligible and in desperate need of clarification. Religion provided a framework for improving conditions on both sides of the equation. The Scriptures informed owners that slaves were fellow creatures for whose treatment these earthly masters were accountable on Judgment Day. It also laid out instructions and duties slaves owed their masters. The following biblical command required earthly obedience "according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness of heart as unto Christ."18 Primarily, religious instruction promoted a better understanding of the relationship between the two groups especially as it highlighted their reciprocal duties. A second assumed benefit from attention to proper treatment of human property and provision of their needs, was an improvement in health resulting in less medical attention and loss of work
hours. It was also presumed that if black religious needs were met as a result of their own labor, more industry and less crime resulted. Another important by-product was less need to find fault and to punish slaves which engendered a feeling of pleasure and less unrest.

Still another positive result of Christian instruction was the contribution to safety. While conceding the superiority of white society, the committee felt that even a weaker potential enemy should not be ignored. If slaves recognized God as the "Superintendent of Providence", they would be less easily led or swayed toward insurrection. A corollary to concerns over security prompted white surveillance during black religious services, a tactic which allowed an opportunity to talk with them individually. This, it was hoped, would promote more kindly feelings toward masters and lessen insubordination. Finally religious education aided in dispelling superstition and ignorance, thereby lessening the impact of unscrupulous men.

Beyond the many benefits religious instruction provided individual slaves and slavery itself, the church also benefitted from the opportunity to promote its own morality and religion. Of grave concern to the committee was the negative influence non-Christianized Blacks had on white children. The unsavory results of negative influences on the very young continued into youth, manhood and old age. Efforts to evangelize the slaves would directly increase and encourage the growth of grace in white Christian souls. "He that waters, shall be watered also himself." A positive succession followed as slaves became more modest and elevated in intelligence and morality, resulting in protection for white youth. As one class rose, so would the
other. Another related benefit meant that the church would be spared much unpleasant disciplinary action in the form of punishments and excommunications.

The final reason given for religious education of the black community is listed as the one of most importance and is definitely of primary importance here. All else was secondary to the salvation of souls. Given the worldly position of the slave, he was, above all others, entitled to the hopes of blessed immortality for sustenance in his earthly pilgrimage below. To date, the ministry and owners had neglected their duty, and to continue, convicted them of a heinous sin meaning a loss of eternity. Salvation of both Black and White, it seems, was very important to these South Carolina Presbyterians.

In its conclusion the report deals with contemporary fears regarding religious enlightenment of slaves. Many worried that emancipation would be the result, a seemingly futile exercise if one believed slavery was scripturally prescribed and Christianity was destined to prevail upon the earth. If one subscribed to the above beliefs and freedom resulted, then emancipation was also divinely ordained and God would provide for it in an orderly manner, particularly if Christians followed biblical dictates and upheld their duty as masters.

A second issue raised by those in opposition to education centered on the ability of outsiders to fill the heads of slaves with subversive ideas much against the interest of the owners. This fear was dismissed, as outside participation could only come with Southern consent. If masters undertook the instruction themselves, they alone maintained control of content.
A third problem dealt with insubordination and the notion that slaves would equate their position in Christ and the Church as meaning they were equal to their white owners and result in neglect of work and resistance to discipline. Not so, said the proponents of the plan, as biblical admonitions to servants adequately spelled out their subjectivity to their masters. If insubordination did result it was deemed a problem of implementation not Holy Writ. While discipline was softened by improving moral principles, it was still considered a necessary part of religious training. After all, fathers reprimanded children and the same principle applied to slaves. The presence of white men at black Christian religious worship of all kinds, precluded insubordination unless laxity prevailed. Lastly, fears abounded that biblical instruction would do bondsmen more harm than good because they were not redeemable. This fear seemed unfounded however, because these Presbyterians believed the Gospel contained sufficient power to redeem even Africans as they too were men, who were endowed with reason and conscience like their fellow human beings.

As we have seen the committee charged with determining church policy on religious education put forth several serious solutions and answered some specific objections. In conclusion it felt these objections of insufficient concern to deter them from their findings. Ultimately, they decreed it their duty to impart the Gospel to "our coloured population". They also determined that the appalling apathy regarding the "perishing of two million heathens" was due to neglect by both ministers and people. The whole country "groans under the sin of neglect of the salvation of these
people" manifesting a deficiency in the spirit of Presbyterianism and Christianity. This spirit was one of love and obedience. Accordingly, when all men stand before "the Bar of God, where the artificial distinctions of this world will not be recognized," God will judge each according to his work.

From this fairly in-depth look at the work of the Committee selected to report on the subject of religious education of the black population, it is possible to draw some preliminary conclusions. Accountability on the part of owners and the clergy is treated very seriously. If either side neglected biblical demands it would be judged by God and found wanting. Very importantly, the report also shows concern with the salvation of both races as well as a temporal issue, that of security and the impetus provided by religious instruction.

During the decade of the 1840s, the man credited with creating the basis for the religious education of slaves, the Reverend Charles Colcock Jones, addressed the Christian public of the South. Speaking for the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, this prominent Presbyterian minister designed his report to aid all Protestant denominations. Jones believed that the vast majority of professing Christians, clerics and laymen alike, had accepted the duty of evangelizing the black population and moved onward, seeking the best possible plan for fulfilling that duty. Utilizing his own experiences, as well as those of his ordained brethren, he completed a series of Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes. Included were the duties of church, clergy and owners.
Reverend Jones began by lamenting the lack of qualified clergy to minister to the large number of slaves as well as the neglect of duty by owners. Plantations capable of blooming into "fruitful fields and vineyards of the Lord" remained in a state of wilderness. They also lacked morality. He expressed specific concern over the large numbers of unchurched slaves, particularly children and youths. He placed their numbers at approximately 1,846,028. Christian ministers were charged with understanding that Southern congregations consisted of families - parents, children, masters and servants and that these created one congregation. The responsible master, therefore, "divided the word", and gave "everyman his portion in due season."²⁴

While this document provides detailed suggestions regarding specific obligations of religious education, its most important contribution is in delineating ministerial responsibility toward black constituents. Jones charged his fellow church leaders to exercise great care when receiving black members into their churches, paying particular attention to the rolls. The upkeep of these records was of primary concern as they enabled documentation of breaches in appropriate behaviors and morality. An additional benefit was an accurate accounting of the number of converted slaves. The following is an abbreviated list of Jones’ suggestions to aid record-keeping:

1. A regular course of instruction for candidates.
2. The appropriate time of said instruction was to follow church rules, or ministerial discretion.
3. No early or hasty admissions.
4. Kindness must accompany instruction.
5. Final examinations must be accompanied by fairness, intelligence and candor.
6. Acceptance into the church membership ensured baptism with the same timeliness accorded white applicants.
7. Acceptance of ex-communicated members of other denominations required great scrutiny and caution.

Other ministerial duties included performing marriage ceremonies and visiting the sick. In addition, provisions were made for services to the black flock, including baptism, pastoral instruction and the establishment of Sabbath Schools. As far as the method employed by Sunday Schools in disbursing religious education, the Reverend Jones supported diligence. Due to the lack of literacy, instruction was catechetical, with scholars answering in unison or rotation. Scripture cards with pictures proved helpful, as did the singing of hymns and psalms. The latter proved a great source of enjoyment for the slaves. However, a necessary proviso accompanied these suggestions: the correct method of singing and praying etc. awaited instruction from qualified white teachers. Ideally, at the close of the Sabbath School, participants were reviewed on the lessons of the day.

Having taken care of content, Jones then turned his talents to matters of time, discipline and location. He deemed the appropriate time at an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes. Better to stop short of weariness than to risk attentiveness. It was possible to accomplish the necessary requirements contained in his format within this suggested time frame. Discipline was the order of the day, even after Sunday School and worship were completed. Students were charged with maintaining the proper decorum while within the confines of the church and surrounding area. He called upon them to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Frequent pastoral visits
were highly recommended as were continued efforts at establishing similar schools in religiously "destitute" neighborhoods. Parents and masters were also encouraged to continue instruction at home.

In addition to Sunday School, regular church worship and religious instructions, missionaries were needed to reach the thousands of already perishing black souls. Jones saw the need for additional pastors, and even theological students occupied solely in this endeavor. As an aid to this plan of action, he listed some guidelines. Briefly, they included:

1. Gain permission before visiting any plantation.
2. Refrain from involvement in the civil condition of the slaves.
3. Do not take sides in slave's arguments.
4. Condemn all vice and evil customs.
5. Preserve order at all times.
6. Stress the advantages enjoyed by gaining religious knowledge.
7. Refrain from causing unnecessary excitement and upset.
8. Support peace and order.
9. Dismiss personal slights and unkindness.

In addition, those employed solely with black congregations must guard against straying from the appropriate Scriptures, prayers and hymns, etc.

These suggestions for spreading the Gospel to the black "heathen" also came with a financial plan of action. Jones suggested fiscally able owners support a missionary and an appropriate building as well. He cited as an example, one unnamed Southern planter who spent $30,000 on a church and provided an annual stipend of $1,200 to his vicar. If unable to participate on this somewhat grandiose level, the author suggested collaboration with nearby neighbors as an alternative. Or, Jones advised, individual churches might sponsor one of more missionaries.
Additional suggestions included fund raising activities by the various synods, presbyteries, associations, conferences and conventions. Joint participation with those of other denominations willing to establish domestic missions was also encouraged, pointing once again to the strong case for Protestant cooperation.25

Having dealt with ministers and missionaries, Jones continued with the duties of owners regarding religious enlightenment. The slave's eternal well-being was definitely of great concern to this cleric as he made clear in the following quotation. Jones urged masters to faithfully discharge their duty in the matter of religious instruction and salvation.

He who is in the providence of God, called to be a "master in the flesh," should acquaint himself with his duties and responsibilities, taking the word of God as his infallible guide to truth in his peculiar relation. His rights are founded upon a discharge of his duties and one of his first duties is to remember that his servants are immortal beings and to the best of his ability and opportunity HE SHOULD PROVIDE FOR THEIR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION. (emphasis Jones')

A Master was also charged with according missionaries the same respect as ministers. In addition, his own responsibilities included attendance of house servants at family prayers. The remainder of the slave population was allowed to hold its own evening prayers - Plantation Prayers, led by a watchman or some other prominent church member. Following proper procedure was a necessary prerequisite to securing permission for these slave services. The owner's failure to comply with these responsibilities was regarded by Jones as "an abuse of power amounting to downright oppression, and a great sin before God".26
Plantation schools for children and youths were also charged to the owner’s duty. Here, young slaves learned obedience and respect for superiors, making them better and more profitable servants. Other positive results were happier children and, later, better husbands and wives. "The wild half-clothed boisterous, lawless rabble of children, are tamed and reduced to decency and order," Jones assured readers.  

Even properly trained nurses assigned to tending young children while their parents toiled in the fields, were viewed as viable agents for transmitting religious education.  

Having attended to the slave’s rights to know God, Reverend Jones then set his sights on the more mundane matters of this world. Christian principles used in teaching slaves the appropriate behavior, decency and a chance at immortality, placed some physical demands on owners. These included adequate food and clothing, houses which met the basic requirements of size and necessary supplies, etc. In addition, the sick and aged deserved nursing care. Free time was also stressed and suggestions included an opportunity to plant some crops for personal use with the freedom to sell the harvest and keep the receipts from such sales. Very importantly, the Sabbath was set aside strictly for the business of religious worship and rest. Unnecessary visiting to other plantations was curtailed as were trips to retail stores and "tippling shops" set up on street corners in cities, villages and towns. It was here goods of questionable origin changed hands and intemperance prevailed. Such activities proved "a most ruinous and demoralizing influence over the coloured population of the South". 

If owners followed the Reverend Jones' plan outlined in this document, they were assured of ample reward. He advised: "Let them invest a little capital in the minds and hearts of their people and it will prove to all concerned, a peace-giving and profitable investment for time and for eternity". Women were not immune from this call as those of piety and zeal were encouraged to assist in Christianizing the bondsmen.

In conclusion, this document delineates an elaborate and thoughtful form of religious instruction for churches to take. For example, separate facilities were not advised and the "classes" (i.e. white and black) formed one pastoral charge, one congregation. Both races were subject to the same care, discipline and religious ordinances. Preservation of unity created a stronger bond and kinder feelings resulted. In the event of the establishment of separate "coloured" churches, Jones advised the appointing of appropriate white pasters, elders and deacons. Provision of ample church accommodations for slaves, however, was a duty incumbent upon masters. In this area Reverend Jones called attention to a noble venture taking place in Charleston where the local Presbytery had recently erected a house of public worship with sufficient room for Blacks. This new congregation was overseen by a white pastor. It was hoped this example would multiply. Leaving no doubt as to his belief in the importance of religious education and the roll it played in the salvation of both races, the author's summation on the subject is included below.

There can be no doubt and no dispute on the duty of affording them the gospel of the grace of god. Here, then, is firm ground to stand upon; and ground upon which the Lord's servants may stand firmly, for it is their own. Ministers, churches and owners
are the almoners of Divine mercy to this dependent people .......... We are to lead this people unto life eternal, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the will of god - this is our duty of the Southern Church. Grant us wisdom and power and grace, O Lord, our God and our Redeemer, to discharge it. 29

Religious instruction continued to be important to Presbyterians in South Carolina. Consequently, by 1845 another report appeared. This time it was part of a larger body of information contained within The Proceedings of the Meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, May 13-15, 1845, on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes. In this document the Presbyterians reported that the church had favored such education for the previous twelve years. For a decade, momentum had been gradual whereas during the last two years growth had been rapid and extensive. Ministers and churches were both evangelizing slaves and, there was growing interest in Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama and, most importantly, South Carolina. Some ministers were serving primarily as missionaries.

The report included three cardinal points of black education. They were:

1. To provide for each group (masters and servants) to receive a just proportion of ministerial labor.
2. To establish Sabbath Schools and classes within each church for instruction of children, youths and adults and also to encourage schools in private homes.
3. To provide as many qualified and employed missionaries as quickly as possible. 30

While the Presbyterian church became increasingly worried by the subject of religious instruction by 1845, so did particular ministers. In response to the letter sent out under the auspices of The Committee of the Charleston, South Carolina Meeting on the Religious Instruction of Negroes, John Douglas, from Chester District reported that the two congregations to which he ministered, had produced more than
100 black attendees. Eighteen of these held full membership. Still, he noted a lack of missionaries to work specifically with slaves. Under Douglas, religious instruction consisted of inclusion of slaves at white services where a "quarter of the house" or the traditional gallery was reserved for their use. Here they heard the same sermon and scriptural readings as white Presbyterians. No black teachers or preachers participated, nor was there a catechetical program for children or youth. The Reverend Douglas also expressed difficulty in calculating a proper observance of the Sabbath citing the white population as a poor example. Nevertheless, when he compared his one hundred black worshippers with those not exposed to religious influence, he observed enough positive difference in the former to justify his efforts.31

From the same district the Reverend W. Flenniken reported black membership in his church was fourteen. All but one could read, and eight could spell and write at a rudimentary level. All were catechized during regular public worship by elders of the church, utilizing Brown's Child's Catechism as well as the denomination's Larger and Shorter Versions. During his parish rounds, this pastor noted, almost without exception, that black children were included with white in Sunday evening catechism classes. At such family sessions, masters stressed improvement of religious knowledge and morality. Flenniken concluded with the observation that unless slaves were taught early and received the necessary "proper government and discipline" they often turned out to be some of the worst behaved slaves on the plantation.

Chester District was not the only one to report to the committee: ministers from Sumter, Abbeville, Williamsburg, Marlborough and Charleston Districts as well
as Prince William's Parish, Edisto Island and James Island also complied. In reply to
the questionnaire, a response from Sumter District reported that the Reverend R. W.
James (recently deceased) had met regularly with Negroes for the purpose of
instruction every Sabbath morning at 9 a.m. and concluded his ministrations with a
discussion with the watchman as to black conduct during the previous week. Reporter
George S. C. DeShamps believed the ensuing good order which prevailed in the
district, and the general improvement in behavior, intelligence and character was
completely due to the influence of the Gospel.32

Abbeville District's reply reported that of a total membership of eighty,
seventeen were Black. Here the minister addressed the slaves every other Sunday
afternoon. Catechism was once again taught by the master in his home. The results
were positive, and religious training was credited with the elevated moral character of
the slaves and their fidelity.33

Marlborough District identified the percentage of black participants in the
district as small. In addition, it noted the lack of any black ministers. Seats were
reserved in all district churches for special black services that followed regular
worship. No specific adult catechism method existed other than that administered by
masters in their households. Results appeared to reflect improvement commensurate
with instruction.34

While the above listed districts reported little formal catechism training,
Charleston's superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal denomination reported that all
churches in the district, including the Presbyterian and Scottish church, provided
schools charged with this responsibility. Further evidence is supplied by a similar report from Thomas R. Vardell, superintendent of the Presbyterian church, whose participation was at the request of the Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Reverend Dr. Smyth. Superintendent Vardell continued by commenting on the "coloured Sabbath School" formed in 1831. Attendance there appears to have fluctuated from fifty to two hundred students with thirty adults enrolled on the reporting date. The group met on Sunday mornings after service and received the catechism prepared by the aforementioned Reverend C. C. Jones. Sabbath sunrise services led by black teachers were also available. Similar meetings were also held in the afternoon just before dusk so as to comply with South Carolina law regarding Negro assembly. Both morning and evening sessions were well attended by approximately 400 to 500 congregants.35

While the information for Charleston is fairly specific, other areas are less precise but still revealing. For example, Prince William’s response states only that the Presbyterians had no colored preachers but that all churches had watchmen, information that supports a common theme running through all the answers to the Charleston query. Instead, it appears that black "exhorters" were used to lead slave prayer meetings. This is true for Abbeville District too, where one white minister and a black exhorter attended their congregation on a fortnightly basis. Catechisms here took place in the home and sometimes in church after service following the traditional method.36
While many informants included instances of black prayer group leaders, Edisto Island relied totally on its minister. The Reverend Wm. States Lee acknowledged "157 Negroes in communion with the Presbyterian Church of which I am Pastor." Although 200 to 250 regularly attended his weekly services, no black person was authorized to teach in any capacity here, even as a prayer group leader. Reverend Lee used oral instruction and catechizing to reach his congregation. He, like many others, also used Jones' Catechism for weekly instruction. He also taught the necessary lessons to candidates seeking full membership. Thirty were involved in the process at the time of the reply. He also held special services at the conclusion of morning worship. In addition, he spent Sunday afternoons alternating preaching duties on two different plantations, at which time he made the catechism available to approximately thirty additional children. Lee consequently reported a growing number of youthful applicants due to such early religious training. Overall, Reverend Lee experienced a general improvement in moral character but, interestingly, could not discern whether this came from improved discipline on the plantations or increased subordination of the slaves. In either event, religious education seemed responsible.37

In contrast, James' Island's black Presbyterian congregation, which stood at three hundred, was ministered to by several black class leaders on a weekly schedule. It was thought they were generally ineffective, however, and plans were underway to replace them. Once again, reference is made to the employment of watchmen to
report on behavior. These offices were filled from the ranks of exemplary members. Blacks also led special services following morning worship, and catechism classes.

In concluding, the Committee declared that the responses to their circular, proved much devotion and long-lived activity in the area of religious instruction of the slaves. The members believed that had the input of other slave-holding states been included, their combined voices "would be as the sound of many waters and their multitude and their labours would exceed our most sanguine expectations."\textsuperscript{38} 

The foregoing report certainly reveals the central assumption that slave education, even of the religious variety, required proper discipline on the part of owners if it were to succeed in any meaningful way. By pursuing such strictly monitored studies, South Carolina Presbyterians also claimed to be fulfilling their Christian duty - spreading the Word, God's word - the Gospel - to all His children. Africans were considered human beings with souls and as such entitled to know God. It was, therefore, a duty to comply. This lengthy report substantiates their commitment to this cause. Without question, religious instruction condoned the institution of bondage because participating masters and ministers became missionaries for God. They defended slavery as a positive good for black enlightenment and eventual salvation as well as receiving God's blessings for their efforts. Without these missionizing Presbyterians, millions of black souls faced damnation. Masters, by fulfilling biblical requirements and their duties as owners, also ensured their own salvation. An important temporal concern was also met in improved behavior of the work force.
By 1847, the Synod of South Carolina meeting at Columbia felt compelled to go even further in the area of appropriate Christian behavior for both masters and slaves. This was primarily in response to fear of another schism over the issue of slavery. To avert the impending crisis, the Reverend James Henly Thornwell attempted to ensure absolute compliance with God's demands regarding the relationship between master and slave. Thornwell acknowledged that while some Northern Presbyterian abolitionists were monomaniacs laboring under delusional reasoning, others, while sincere, were mistaken. Slavery was divinely ordained because if God had condemned it, the Bible, as His word, would surely have said so. Instead, scripture not only sanctioned the institution, it also laid down directions for proper conduct of Christians regarding their duty in the relationship of masters and servants. Since the integrity, honesty and piety of these Southern Presbyterian ministers had been called into question, Reverend Thornwell felt obliged to initiate a public discussion on the subject. Using the Bible as his source, he first declared that:

"domestic servitude as found among us at the South...is not, in itself sinful. The Bible plainly recognizes it; and the SIN OF SLAVERY (for there is much sin attending it) springs, not from the nature of the relation, but FROM THE NEGLECT OF DUTY IN THE MASTER. The command of God is, 'masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a master in Heaven.'

The author went on to discuss inequities in relationships since the beginning of recorded time. Mosaic law (the laws God gave to Moses which specifically allowed slavery) even determined that slavery would be perpetual. Men of heathen or Gentile origin were referred to as a man's money, thus making a slave a possession also. To
these Gentile slaves of the Jews God said, "they shall be bondmen forever" (Levi. 25:26). Then Dr. Thomwell likened this ancient form of heredity servitude to slavery in South Carolina and the South in general. Levit. 22: 10, 11, made provisions for ministers of the Lord to be slaveholders. To be a Southern slaveholder and be consistent with the word of God, therefore, required that the duties of masters be correctly enforced.

This unequal relationship (only one of many ordained by God) required very specific behavior in one's response to particular types of possessions. Thornwell used horses, logs and slaves as examples. An owner should not treat a horse as he would a log, he should not hack, chop or burn a horse, whereas he may use a log in that manner. A horse is an owner's property and as such he may use and treat him in any way conducive to the animal's well-being. The master had the same rights in his slave property and might treat them "in any way consistent with their nature as human beings, not only sentiment, like mere animals, but also as rational, as accountable beings, HAVING IMMORTAL SOULS". He may have had the power to treat them otherwise, as logs or horses, but not the right.

Having propounded that slaveholding itself was not a sin and that improper treatment was, Reverend Thornwell proceeded to enumerate specific duties for both masters and slaves. He addressed such issues as an owner's entitlement to his bondsman's service, respect and loyalty. In return, he must supply adequate and comfortable support, kind and considerate treatment and, most important, for the purpose of this enquiry, "due instruction and care for their morals". Servants were
entitled to faithful and careful religious instruction throughout their life span. A similar additional duty of masters was that they owed all their bondsmen practical facilities for securing their eternal salvation.42

The author saw the master's rights "bounded by the grave" but his responsibilities "overleap that barrier and stretch outward through eternity". Because the Savior died to redeem the souls of white and black alike, the owner had no right to endanger his slave's immortality. Slaves had the right to learn to live honest, virtuous and respectable lives while here on earth as well as the opportunity to secure eternal happiness in the hereafter. Specifically, education meant religious instruction from the Bible, observing the Sabbath as a day of rest, allowing all to participate in public worship and the necessary physical facilities to accommodate the same. This frequently quoted biblical example showed that Abraham had brought his slaves into a Covenant with God. "The servants born in his house, and those he bought with his money he circumcised." Gen. 17:12, 13:23. When he did this, Moses also pledged to instruct and to require his servants to keep the law of God.

"The Duties of masters and Slaves" concludes on a very important note and the final two paragraphs are worthy of inclusion here. They deal specifically with the question at hand and leave little doubt as to the importance of religious education of slaves and the consequences of failure to follow Christian duty in this area:

Yes, true it is, we may be legally entitled to certain services from those whose master we are, but we too have a Master in heaven, who claims our service, in the use of every talent we possess in compliance with His will. For all, we must render to Him a strict account, and for the manner in which we have treated our servants, no less than for the manner in which we have personally improved
or abused our own religious privileges. Happy and blessed is the man, who like the holy patriarch of old, trains his entire household, servants no less than children, in the fear of God. But woe to the selfish and unthinking master, who (however liberal the provision he makes for the present comfort of his slaves,) puts it out of their power to learn how they may become reconciled to God and save their souls. The man who wantonly kills a servant, is a murderer. He who shuts out his servants from a knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ, is a murderer of souls, and he must meet a dread responsibility at the bar of God; whose high command is, MASTERS GIVE UNTO YOUR SERVANTS THAT WHICH IS JUST AND EQUAL; KNOWING THAT YE ALSO HAVE A MASTER IN HEAVEN.43

Like the Reverend Thornwell in 1847, the Reverend Ferdinand Jacobs was, by 1850, along with most of his colleagues, preaching on a wide variety of subjects related to slavery. Speaking from the Second Presbyterian Church in Charleston on December 6th., a day declared by the South Carolina Legislature as one of fasting, humiliation and prayer due to the poor condition of the state’s relations with Washington, Jacobs delivered a sermon entitled The Committing of our Cause to God. Emphasis was on the religious aspects of the relationship between South Carolina and the federal government but for this minister one prevailing principle underscored the issue of slavery: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Wrongful interpretation of this principle had led to its misguided application to the issue of bondage. Detractors, for example, used this biblical demand to argue that if any master who, if he were a slave would wish to be free, must free his slaves. Jacobs felt this erroneous because to follow it would subvert all unequal relationships set up
by God. Instead, he argued, the Bible had sanctioned slavery from the earliest age -
the time of Abraham.44

Indeed, God made a solemn covenant with Abraham saying that "every man-
child in our generations, he that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy
money, of any stranger which is not of they seed, must need be circumcised; and my
covenant shall be in your flesh, for an everlasting covenant." This same covenant
included the church as Reverend Jacobs stated:

the coming of the Savior in whom all the families of the earth
shall be blessed; it involves all our hopes of attaining moral purity
to communion with God, to the enjoyment of his presence in the
world of purity and bliss. In this covenant, sacred indeed, this
institution of slavery is distinctly recognized; - not to be
denounced, not to be prohibited in the church, but to require
that it be the means of spiritual good to the slaves, that the
servant with the master, enjoy like glorious spiritual blessings.45

Having established divine sanctions for the institution, Reverend Jacobs
furthered his cause by including another heavenly rule, "Masters render unto your
servants that which is just and equal knowing that ye also have a Master which is in
Heaven." Slaves were like the master's children and, as such, a good master carried
out his duties to them in the form of prayer on their behalf and personal influence for
their improvement. The Lord avenged the cause of the oppressed and if owners
failed in their Christian duty to provide that which was just and equal, salvation for
masters would prove illusive. In other words, failure to provide for the salvation of
those in bondage resulted in that option being removed for their owners. In the
hereafter God would not differentiate between the two races, holding both equally
accountable. While providing the means for eternal salvation was not an owner's
only duty, he was charged by Jacobs to provide for his slave's immortality. This clergymen also seconded the previously expressed belief that statewide provisions for appropriate religious instruction of "Negroes" was being carried out. So the Reverend Jacobs stressed the importance of personal salvation for both Black and White. If his sermon was taken seriously by the slaveocracy of South Carolina, then the failure to provide adequate religious education would result in the loss of salvation.

A year after the Reverend Jacob's sermon was preached in 1850, a Report on the Subject of Slavery was presented to the Southern Presbyterian Church at the Synod of South Carolina in Winnsborough. This meeting took place in November of 1851. The resulting report referred to the work of an earlier committee assigned by the Synod, which met in Columbia in 1847. It had set forth the proper relations of the Church to the institution of slavery and had outlined the duties of masters and servants. The purpose of the 1847 committee was to allay fear and agitation in answer to growing Northern hostility to slavery. It was felt that Christian duty required an attempt to maintain the unity of the church. The biggest threat in 1847 was the possibility of partial alienation or external schism amongst Presbyterians and fellow Christians North and South. In the ensuing years the Synod at South Carolina (Winnsborough) concluded that the circumstances had changed. Slavery was no longer the lone target of Northern aggression, the actual integrity of the Union was under attack and the issue had moved from the hands of the Church to those of the state.46
Southern Presbyterians saw their position as the only workable solution. Since God had not declared slavery a sin, then the church, being a purely declarative and ministerial institution had no right to change the fixed and unalterable constitution that was the word of God - the Gospel. The church as an institution was allowed creeds but not opinions on Holy Writ. Since biblical edict distinctly sanctioned slavery, it definitely did not condemn it. Consequently, the Church had no authority to disturb the relationship between slave and master; instead, it was bound to enforce the duties specifically laid out in the Bible. Owners had responsibilities toward their bondsmen and the church was obligated to uphold them.\textsuperscript{47} As for the issue of slavery itself, the report defined bondage as a political matter not a moral one. It emphasized that opposition to the system was based upon misguided human reason and not biblical reality. Fearing schism in both church and state, this synod appealed to the abolitionists to reconsider their misguided crusade which Southern Presbyterians saw was based on Christian misconduct or sinfulness.

Having specifically defined the church’s acceptance of bondage, its most important role became enforcing the duties incumbent on both parties, particularly the master’s responsibility for the religious education of his slaves. This trust was carried out with the utmost care and diligence. Indeed, it required the same attention that one gave one’s children. The church fulfilled its leadership role in this venture by resolving several serious and long standing questions. The first was the status of slave teachers. The committee decided against their use, arguing that black instructors tended to lean toward superstition and extravagance and could not be
entrusted with the care of their own souls, never mind anyone else’s. This conclusion stemmed from the fear that their condition rendered them childlike and incapable of becoming ministers and leader. Presbyterians ultimately worried that black ordination would result in a lessening of piety, reducing the church to fanaticism and bedlam.\textsuperscript{48} The 1851 document closed on a note of relief declaring that all congregations within the synod shared the point of view that slaves were not ready to assume positions of responsibility. Consequently, the church anticipated a slow but steady progress on the road to slave salvation.

Once again, religious education of slaves is the primary prescription of South Carolina Presbyterians in maintaining the righteousness of the institution of slavery. Clearly, it was ordained by God and His wishes could not be undone by religious edict. Christians were instead called upon to carry out the duties attributed to their status as owners to educate their fellow human beings in the word of God, thus allowing for the salvation of their souls. Failure to follow Divine instruction within the system was the sin, not slavery itself. While not specifically addressing the salvation of the masters, Southern Presbyterians deemed the failure to provide religious care as a dereliction of that class’ duty. Moreover, that failure jeopardized Heavenly residency when one stood before God on Judgement Day. Underscoring the gravity of such dereliction, this Synod declared it a sin and implied that punishment would be forthcoming.

The necessity of including the exposure of slaves to religious enlightenment to secure salvation was also an important theme of an 1854 document entitled, \textit{Early
History of Presbyterians in South Carolina. Written and presented in the form of a
sermon by the Reverend George Howe, it marked the official opening of the Synod of
South Carolina which met in Charleston. A professor of biblical literature at the
Theology Seminary in Columbia, Howe gave a brief history of the Presbyterian
experience in America, paying particular attention to the growth of the church. He
questioned the premise that earlier missionary zeal had failed to keep pace with
growing membership and suggested rather, a lack of diligence in following the holy
admonition to "go ye and preach the Gospel to every creature, lo I am with you until
the end of the world".\(^\text{49}\)

Current church advances in religious instruction and improved understanding
by slaves did not entirely put Reverend Howe at ease; he remained concerned with
spreading the Gospel to every community. He felt the necessity for a wider and
better effort in spreading the word of God, including Christianizing the Native
Americans.\(^\text{50}\) He expressed the need for the "indoctrination of truths of the Gospel"
to be administered to "the ever increasing numbers of our servile population".
Referring to the relatively small number of African-American slaves in the era of his
father, he noted that missionary work currently remained at approximately the same
level. America being a Christian country, of necessity should have brought all into
contact with God, thereby saving their eternal souls. Howe further decried the lack of
growth among missionary members of the church and called for a renewed effort in
the future. Reverend Howe concluded by quoting the now familiar gospel command
of Christ: "Go ye and preach the Gospel to every creature, lo I am with you unto the
end of the world". The same quotation had also appeared in "Instructions to our Coloured Brethren" in 1833.

Here again, the immense importance attached to spreading the Gospel as a way of achieving salvation for all races is paramount. Besides the admonition to go forth and spread the Gospel to the "heathen", Reverend Howe also discussed the need to labor to this end, declaring that rest was not in the earth’s dominion but rather "yonder in the skies". Reaching the unconverted slaves with Christ’s word ensured their redemption and eternal salvation. At the same time it fulfilled the Christian requirement thus securing everlasting life for these Presbyterians.

The original examples provided leave little doubt as to the beliefs of South Carolina Presbyterians regarding black and white salvation and the intent inherent in their programs to provide religious education for their bondsmen. It is clear that they genuinely felt such enlightenment was a necessary part of their Christian obligation, fuelled by the need to achieve salvation for themselves. Providing the means for black redemption was the impetus for achieving this goal. While they undoubtedly varied in sincerity and effort, it was obviously not a matter to be taken lightly. Concern was ongoing and deepened over time, culminating in intensity on the eve of the Civil War and through the conflict itself. However an end to the issue would prove illusive as the internal denominational struggle continued along with an unflagging belief that resolution to the war did not change God’s word or one’s duty to go forth and spread His word amongst the unconverted "heathen,” now the freedmen and their families.
NOTES


6. Ibid., 10.

7. Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, 154. While teaching slaves to read was against South Carolina law, there are references to literate slaves. From the available data it is unclear whether these bondsmen learned to read while residing in other states or the West Indies or if, indeed, state law was circumvented in these instances.

8. Ibid.

9. The Report of the Committee to Whom was Referred the Subject of the Religious Instruction of the Coloured Population of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia December 5-9, 1833 (Charleston, 1834), 3.

10. Ibid., 3.

11. Ibid., 4.

12. Ibid., 5.

13. Ibid., 7.


15. Ibid., 9.
16. Ibid., 9-10.
17. Ibid., 13.
18. Ibid., 15.
19. Ibid., 17.
20. Ibid., 29.
21. Ibid., 30-33.
22. Ibid., 33.

23. While the exact date of this document remains elusive, reference to the census of 1840 and to the future as 1850, place it within the decade of the 1840s.


25. Ibid., 28.
26. Ibid., 32.
27. Ibid., 35.
28. Ibid., 36.
29. Ibid., 40.


31. Ibid., 24.
32. Ibid., 29.
33. Ibid., 38.
34. Ibid., 39.
35. Ibid., 34.
36. Ibid., 44.
37. Ibid., 44-5.

38. Ibid., 71.

39. Synod of South Carolina at Columbia, 1847 (Columbia, 1848), 18-19.

40. Ibid., 18.

41. Ibid., 19.

42. Ibid., 23.

43. Ibid., 24.

44. Reverend Ferdinand Jacobs, The Committing of our Cause to God. (Charleston 1850), 10.

45. Ibid., 11.


47. Ibid., 7.

48. Ibid., 16.

49. Reverend George Howe, Early History of Presbyterianism in South Carolina. (Synod of South Carolina, Charleston, 1854), 19.

50. Ibid., 16.
CHAPTER 5

EPILOGUE
The War Ends - The Conflict Continues

With the end of the Civil War came an end to the institution of slavery. However, the freedom of the black population did not necessarily mean the end of Presbyterian responsibility to this group, nor the end to the denomination’s preoccupation with black and white salvation. Indeed, clergy and former owners continued to fear harsh treatment at Heaven’s gates for failure to carry forward the Lord’s command to enlighten the less fortunate. The church still clung to the duties derived from the now defunct relationship between masters and slaves. As a Pastoral Letter from the General Assembly of 1865 reported, two vital interests remained. First, slavery remained a scriptural truth (I Tim: 6, 1-5). This absolved Southern Presbyterians from charges that they had fostered black freedom. In their view they had done everything they could for the slaves and were not responsible for the change in the condition of the black population. Second, it remained incumbent upon member churches to do everything possible to assist the former slaves in return for prior services rendered for the glory of God. If the church’s worst fears came to pass, and the freedmen were doomed, then Presbyterians could appear clear of
conscience on Judgment Day. Even though seminaries, colleges and churches had
suffered financial ruin, they were asked to work together for the good of both races.²

At the end of the war the Southern Presbyterian Church comprised one third of
the total national membership. It represented twelve states, consisted of ten synods,
46 presbyteries, 1,000 ministers, 1,400 churches and some 70,000 members. As a
relatively large and complex institution, it expressed concern about the future under
Reconstruction. As General Assembly minutes show, Presbyterians still held
inviolate, biblical defense of slavery as well as the appropriate separate
responsibilities of church and state. Their refusal to deny these deeply held
convictions, proved the major stumbling block to reunification with the Northern
church. By this time, the rift between the Old and New Schools had been overcome.
Since the Northern church regarded secession as treasonous and unconstitutional, its
requirement for reunion remained recantation by the South of its former stand on
slavery and separation. This proved impossible for the South as its entire position
rested on the literal expression of God's word. Southerners had fought the war over
this very issue, charging the North and anti-slavery forces everywhere with
"rendering unto Caesar that which is God's." Unsurprisingly, South Carolina
ministers like Ferdinand Jacobs and James Henley Thornwell found this an intolerable
demand. They saw it as Erastianism of the church, a move to secularize and,
consequently, devalue Holy Writ. To them such differences were not petty and
personal but basic and critical. Southern Presbyterians wanted a pure, spiritual
church that was true to its Scots heritage.³
Southern consideration of the reunion overtures of the Northern church shows that South Carolina had most definitely not renounced its stand on slavery. Part of its argument reflects the claim that the colony had been the first to outlaw the slave trade. Because South Carolina had proposed an act to prohibit the importation of slaves as early as 1760, the state felt vindicated in believing that the system was foisted upon them against their will. This being the case, government became responsible for the institution, and the church’s only concern lay with the duties arising from it. The Southern church would not breach its own constitution, the written word of God, to inflict the "wrong" of the North upon the slaves, by abandoning them against the dictates of a high authority. Slavery was the product of a fallen word, an adjustment of divine providence, resulting in the need to keep Blacks under a Christian influence.

It is evident from responses to unification overtures that South Carolina Presbyterians viewed slavery as vindicated while simultaneously allowing that former slaves still required more monitored religious education. Because of this deficit, freedmen were not yet ready to become part of white society in any meaningful way. The proof that slavery had been generally beneficial is taken from a response by the Old School South to a charge by the Northern branch that they held heretical and blasphemous views of the institution. This sharp retort, quoted below, compares the state of the Africans of sixty years ago to the present day:

A race of wild and naked savages has been lifted to a degree of knowledge and virtue which in the estimation of our Northern brethren justifies them in packing these new-born freedmen into our Legislatures and Courts, to enact and expound the laws under
which we live. It is the highest encomium they could pronounce upon the value of slavery as a grand educational and disciplinary system.⁴

When the General Assembly met in 1870 the overture to reunite was still under discussion, and this basic argument survived intact. From the Southern viewpoint, the Northern invitation contained the flawed assumption that mutual grievances existed which the South denied. The South believed it had never uttered a single unfriendly declaration or action against the North, and its goal remained the reuniting of a political body rather than a spiritual one. It remained a denial of faith to allow the North to "blind the Divine church with the wheels of Caesar's chariot." In June, 1870, the United Assembly met in Louisville with delegations from both factions to attempt reunification. One June 11th, the Northern church withdrew and discharged its committee, postponing the subject with much regret and hopes for the future.⁵

In keeping with their pronouncements at the General Assembly's reunification meeting, the Southern brotherhood shifted emphasis slightly and forged ahead. It retained the belief that Blacks were inferior and needed the church to light their spiritual way and ensure their immortality. That the government had now decided to end slavery presented no problem since this group had always held that slavery was a matter for civil authority. After emancipation, however, Southerners further enforced racial distinctions in religious services to maintain the system of discipline established under bondage. Blacks were considered degraded and inferior due to a history of barbarity and sin.
It remained the Christian duty of the church to see to the religious welfare of the black population. The General Assembly of 1865 had advised member congregations that "the debt of love and service which they owed their cultural members was in no degree lessened by the abolition of slavery." In 1866 the same organization urged members to dissuade freed people from leaving the white church and to encourage baptism, worship and the organization of Sabbath Schools. (This patriarchal concern with the spiritual well being of Blacks was also though to lessen the possibility of riots.) Presbyterians considered preaching the Gospel the highest expression of their love. A consequence of this concern was fear of Northern teachers who espoused the doctrine of racial equality and its effects on a social system based on inherent equality. However good the intentions of the General Assembly regarding black salvation through education, it soon became the burden of individual churches due to a lack of funds. As of 1866 funding for the project was reported as $422.55, a woefully inadequate sum for the entire South.6

During Reconstruction, as the Southern church fretted over its free black members, the Northern church made enormous gains in the South by providing a sympathetic ministry to aid the ex-slaves in forming their own congregations and also training black pastors to lead them. These Northerners believed African-Americans were capable of more than minimum education and made viable clerics. While the Southern church remained concerned with keeping Blacks in existing congregations, there were a few exceptions. Some individual ministers aided the North in the formation of black churches and were suspended from their ministry for their efforts.7
Ultimately, emancipation resulted in black members leaving white Southern churches and joining those of the North or forming separate congregations of their own. Between 1866 and 1874 there were several plans to reverse or slow down this trend but none allowed for equal participation of both races. White belief in this form of social inequality no longer seemed reasonable to the newly freed black citizens. In 1869 the Southern Presbyterian church was still proclaiming that the best interests of the ex-slaves were served by remaining under the paternalism of this organization.

One fundamental change, however, was forthcoming. In that same year, qualified Blacks were permitted to "exhort" all-black congregations, but black churches would still remain under white control. By 1874 this plan had yielded six Black churches, two in Alabama and four in South Carolina. South Carolina was particularly interested in solving this problem as the state had an extremely large black population and the possibility of unrest still seemed very real. While historians generally agree that black motives for leaving white churches are hard to discern, a response by a Charleston ex-slave gives at least one valid reason. Charged with desertion by his white pastor, Thomas Smyth, the freedman replied, "I belong to disabuse your mind as to the cause of separation and think it susceptible of demonstration that they (Negroes) have been more Sinned against that Sinning, we respect the rights of others and demand that ours be respected." It appears that the image Blacks had of themselves as free citizens was no longer compatible with this particular form of white paternalism.
The Northern Presbyterian church was not the only denomination to make gains in black membership. After the Civil War, both Baptists and Methodists successfully recruited among freedmen. In South Carolina they worried along with their Presbyterian brethren over the loss of control implicit in the formation of black churches. The General Assembly of 1873 registered an official expression of concern over this matter. Likewise, the Charleston Presbytery "feared that the present intellectual and moral qualifications of this people were not such as to fit them for the successful management of such an undertaking." The result of these measures was alienation of the black membership within the white parent organization and a large decline in the number professing any form of Presbyterianism. It should not be surprising that a race declared free, possessing supposedly equal civil and social rights, demanded equality in their ecclesiastical relationships.

During Reconstruction, the Southern Presbyterian Church in South Carolina never wavered in its belief that biblical truth sanctioned slavery, making it an institution blessed by God. To change their minds and denounce slavery as a sin usurped the word of the Lord. Their sole responsibility lay in the relationships stemming from the institution itself. These duties were spelled out in the Bible and negligence constituted sin. Although understanding of the duties of both masters and slaves was of primary importance, sinfulness due to neglect negated the scriptural truth which legitimized the system. During the Civil War the Presbyterian position never altered and was even fortified by the perceived evil intentions of Northerners bent on inflicting their sectional ideology upon the South. To these Presbyterians the
opposition was guilty of subverting God's word to that of man's. After the end of the conflict the belief in the righteousness of their cause continued and eventually led to segregation within the church and removal of paternalism from the equation of racial social equality.

In 1851 the Reverend James Henley Thornwell of South Carolina had summarized the belief that slavery was part of God's design. Since the system was sanctioned by the Bible it could not be evil. Slaves were a solemn trust and while owners had a right to use and direct their labor, they were bound to protect them and introduce them to "blessed immortality." Blacks were not a separate species but, rather, "of one blood with ourselves." It was the duty of a Christian master to give the slave the Gospel thus allowing him to secure his own salvation. The Civil War was seen as retribution for neglecting the duties of religious education of slaves and denying them ultimate redemption. All denominations made renewed efforts to overcome this deficit by appointing more ministers, missionaries and Sunday schools and urging more diligence by owners and their families. In that same year a special committee was appointed by the General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church specifically to deal with this matter. A reward for the conscientious master, mistress and their participating offspring was the smile of the angels upon their efforts. It was considered a Christian master's duty to provide for the spiritual well-being of his charges, and as an owner, he was ultimately responsible to his heavenly Master for spreading the Gospel and other necessary religious instruction to all under his care. The same was true for all denominations discussed herein, and their
concern with this issue proved deep enough to overcome theological differences and unite them in a common cause, at least for a time.

Slavery was ultimately responsible for fracturing all major Protestant denominations (with the single exception of the Anglicans), making many people of faith question the very essence of their religious values. While the original split in the Presbyterian church was over doctrinal concerns, sectional attitudes contributed to the Old School-New School formation. By 1857 the New School, whose members were predominantly anti-slavery Northerners, divided over slavery itself. Those who left, approximately one eighth of the total membership, formed a separate entity in the slave-holding states. The Old School managed to stay united until the Civil War broke out in 1861. At this time, they too formed a new institution providing the church of choice for the majority of Southern Presbyterians. All other denominations under discussion found their administrative hierarchy dealing with sectional rifts within their congregations.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, the end of the Civil War failed to return harmony to these religious bodies. Southern Presbyterians of both the Old and New persuasions finally joined forces in 1865 and formed the Presbyterian Church of the United States. It continues under this name, and as late as 1958 it still refused reunion with its Northern counterpart. During Reconstruction particularly, there were ongoing efforts still centered on the same controversy—the sinfulness of slavery. The Southern entity refused to admit the system was evil and continued to advocate its divine sanction and their responsibility to teach and spread the Gospel among freed
Blacks. This work enabled Blacks to secure the path to their redemption and provide former masters with entry to Heaven as well. They could now face Judgment Day with a clear conscience securing their own immortality as well as that of their bondsmen.
NOTES

1. The Distinctive Principles of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Richmond, 1870), 67.

2. Ibid., 69.

3. Ibid., 98.

4. Ibid., 106.

5. Ibid., 106.


7. Ibid., 27.

8. Ibid., 34-5.


11. Ibid., 15.

12. Simkins and Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, 391.
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