



**HISTORY OF BLACKS  
IN AMERICA  
& THEIR BAPTIST  
CHURCHES**

*History of Blacks in America and Their Baptist Churches*  
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*History of Blacks in America  
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# The Atlantic African Slave Trade

We must begin the history of black churches in America with the sordid account of how blacks first came to America.

The Atlantic African slave trade of the 15th to the 19th centuries was a continuation of the ancient global practice that dates to man's fall. It is not a product of "racism"; it is not an issue of skin color; it is a product of man's sinful heart. The Lord Jesus Christ, in describing man's character, uncovered the fundamental issue of slavery:

"And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23).

Man's history can be summarized as "hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3), and that innate hatred has often taken the form of enslavement of one's fellow man. Slavery has been practiced by the white man, the black man, the red man, the yellow man, and every other kind of man. Slavery was practiced by the Babylonians, the Hittites, the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Persians, the ancient Brits, the Danes, the Romans, the African kingdoms, the South American kingdoms (e.g., Mayan, Aztec, Inca), the Chinese, Indians, Mongols, Mughals, Burmese, Native North Americans, Muslim kingdoms, Spanish, Mexicans, British, and Americans. Slavery is still practiced in some places (e.g., North Korea, Sudan). International slavery is still big business. Today it is called "human trafficking." (See *Slavery's Ugly History from Ancient Times*, available as a free eBook from the Books section of [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

In the 1440s, the Portuguese began trading in gold and slaves from the west coast of Africa. The first 200 slaves were brought to Portugal in 1444. This was the beginning of the Atlantic black slave trade that corrupted western nations for four hundred years.

Eventually, the Atlantic slave trade was engaged in by Portuguese, French, Dutch, Swedes, Danes, Germans, and British. More than 60 fortifications along the shores of the African Gold Coast were engaged in this business.

Blacks were captured in Africa by other blacks, such as the Hausas, the Fante, and the Ashante, and by Portuguese, Arabs, and others, and marched to ports on the coast for sale to slavers.

One of the major slaving hubs was Bolgatanga in modern-day Ghana. "For centuries, Bolgatanga was a vital crossroads for trade at the southern terminus of the Trans-Saharan trade route. From Bolgatanga, millions of slaves were taken in one of three directions: north across the Sahara to Arab slave markets in Morocco and Algeria, west to the coastal region of Senegambia (modern-day Senegal and The Gambia), and 470 miles south to the Gold Coast" (Kara, *The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder that Inspired the Abolition of Slavery*, p. 52).

The condition of the slaves was terrible from beginning to end. Great numbers of them died of the horrific conditions of the coffle marches, imprisonment in slaving pens awaiting auctions, the transportation on the slaving ships, and hard labor on slaving plantations. They were bought and sold like cattle and treated like cattle or worse.

The slaves were transported across land in **coffles**.

"Slaves heading south from Bolgatanga to the Gold Coast were marched in coffles, or caravans, by the Hausa slave dealers. Each coffle was led by a madugu (commander) and might include more than a hundred

slaves. In the first published account of an American's voyage to Africa in 1797, the author describes how the slaves in coffles were restrained with a 'wicker bandage round the neck' that was used to fasten them 'to poles in rows, four feet apart.' In addition, the arms of each slave were 'pinioned by a bandage' above the elbow, so that 'they had sufficient room to feed, but not to loose themselves, or commit any violence.' The only European who marched for an extended period with a coffle noted that the Africans were 'all of them prisoners of war' and that they were restrained 'by putting the right leg of one, and the left of another, into the same pair of fetters.' He further observed that 'every four slaves are likewise fastened together by the necks, with a strong rope of twisted thongs; and in the night, an additional pair of fetters is put on their hands, and sometimes a light iron chain passed round their necks.' The slaves were forced to march in this condition eight to ten hours a day in the intense heat. They were provided just enough food and water to survive. They slept in the open air exposed to insects, wild animals, and the elements. Those who became injured or too weak to march were left on the side of the route to die. About 170 miles south of Bolgatanga, a distance that took up to two months to cover by foot over unforgiving terrain, the slave caravans reached the largest slave market in northern Ghana--the dusty village of Salaga" (Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 52).

The first British slave voyage to Africa was by captained by John Hawkins in 1562. Between then and the abolition of slave trade in 1807, an estimated 10,000 voyages were made. (And that is only British ships; the Portuguese were also heavily involved in this slave trade.) Historian David Richardson estimated that 3.5 million African slaves were transported to the Americas by the British.

The slave trade made Britain wealthy. "By the late eighteenth century, the slave trade had permeated almost

every aspect of British society and helped transform the nation into an economic superpower” (Siddharth Kara, *The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder that Inspired the Abolition of Slavery*, p. xxi).

The British Atlantic slave trade has been called “**the Triangle.**” Ships transported manufactured goods from Britain to West Africa. One item heavily traded was guns. The British sold 100,000 guns a year to the slavers. The ships then loaded up with slaves, which were transported to the West Indies and America for sale. (This was called “the Middle Passage.”) Most were used in agriculture. The sugar colonies in the Caribbean islands were Britain’s most valuable. Ships would load up in the Caribbean and the British Colonies with raw materials such as sugar, coffee, cotton, and tobacco, and transport them to Britain. Money was made on every leg of the voyages.

The condition on the slave ships was horrible almost beyond imagination. The naked slaves were chained and crowded into narrow compartments. Some were chained together in a sitting position. Others had to lie down. The height of the compartments on some ships was 39 inches; in others it was only 18 inches. Robert Walsh, who in May 1829 was on board a British ship that captured a slaver carrying 517 slaves, described the conditions as follows:

“The slaves were all inclosed under grated hatchways between decks. The space was so low that they sat between each other’s legs and [were] stowed so close together that there was no possibility of their lying down or at all changing their position by night or day. As they belonged to and were shipped on account of different individuals, they were all branded like sheep with the owner’s marks of different forms. ... [T]he circumstance which struck us most forcibly was how it was possible for such a number of human beings to exist, packed up and wedged together as tight as they could cram, in low

cells three feet high, the greater part of which, except that immediately under the grated hatchways, was shut out from light or air, and this when the thermometer, exposed to the open sky, was standing in the shade, on our deck, at 89 degrees. ... The space between decks was divided into two compartments 3 feet 3 inches high ... giving to the whole an average of 23 inches and to each of the women not more than 13 inches. ... The heat of these horrid places was so great and the odor so offensive that it was quite impossible to enter them, even had there been room. ... While expressing my horror at what I saw and exclaiming against the state of this vessel for conveying human beings, I was informed by my friends, who had passed so long a time on the coast of Africa and visited so many ships, that this was one of the best they had seen. The height sometimes between decks was only eighteen inches, so that the unfortunate beings could not turn round or even lay on their sides, the elevation being less than the breadth of their shoulders; and here they are usually chained to the decks by the neck and legs” (Robert Walsh, *Notices of Brazil 1828 and 1829*).

The floors of the slaving pens were covered with blood and human waste. Olaudah Equiano, one of the few slaves who wrote about his own experience on a slaving ship, said,

“The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship’s cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome

smells. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable” (*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African*, 1789).

An average of about 15% of the slaves perished in the sea voyages (Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 5).

From the time they were captured, the females were in constant danger of rape on land and sea. John Newton, who had captained slaving ships before his conversion to Christ, “described how the experience of boarding a Guinea ship was particularly disconcerting for the women, who arrived ‘naked, trembling, terrified, perhaps almost exhausted with cold, fatigue, and hunger.’ In this vulnerable state, the women were ‘exposed to the wanton rudeness of white savages” (Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 84). Newton said that “sometimes the officers raped the females ‘brutelike in view of the whole quarter deck” (Kara, p. 107).

When the slaves arrived in the Americas and were sold, their terrible existence usually did not improve. “The working conditions on sugar plantations in the Caribbean were so harsh that one-third of slaves died within the first three years of arrival” (Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 129).

The first slaves arrived in the Virginia colony in America in 1619 and the practice continued until the Civil War in the 1860s.

“Millions of enslaved Africans contributed to the establishment of colonies in the Americas and continued laboring in various regions of the Americas after their independence, including the United States. Many consider a significant starting point to slavery in

America to be 1619, when the privateer *The White Lion* brought 20 enslaved Africans ashore in the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia. The crew had seized the Africans from the Portuguese slave ship *São João Bautista*. Yet, enslaved Africans had been present in regions such as Florida, that are part of present-day United States nearly one century before.

“Throughout the 17th century, European settlers in North America turned to enslaved Africans as a cheaper, more plentiful labor source than Indigenous populations and indentured servants, who were mostly poor Europeans.

“Existing estimates establish that Europeans and American slave traders transported nearly 12.5 million enslaved Africans to the Americas. Of this number approximately 10.7 million disembarked alive in the Americas. During the 18th century alone, approximately 6.5 million enslaved persons were transported to the Americas. This forced migration deprived the African continent of some of its healthiest and ablest men and women.

“In the 17th and 18th centuries, enslaved Africans worked mainly on the tobacco, rice and indigo plantations of the southern Atlantic coast, from the Chesapeake Bay colonies of Maryland and Virginia south to Georgia” (“Slavery in America,” [history.com](https://www.history.com), Apr. 25, 2024).

Of the millions of slaves in early American history, not all were treated cruelly, though a great many were. Some were treated kindly, but they were still slaves. The fact that tens of thousands of black slaves were willing to risk terrible beatings and possible death for a chance to gain their freedom through the Underground Railroad is evidence of man’s unquenchable desire for liberty.

Slavery as practiced by the British and Americans was never supported by the Bible, in spite of misguided attempts by some professing Christians to do so. It is impossible to obey, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” which is repeated seven times in the New Testament, and enslave one’s neighbour (Mt. 19:19; 22:39; Mr. 12:31; Lu. 10:27; Ro. 13:9; Ga. 5:14; Jas. 2:8). Though the law of Moses allowed the Jews to practice slavery under strict regulations, the Mosaic regulations would have destroyed the slavery system as it existed outside of Israel. For example, if a slave was abused, he was to be freed (Ex. 21:26-27). The capture and sale of a person brought the death penalty (Ex. 21:16). Further, an escaped slave was not to be returned to his master (De. 23:15-16). These laws rendered the entire slave trade null and void before God.

# Abolition of Slavery in England and America

Slavery is a fact of fallen man's ugly history. It is also a fact of history as to who was at the forefront of the war against slavery. It wasn't the Romans or the Persians or the Greeks or the Chinese, the Muslims, the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Animists, the Atheists, or the Humanists. It wasn't the Roman Catholic Church. It wasn't the black African nations or the Asian nations or the South American nations. It was, for the most part, white Quaker, Protestant, and Baptist Christians in England and America. The movement for the abolition of slavery was driven by Bible-believing Christians or those who were strongly influenced by the Bible.

## England

England led the way in the abolition of slave trade in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In 1781 an event aboard a slaving ship named **THE ZORG** became an unwitting step toward the abolition of slavery in Britain. Running low on food and water in the Caribbean, the captain had 132 of the weaker, sicker slaves tossed overboard to their deaths. The males were shackled together in irons and sank into the ocean depths immediately. A mother and her new-born infant were among the murdered females. The goal was to obtain insurance money for the deceased.

The insurers, the fledgling Lloyds of London, refused to pay, and the publicity of the event brought wide attention to the cruelty of the slaving enterprise. **GRANVILLE SHARP** (1735-1813) argued the case of *The Zorg* before the highest British judge and got a ruling in 1772 (*Somerset v Stewart*) that slavery had no basis in British law (though this ruling

had no actual impact on the slave trade). A surgeon and lawyer by trade, Sharp had taught himself Hebrew and Greek to defend the Deity of Jesus Christ against Unitarianism and was an active member of the world's first Bible society, the British & Foreign Bible Society founded in 1804. Sharp believed that modern laws should be founded on "the laws of nature" and Scripture. For his zeal in abolition, Sharp was called "the protector of the Negro." **In 1769, Sharp published *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery*, the first publication in England opposing slavery.** In 1787, Sharp and Thomas Clarkson founded **the Society for Affecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade**. In the beginning, Quakers formed the largest percentage of the membership. Sharp lived to see the passing of the Act of Abolition against slave trade in 1807 but died 20 years before the final abolition against slavery was passed in 1833. In 1807, Clarkson was commended in letters from two of America's Founding Fathers. John Adams wrote, "You have merited the respect and esteem of all men, among whom liberty and humanity are not disregarded," and Benjamin Franklin acclaimed Clarkson for his zeal to "long and successfully defend the claims of the oppressed Africans" (SiddharthKara, *The Zorg*, p. 210).

In 1786, **THOMAS CLARKSON'S** (1760-1846) *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African* was published in English by the Quaker printer James Phillips. Clarkson's essay was first written in Latin and won first prize at Cambridge University's annual Latin essay contest in 1785. At age 24, as an Anglican clergyman, Clarkson devoted his life to the cause of abolition. After co-founding the Society for Affecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Clarkson did extensive research with the objective of obtaining information to overthrow the trade. He journeyed an astonishing 35,000 miles on horseback to

collect information from sailors, ship captains, and ship surgeons and to gather artifacts such as chains and collars. After observing a slaving ship at Liverpool, he wrote, “The sight of the rooms below and of the gratings above filled me with melancholy and horror. I found soon afterwards a fire of indignation kindling within me” (Siddharth Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 200). Clarkson was instrumental in encouraging the publication of firsthand accounts of the slave trade, such as Alexander Falconbridge’s *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788) and James Stanfield’s *Observations on a Guinea Voyage* (1788).

It was Clarkson who obtained the schematic of the *Brooks*, a massive slaving ship of 297 tons which made 11 triangle voyages between 1781 and 1804, transporting as many as 740 slaves on a single journey (Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 204). The schematic showed that the slaves were “lined up like sardines in a box, with only sixteen inches of width allotted for each person.” An initial printing of 7,000 copies had a huge impact on the public. Clarkson said the image “seemed to make an instantaneous impression of horror upon all who saw it.” This drawing remains a major image damning the Atlantic slave trade.

In 1784, **JAMES RAMSAY**, Anglican clergyman, published *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies*. It was the first published eyewitness accounts of the brutalities of Caribbean slavery. Ramsay had preached to slaves in Saint Kitts and had been forced to leave because of his stance against slavery.

“The book detailed how slaves on the island of Saint Kitts worked from 4:00 a.m. to midnight to ‘manure, dig, and hoe, plow the ground, to plant, weed and cut the cane, to bring it to the mill, to have the juice expressed, and boiled into sugar.’ Punishments were cruel, including ‘cart whipping, beating with a stick,

sometimes to the breaking of bones, the chain, an iron crook around the neck, a large iron pudding or ring about the ankle, and confinement in the dungeon.’ ‘There have been instances,’ Ramsay wrote, ‘of slitting of ears, breaking of limbs, so as to make amputation necessary, beating out of eyes, and castration’” (Siddharth Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 95).

Ramsay’s book drew the fury of absentee sugar plantation owners living in England. “The planters maligned his integrity in a slew of pamphlets and newspaper articles, one of which accused him of selling church artifacts for profit” (Kara, p. 222).

In 1789, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vass*, the African, became the first autobiography by a former slave.

In 1789, **WILLIAM WILBERFORCE** (1759-1833) began his efforts in Parliament to abolish slavery.



His work was the fruit of his lively Christian faith. Three years earlier, he had experienced a spiritual conversion that dramatically changed his life. Whereas previously he had lived for personal pleasure, now he cared about others and wanted to use his position in Parliament for good in the service of Christ.

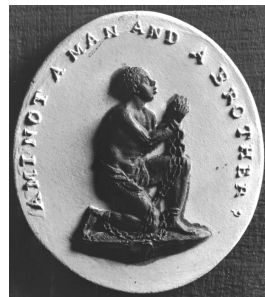
Wilberforce was small in stature (about five foot three) but large in godly conviction and courage. He was also a great orator.

The first cause he dedicated himself to was the abolition of slavery. He wrote, “So enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did the trade’s wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for abolition. Let the consequences be what they would: I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected its abolition.”

Wilberforce was encouraged and helped by **JOHN NEWTON** (1725-1807), a former slave ship captain who was converted in 1747 after reading the Bible. Newton worked with William Cowper to write famous hymns such as “Oh, for a Closer Walk with God” and “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood.” Newton is the author of the ubiquitous hymn “Amazing Grace.” In 1780, Newton moved to London and became pastor of St. Mary Woolnoth Anglican Church. There he befriended Wilberforce, who sometimes attended his church. In 1788, Newton published *Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade*, which described his own experiences and had a wide influence. He wrote, “It will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders.”

Beginning in 1789, Wilberforce introduced abolition bills into British Parliament almost every year, and most were defeated. It was a commendable exercise in persistence in a good cause.

It was an uphill battle. Huge amounts of money were involved. Great fortunes were made in the slave trade. British sugar and coffee plantations in the West Indies depended on slave labor, and British ships had been involved in the trade since 1650. Its abolition seemed impossible. Year after year, Wilberforce introduced bills only to have them defeated by powerful vested interests. He persisted in spite of bad health and vilification. He was so hated that some feared for his life.



The abolition movement gradually grew in influence. Josiah Wedgwood, founder of the famous Wedgwood pottery company, designed the “**Am I Not a Man and a Brother**” medallion in 1787. Benjamin Franklin

distributed the image in America and said its impact was “equal to that of the best written pamphlet.”

Finally in 1807, 18 years after Wilberforce’s first abolition bill was introduced, the British Parliament abolished the slave trade. When the Abolition of Slave Trade Act passed Parliament, the members “rose to their feet and cheered wildly” even though it meant a serious economic loss to Great Britain. “It was the first national law from any slaveholding nation to outlaw the slave trade” (Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 210),

Proving that the abolition slave trade bill was not mere words, the Royal Navy was tasked with capturing slave ships and freeing slaves. Beginning in 1808 with just two ships, the **West Africa Squadron** eventually consisted of 25 vessels with 2,000 personnel. Between 1808-1860, the Squadron captured 1,600 slave ships and freed 150,000 slaves. In this endeavor, more than 1,500 British sailors lost their lives through tropical disease, accidents, and violent encounters with slavers. The most successful anti-slaver ship was the **HMS Black Joke**, which was the former slave ship *Henriquetta* that had transported more than 3,300 slaves in the two years prior to its capture. In January 1829, the *Black Joke* chased the Spanish slaver *El Almirante* for 31 hours before capturing it and freeing 466 slaves. The ships dueled for an hour and a half. The *El Almirante* had 14 guns to the *Black Joke*’s two, but after the death of its captain and the death or wounding of 29 crew members, the slaver surrendered. Altogether the **HMS Black Joke** captured 16 slave ships and liberated 3,970 slaves.

In August 1833, 44 years after Wilberforce’s first abolition bill, slavery itself was abolished in Great Britain by the Slavery Abolition Act. The Parliamentary vote passed on July 26, three days before Wilberforce’s death. Seven hundred thousand slaves were freed, with the owners receiving about £20 million compensation from the British treasury (“a sum

equal to roughly \$4 billion today”). Thus England abolished slavery at great expense.

## **America**

America’s role in the destruction of slavery in modern times is also a fascinating study.

### **Timeline of the American Abolitionist Movement**

There was widespread opposition to slavery from the time of the founding of the American colonies, and many of the Founding Fathers were opponents, but abolition became a groundswell movement during the Second Great Awakening, both in America and England. The culmination in America was the Civil War of 1860-65, after which slavery was officially abolished. Following are some of the important events:

1652 - Under the leadership of **Roger Williams**, Rhode Island passes a law against slavery. The colony had received a charter eight years earlier from the king of England.

1688 - The colony of **Pennsylvania** produces the first anti-slavery document in America, the Germantown Petition of 1688. “To bring men hither, or to rob and sell them against their will, we stand against ... We ... are against this traffic of men-body. And we who profess that it is not lawful to steal, must, likewise, avoid to purchase such things as are stolen.”

1737 - Quaker Benjamin Lay publishes a paper against “All Slave Keepers that Keep the Innocent in Bondage,” calling slavery “a notorious sin.”

1773 - **Benjamin Rush**, who signed the Declaration of Independence three years later, publishes *On Slave Keeping*. He called it a “vice which degrades human nature” and urged Americans to oppose it.

1774 - Quakers end slavery among themselves, and those who persisted in owning slaves are expelled.

1775 - The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage is founded in Philadelphia by Quakers led by Anthony Benezet. It was the world's first antislavery organization. Benjamin Franklin was one of the presidents. He considered slavery to be "an atrocious debasement of human nature" (Siddharth Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 197).

1776 - **Samuel Hopkins**, Congregational minister, publishes *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*. Addressed to the members of the Continental Congress, it called for the end of slavery in America. He said, "[I]f any kind of slavery can be vindicated by the Holy Scriptures, we are already sure our making and holding the Negroes our slaves, as we do, cannot be vindicated by any thing we can find there, but is condemned by the whole of divine revelation."

1777 - **John Jay**, later Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, makes his first attempt to end slavery in New York, finally succeeding in 1799.

1784 - The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage is reorganized as the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage (also known as the Pennsylvania Abolition Society)

1789 - The Philadelphia Baptist Association declares "high approbation" of societies "for the gradual abolition of slavery of Africans" and recommends "to the churches we represent to form similar societies."

1790 - Benjamin Franklin petitions the U.S. Congress to ban slavery

----- The Connecticut Society for the Promotion of Freedom is founded. Members included two presidents of Yale College (Ezra Stiles and Timothy Dwight), Congressman Simeon Baldwin, Senator William Hillhouse, and Judge David Daggett.

1791 - **Jonathan Edwards**, a Congregational preacher at the forefront of the Second Great Awakening, publishes *The*

*Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade and of the Slavery of the Africans.* It was a sermon preached before The Society for the Promotion of Freedom, and for the Relief of Persons Unlawfully Holden in Bondage, Sept. 15, 1791. Edwards used strong language. He called slavery and the slave trade “unjust ... wicked and abominable ... utterly wrong ... exceedingly impolitic,” and said that “slavery produces ... intemperance, lewdness and prodigality ... haughtiness and a domineering spirit.”

----- Benjamin Banneker, a free Black, wrote to Thomas Jefferson, “quoting back his own lines from the Declaration of Independence in a plea for equal treatment” (Michael Auslin, *National Treasure: How the Declaration of Independence Made America*, p 126)

1793 - **Noah Webster**, author of the *Blue-Back Speller*, America’s most influential speller, publishes an abolitionist pamphlet entitled *Effects of Slavery on Morals and Industry*.

1794 - The U.S. government passes a law prohibiting slavery in new American territories.

----- The American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery is founded.

1800 - Gabriel Prosser plans a slave revolt with the goal of capturing Richmond, Virginia, killing most of the whites, and making Virginia a state for blacks; his plot is exposed by two slaves and he and about 34 of his followers are hanged.

1803 - The Pennsylvania Abolition Society is founded; Benjamin Rush, an American Founding Father, is elected the first president.

1807 - The British government abolishes the slave trade, though the owning of slaves in British colonies is still legal.

----- Abolitionist Baptist churches in Kentucky form the Baptized Licking-Locust Association and refuse to receive slave owners as church members. The pastors included Donald

Holmes, Carter Tarrant, Jacob Grigg, and George Smith (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, 1921).

1808 - The British found the *West Africa Squadron* to capture slaving ships and rescue slaves. Between 1808-1860, the Squadron captures 1,600 slave ships and frees 150,000 slaves.

----- The U.S. government outlaws American participation in the African slave trade.

----- Baptist pastor David Barrow publishes *Involuntary, Unmerited, Perpetual, Absolute, Hereditary Slavery, examined on the principles of Nature, Reason, Justice, Policy, and Scripture*.

1813 - James Forten publishes *Letters from a Man of Colour* to protest a Pennsylvania bill to limit the rights of free Blacks. He quoted from the Declaration of Independence's proclamation of the equality of men.

1816 - George Bourne, a Presbyterian preacher, publishes *The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable*; he says any slaveholder who considers himself a Christian is "either an incurable Idiot who cannot distinguish good from evil, or an obdurate sinner who resolutely defies every social, moral, and divine requisition."

1821 - The first American anti-slavery newspaper is founded (*The Genius of Universal Emancipation*).

1822 - Denmark Vessey plots a slave revolt in South Carolina; about 9,000 free and slave blacks are caught up in the plot, but it is exposed and Vesey and about 35 of his followers are hanged.

----- Liberia is founded in Africa by the American Colonization Society for the settlement of free blacks and liberated slaves.

----- South Carolina passed the first Negro Seaman Acts to require free black sailors to be incarcerated while their ships were in southern ports so they would not influence slaves. By 1848, every southern state had such laws. Most southern states

required New York-based captains to post a large bond to assure that they would not allow slaves to escape on their ships.

1823 - There were 25 manumission societies in Tennessee alone, with others in North Carolina, Kentucky, and Georgia. The purpose was to promote the emancipation of slaves and to purchase slave families for liberation.

1825 - *The Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave* is published

1827 - The British capture the slaving ship *Henriquet*, a fast Baltimore clipper, converting her to an anti-slaving ship named the *HMS Black Joke* and placing her into service in the West Africa Squadron. The *Henriquet* had transported more than 3,300 slaves to Brazil in six voyages. The *Black Joke* liberated 3,900 slaves from 16 ships.

1829 - David Walker, a free black, publishes *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, labeling slavery a crime; it “scorched the hands of anyone who picked it up.” After quoting the Declaration of Independence on the equality of man, Walker said, “Compare your own language from your Declaration of Independence with your cruelties and murders inflicted by your cruel and unmerciful fathers and yourselves on our fathers and on us.”

1830s - **The Underground Railway** is established to help runaway slaves escape to the northern states and Canada, ultimately assisting an estimated 90,000 escapees.

1831 - Nate Turner’s slave revolt in Virginia kills about 60 whites and results in stricter slave laws.

1831 - **William Lloyd Garrison** founds *The Liberator*, a prominent weekly antislavery newspaper.

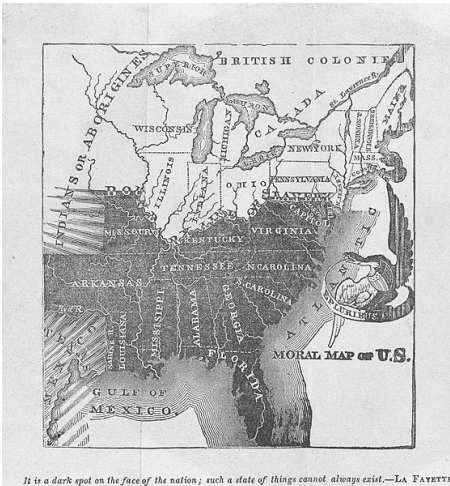
1833 - Great Britain abolishes slavery.

1833 - The American Antislavery Society is organized. Within five years it had 1,350 chapters and 250,000 members. The

society's publication is *The Legion of Liberty! and Force of Truth*.

1833 - **John Greenleaf Whittier**, famed Quaker poet, published *Justice and Expediency*, which states, "I come now to the only practicable, the only just scheme of emancipation: Immediate abolition of slavery; an immediate acknowledgment of the great truth, that man cannot hold property in man; an immediate surrender of baneful prejudice to Christian love; an immediate practical obedience to the command of Jesus Christ:

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."



*It is a dark spot on the face of the nation; such a state of things cannot always exist.—LA. FAYETTE.*

1837 - The American Antislavery Society publishes *The Moral Map of U.S.*, with slave states colored in dark gray and free states in white.

----- Moses Roper publishes *Narrative of My Escape from Slavery*, describing his escape from the

South by sea; the book goes through 10 editions

1839 - The Liberty Party is formed as an anti-slavery political party.

1840 - The World Anti-Slavery Convention meets for the first time in London, England, with the American Antislavery Society participating. The convention's mission was "the universal extinction of slavery and the slave trade and the protection of the rights and interests of the enfranchised population in the British possessions and of all persons captured as slaves."

1845 - Jonathan Walker publishes *Trial and Imprisonment at Pensacola, Florida, for Aiding Slaves to Escape from Bondage*

----- The new state of Florida enacts the death penalty for anyone assisting runaway slaves.

----- **Frederick Douglass**, highly literate and well spoken formerly enslaved Black man, publishes the *Narrative* of his life to wide acclaim. On July 5, 1852, Douglass had bravely stated before a crowd of 600 in Rochester, New York, “What to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. Your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. ... I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. ... While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age.”

1852 - **Harriet Beecher Stowe** publishes *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which is influential in stirring abolitionist sentiment. Selling 10,000 copies in a week, 100,000 in ten weeks, and 300,000 by year's end, it aroused hotheads on all sides of the issue.

1856 - The Republican Party is formed in America as a coalition of various political groups opposing slavery.

1859 - John Brown unsuccessfully tries to capture the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, to launch a slave revolt

1860 - **Abraham Lincoln** is elected U.S. President, the first Republican party president. Because of his stance against slavery, he was labeled the “Black Republican” by the supporters of slavery. On February 22, 1861, in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Lincoln said, “I have never had a feeling

politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. ... [The importance of that Declaration was to give] liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time ... that *all* should have an equal chance. ... Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? But if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle--I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it.”

1861 - Eleven Southern states secede from the Union after the election of Abraham Lincoln.

----- Harriet Jacobs publishes *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

1862 - “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” by **Julia Ward Howe** is published. It allegorized Scripture to express the liberal social gospel. It interpreted the Union armies of the North as the coming of Christ, the “watch-fires” of the Union army camps as the altar of God, and “the burnish’d rows of steel” bayonets as the gospel. Howe was a Unitarian universalist who rejected Jesus Christ as the Son of God, denied the divine inspiration of Scripture, and promoted the unity of religions.

1863 - President **Abraham Lincoln** issues the *Emancipation Proclamation* abolishing slavery in the Confederate States.

1865 - The Civil War ends and the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolishes slavery in all states.

1868 - The Fourteenth Amendment grants citizenship rights to native-born blacks and equal protection under the law.

1870 - The Fifteenth Amendment grants voting rights to black men.

1872 - William Still publishes the 800-page *Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c.*

1948 - President **Harry Truman** ends segregation in the U.S. military by an executive order.

From its founding, America has been a mixed multitude of people of varying principles, including religious principles.

Early America was strongly influenced by the Bible and most of its citizens were professing Christians of some sort, but there were all sorts of “Christians,” some born again and some (doubtless the majority) “nominal,” trusting in baptism and good works rather than in a personal relationship with Christ, and there were also many non-Christians.

As on many issues, early America was divided on the issue of slavery. On one side were those who defended slavery and kept slaves. On the other side, there were many in America who were opposed to slavery, even during the Colonial era. These understood that it was wrong and hypocritical to proclaim liberty for all men while keeping some men in bondage.

In 1772, Baptist pastor John Allen of Boston preached that slavery violates the laws of God and the natural rights of men. He stated this in *An Oration on the Beauties of Liberty, or The Essential Right of the Americans*.

In 1776, Samuel Hopkins of Rhode Island sent a pamphlet (*A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*) to the Continental Congress “asking how they and Americans, so adverse to enslavement by British Parliament, could overlook the slavery of African-Americans ‘who have as good a claim to liberty as themselves’” (Angela Kamrath, *The Miracle of America*). He referred to black slaves as “our brethren and children.” In 1784, Hopkins established a school in Rhode Island to train black missionaries to Africa.

In 1776, Freeborn Garretson, a Methodist missionary, said, “It was God, not man, that taught me the impropriety of holding slaves: and I shall never be able to praise him enough for it. My very heart has bled, since that, for slaveholders, especially those who make a profession of religion; for I

believe it to be a crying sin” (Carter Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, 1921).

At the Methodist General Conference in 1780, during the War of Independence, slavery was declared “contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature and hurtful to society, contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not that others should do to us and ours.”

In 1789, Baptist leader John Leland, one of the most prominent voices for religious liberty, made the following resolution at the General Committee of Virginia Baptists meeting in Richmond, Virginia: “Resolved, that slavery is a violent deprivation of rights of nature and inconsistent with a republican government, and therefore, recommend it to our brethren to make use of every legal measure to extirpate this horrid evil from the land; and pray Almighty God that our honorable legislature may have it in their power to proclaim the great jubilee, consistent with the principles of good policy.”

In 1789, Lemuel Haynes and a group of Baptists calling themselves Emancipating Baptists or the Emancipating Society wrote, “[S]lavery is a violent depredation of the rights of nature and inconsistent with a republican government, and therefore, recommend it to our brethren, to make use of their local missions to extirpate this horrid evil from the land; and pray Almighty God that our honorable legislature may have it in their power to proclaim the great jubilee consistent with the principles of good policy.”

In 1791, Jonathan Edwards, famous Great Awakening preacher, published “The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade.” He cited Christ’s “Golden Rule” as evidence that slavery is not God’s will.

Abolitionist Baptist churches in Kentucky formed the Baptized Licking-Locust Association and refused to receive slave owners as church members. The pastors included

Donald Holmes, Carter Tarrant, Jacob Grigg, and George Smith (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, 1921). Prominent among them was David Barrow, who emancipated his slaves in Virginia in the 1790s, moved to Kentucky and became an outspoken abolitionist. He republished British Baptist Thomas Clarkson's 1785 *Essay on Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*. In 1808, he published *Involuntary, Unmerited, Perpetual, Absolute, Hereditary Slavery, examined on the principles of Nature, Reason, Justice, Policy, and Scripture*.

In 1836 the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Convention composed of Baptists, stated that "the people have a right to expect of the ministers of Christ that they will cheerfully engage in the work of abolition, and to call upon them to proclaim the truth on this subject, as those who are bound to declare the counsel of God" (Mary Putnam, *The Baptists and Slavery*, 1913, p. 7). That same year, the Baptist Association of Hancock, Maine, adopted a report declaring that "of all the systems of iniquity that ever cursed the world, the slave system is the most abominable" and called for emancipation (Putnam, p. 16).

In 1843, the Union Anti-Slavery Baptist Association was organized with a founding membership of 13 churches which eventually grew to 68 (Leroy Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 65)

Some Quakers, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists formed manumission societies in North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Georgia to promote the emancipation of slaves and to actually purchase slave families for liberation. By 1823, there were 25 manumission societies in Tennessee alone. Hundreds of slaves were liberated, often at great cost to the slave owners, who were required to post bonds or provide land or money for the support of the freed blacks. For example, "In Ky. in 1847, in Owen Co., Susan Herndon

Rogers freed the ten slaves of the Locust family and gave them 403 acres known as Free Station, or Mountain Island. Susan's brother, James Herndon, executed a bond in 1853 for \$21,000 in order to have his twenty-two slaves manumitted. James Herndon's manumitted slaves, the Carroll, Smith, and Vinegar families, divided 125 acres at Mountain Island" ("Emancipationists in Northern Kentucky," *Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, 2009).

American Quakers opposed slavery beginning in the 1670s. William Penn, a Quaker and the founder of Pennsylvania in 1682, owned slaves for a few years, but he treated them well and eventually freed them. In 1737, Quaker Benjamin Lay published a paper against "All Slave Keepers that Keep the Innocent in Bondage." He called slavery "a notorious sin." "John Woolman, one of the fathers of the Quakers in America, always bore testimony against slavery and repeatedly urged that the blacks be given religious instruction. We hear later of their efforts in towns and in the colonies of Virginia and North Carolina to teach Negroes to read and write" (Woodson). In 1774, the Quakers ended slavery among themselves, and those who persisted in owning slaves were expelled. Famous Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier was a strong voice against slavery. He edited the *Pennsylvania Freeman* and promoted freedom for all men. Quakers had a prominent role in the Underground Railroad that helped southern slaves escape their masters. Quakers boycotted slave-produced goods in an attempt to put financial pressure on slaveholders. Philadelphia, the capital of Pennsylvania, was the home of the first black denomination in America, the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Pennsylvania was the first American state to pass a slavery abolition act. This was in 1780, even before the end of the War of Independence. In Britain, Quakers were at the

forefront of the movement that abolished the slave trade in 1807 and slavery itself in 1838.

The American Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1833 under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison. By 1840, there were 2,000 auxiliary societies with a total membership of 200,000 to 250,000. Though Christians of all types supported abolition, the prominent members were not sound in doctrine. Unitarians and transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and John Greenleaf Whittier rejected the authority of Scripture for the authority of human thinking, and they rejected the gospel of personal redemption through faith in Jesus Christ for the social gospel. Garrison was raised Baptist, but as a young man he rejected the New Testament faith. "Immediate abolition became his gospel, and the anti-slavery movement became his household of faith" (Henry Mayer, *All on Fire*, p. xvi). In this he rejected the warning of his mother. When he first proposed to get involved in writing and politics, she wrote to him, "Had you been searching the Scriptures for truth, and praying for the direction of the Holy Spirit to lead your mind into the path of holiness, your time would have been more wisely spent, and your advance to the heavenly world more rapid." She "yearned to know that he was impressed about the salvation of his soul." Instead, he was attracted to the Unitarian William Ellery Channing and settled on the gospel of works--"the way to get good was to do good." Eventually Garrison got involved in Spiritualism and attempted to commune with the dead. The abolition movement contained a large element of religious apostasy. Bronson Alcott observed, "there is nothing deemed true and sacred now that shall pass this time, unharmed" (Mayer, p. 301). Ralph Waldo Emerson described Garrison's crowd as "representing every shade of opinion, from the strictest orthodoxy to the wildest heresy, and many persons whose church was a church of one member only."

## America's Founding Fathers and Slavery

Like the early American population as a whole, the American Founders represented many beliefs.

Some were Bible-believing Christians who had personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Following are a few examples:

**Samuel Adams** (1722-1803), signer of the Declaration of Independence, Governor of Massachusetts. In his last will and testament he wrote "I ... [rely] upon the merits of Jesus Christ for a pardon of all my sins" (*Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams*, edited by William Wells, 1865, Vol. III, p. 379).

**Charles Carroll** (1737-1822), signer of the *Declaration of Independence*, framer of the Bill of Rights. "On the mercy of my Redeemer I rely for salvation and on His merits, not on the works I have done in obedience to His precepts" (Letter from Carroll to Charles Wharton, Sep. 27, 1825).

**Robert Treat Paine** (1731-1814), signer of the *Declaration of Independence*, Attorney General of Massachusetts. "I am constrained to express my adoration of the Supreme Being, the Author of my existence, in full belief of His Providential goodness and His forgiving mercy revealed to the world through Jesus Christ, through whom I hope for never ending happiness in a future state" (Last Will and Testament, attested May 11, 1814).

**Benjamin Rush** (1746-1813), signer of the *Declaration of Independence* and "Father of American Medicine." "My only hope of salvation is in the infinite transcendent love of God manifested to the world by the death of His Son upon the Cross. Nothing but His blood will wash away my sins. I rely exclusively upon it" (*The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*).

**Roger Sherman** (1721-1793), signer of the *Declaration of Independence*, framer of the Bill of Rights. "I believe that

God ... did send His own Son to become man, die in the room and stead of sinners, and thus to lay a foundation for the offer of pardon and salvation to all mankind, so as all may be saved who are willing to accept the Gospel offer.” (*The Life of Roger Sherman* by Lewis Boutell, 1896, pp. 271-273).

**John Witherspoon** (1723-1794), signer of the *Declaration of Independence*. “... no man, whatever be his character or whatever be his hope, shall enter into rest unless he be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ” (*The Works of John Witherspoon*, 1815, Vol. V, pp. 245, 267).

On the other hand, some of America’s founders were skeptics who did not accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and did not believe the Bible to be God’s infallible Word.

The most prominent examples are Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin.

**Thomas Jefferson** was the principal author of the *Declaration of Independence*, the first Secretary of State under George Washington, and the third President of the United States. Jefferson made his own “Bible” by cutting out of the Gospels everything pertaining to the divine and miraculous in Jesus’ life. Jefferson’s “Bible” left out references to angels, prophecy, Christ’s deity, the virgin birth, the miracles, and the resurrection. It should also be said that Jefferson was not a Deist as has often been claimed. In 1823, he said of the Declaration of Independence, “[I]t is a heavenly comfort to see that these principles are yet so strongly felt I pray God that these principles may be eternal.” A Deist God does not answer prayers.

**Benjamin Franklin**, who has been called “the first American,” was a signer of the *Declaration of Independence* and a member of the Constitutional Convention that wrote the U.S. Constitution. Like Jefferson, he wanted to maintain the moral code of Christianity as a rule for society, but he did not believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Franklin was

a great fan of the blasphemous French skeptic Voltaire. Instead of bringing his grandson Benny Bache to the feet of Jesus, Franklin sought Voltaire's blessing on the boy (H.W. Brands, *The First American*, p. 563). Franklin participated enthusiastically in a eulogy following Voltaire's death. It was held in a hall dressed in black and lit by candles. Franklin took his Masonic crown and laid it at the foot of a large painting of Voltaire (*The First American*, p. 565). At the end of his life, Franklin said "I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some doubts as to [Christ's] divinity." Like Jefferson, Franklin was not a Deist. For example, during the Constitutional Convention he reminded the attendees that God had often answered prayer during the war of independence and that they would do well to pray for help fashioning the constitution.

**This being said, most of America's Founding Fathers were opposed to slavery.**

### **John Quincy Adams**

John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the United States and son of John Adams, second President of the U.S., was called the "Hell Hound of Abolition" for his persistent efforts to end slavery. In 1837, he said that the nation's founders were opposed to slavery. "The inconsistency of the institution of domestic slavery with the principles of the *Declaration of Independence* was seen and lamented by all the southern patriots of the Revolution; by no one with deeper and more unalterable conviction than by the author of the Declaration himself [Jefferson]. **No charge of insincerity or hypocrisy can be fairly laid to their charge. Never from their lips was heard one syllable of attempt to justify the institution of slavery. They universally considered it as a reproach fastened upon them by the unnatural step-mother country [Great Britain] and they saw that before the principles of the *Declaration of Independence*, slavery--in common with**

**every other mode of oppression--was destined sooner or later to be banished from the earth”** (An Oration Delivered Before the Inhabitants of the Town of Newburyport, at Their request, on the Sixty-first Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1837).

### **Thomas Jefferson**

Thomas Jefferson, author of the *Declaration of Independence* and America's third president, inherited slaves from his father beginning at age 14 and owned slaves all his life, but he introduced legislation throughout his career to abolish slavery.

“How could the man who wrote that ‘All men are created equal’ own slaves? This, in essence, is the question most persistently asked of those who write about Thomas Jefferson, and by all indications it is the thing that contemporary Americans find most vexing about him. ... The question carries a silent assumption that because he practiced slave holding, Jefferson must have somehow believed in it, and must therefore have been a hypocrite. My belief is that this way of asking the question ... is essentially backward, and reflects the pervasive presentism of our time. Consider, for example, how different the question appears when inverted and framed in more historical terms: How did a man who was born into a slave holding society, whose family and admired friends owned slaves, who inherited a fortune that was dependent on slaves and slave labor, decide at an early age that slavery was morally wrong and forcefully declare that it ought to be abolished? Though stating the same case, these are obviously different questions, focusing on different things, but one is framed in a historical context and the other ignores historical circumstances. The rephrased question reveals that what is truly remarkable is that Jefferson went against his society and his own self-interest to denounce

slavery and urge its abolition” (Douglas Wilson, “Thomas Jefferson and the Character Issue,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1992).

In 1778, Jefferson was instrumental in having the importation of slaves to Virginia banned. He introduced legislation in the Continental Congress to ban slavery, and it failed to pass by only one vote. He called slavery a “moral depravity” and a “hideous blot” (“Thomas Jefferson and Slavery,” Monticello.org). He feared that America would be destroyed by slavery and that it would lead to a civil war, which it did in 1861. As U.S. President, he continued to fight against slavery, but many American slave owners opposed him. He could not free his slaves upon his death, because he owed a large amount of money and his estate, including his slaves, had to be sold to pay the debt. In his *Memoir*, written at age 77, Jefferson said, “Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free.” Black American leaders such as Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr., praised Jefferson for his efforts to abolish slavery.

Recent scholarship claims that Jefferson fathered at least one child by one of his slaves named Sally Hemings, and this is possible, though it has not been absolutely proven.

We would note that Jefferson, as previously mentioned, was not a professing Christian or a believer in the Bible. Jefferson believed that Jesus was a good man and a great moral teacher, but he did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. As we have seen, Jefferson made his own “Bible” by cutting out everything from the Gospels pertaining to Christ’s virgin birth, miracles, atoning death, and resurrection.

### **George Washington**

George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army and America’s first President, inherited

slaves and owned slaves until his death but his thinking about slavery gradually evolved toward an abolitionist position.

At great personal cost to his estate, he vowed that he would not sell his slaves even though he could have benefited financially from doing so. After the Revolutionary War, when he was deeply in debt, the sale of just one slave would have brought him enough income to pay his estate taxes for two years. He also refused to hire out his slaves, because he did not want to break up their families. He said, "To sell the overplus I cannot, because I am principled against this kind of traffic in the human species. To hire them out is almost as bad because they could not be disposed of in families to any advantage, and to disperse [break up] the families I have an aversion" (Washington letter to Robert Lewis, Aug. 18, 1799, *Washington's Writings*, 1980, Vol. 37, p. 338).

Washington was instrumental in having a federal law passed in the first year of his presidency (1789) prohibiting slavery in the new American territories. As a result, the new states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin all prohibited slavery ("George Washington and the Washington Monument," [www.abschools.k12.wi.us](http://www.abschools.k12.wi.us), June 23, 2016).

In 1845, Daniel Webster described Washington's efforts to abolish slavery in America:

"Soon after the adoption of the Constitution, it was declared by George Washington to be 'among his first wishes to see some plan adopted by which slavery might be abolished by law;' and in various forms in public and private communications, he avowed his anxious desire that 'a spirit of humanity,' prompting to 'the emancipation of the slaves,' 'might diffuse itself generally into the minds of the people;' and he gave the assurance, that 'so far as his own suffrage would go,' his influence should not be wanting to accomplish this result"

(Webster, “Address to the People of the United States ... to Lift Our Public Sentiment to a New Platform of Anti-slavery,” Jan. 29, 1845).

In 1793, Washington wrote to his secretary Tobias Lear and “expressed his repugnance at owning slaves and declared the principle reason for selling the land [his western lands] was to raise the finances that would allow him to liberate them” (“George Washington and Slavery,” *Wikipedia*, citing Dorothy Twohig, “That Species of Property: Washington’s Role in the Controversy over Slavery,” in *George Washington Reconsidered* by Don Higginbotham; and Henry Wiencek, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America*). “In November the same year [1793], Washington demonstrated in a letter to his friend and neighbor Alexander Spotswood that the reluctance to sell slaves at a public venue, first seen in his letter to Lund Washington in 1778, had become an emphatic principle against ‘selling Negroes, as you would Cattle in the market...’” (Ibid., citing Twohig). “In 1795 and 1796, Washington devised a complicated plan that involved renting out his western lands to tenant farmers to whom he would lease his own slaves, and a similar scheme to lease the dower slaves he controlled to Dr. David Stuart for work on Stuart’s Eastern Shore plantation. This plan would have involved breaking up slave families, but it was designed with an end goal of raising enough finances to fund their eventual emancipation (a detail Washington kept secret) and prevent the Custis heirs from permanently splitting up families by sale. None of these schemes could be realized because of his failure to sell or rent land at the right prices, the refusal of the Custis heirs to agree to them and his own reluctance to separate families” (“George Washington and Slavery,” *Wikipedia*).

Washington's will called for the liberation of his slaves upon his wife's death, and he required that young ones be educated to read and write and taught a useful occupation.

Many accounts were told by black men and women about Washington's humility and lack of racial prejudice. My favorite was told by Primus Hall, the servant of Col. Timothy Pickering, one of General Washington's favorite officers during the War of Independence. One evening Washington and Pickering talked late into the evening, and Washington asked Hall if there were straw and blankets enough for him to sleep there that night. Hall replied in the affirmative, and when it was time for him to retire, Washington was shown an extra bed in Pickering's tent made of straw and blankets and laid down to sleep, not knowing that Hall had given him his own humble bed. When Washington woke up in the night and saw Hall sleeping at the Colonel's desk, he realized what had happened and demanded that Hall share his bed. When Hall expressed surprise and told him not to trouble himself, Washington ordered him in an authoritative voice, "Primus, I say, come and lie down here! There is room for both, and I insist upon it." Washington moved to one side of the straw bed, and the shocked black man did as he was told. "Primus professes to have been exceedingly shocked at the idea of lying under the same covering with the commander-in-chief, but his tone was so resolute and determined that he could not hesitate. He prepared himself, therefore, and laid himself down by Washington; and on the same straw, and under the same blanket, the General and the Negro servant slept until morning" (Henry Harrington, "Anecdotes of Washington," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book*, June 1849).

### **Benjamin Franklin**

Benjamin Franklin owned slaves, but he became an abolitionist later in life and liberated his slaves. He was president of the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes

Unlawfully Held in Bondage. He promoted the idea of educating former slaves and helping them find employment so they could fend for themselves. In 1790 Franklin petitioned the U.S. Congress to ban slavery. Franklin considered slavery to be “an atrocious debasement of human nature” (Siddharth Kara, *The Zorg*, p. 197).

### **John Dickinson**

John Dickinson was a member of the First and Second Continental Congresses and assisted Thomas Jefferson in writing the *Declaration of Independence*. He was an officer during the War of Independence. He was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and was elected President of Delaware and President of Pennsylvania. Dickinson is the author of “The Liberty Song” (1768). The original chorus said, “Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all, By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall; In so righteous a cause let us hope to succeed, For heaven approves of each generous deed.”

Dickinson became an abolitionist and freed his slaves in 1776. He devoted his final years to the cause of abolition and donated a considerable amount of his wealth “to the relief of the unhappy.”

### **Benjamin Rush**

Benjamin Rush, signer of the *Declaration of Independence*, denounced slavery in his tract *On Slave Keeping* (1773). He called it a “vice which degrades human nature.” He called on Americans to oppose it. “Remember the eyes of all Europe are fixed upon you, to preserve an asylum for freedom in this country after the last pillars of it are fallen in every other quarter of the globe.”

### **John Jay**

John Jay, first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court (1789-95), author of five of the *Federalist Papers*, and

Governor of New York, was a leading opponent of slavery. "His first two attempts to end slavery in New York in 1777 and 1785 failed, but a third in 1799 succeeded." All slaves in New York were emancipated before his death in 1829.

### **Noah Webster**

Noah Webster, who had a major influence on the U.S. Constitution through his 1787 essay *An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution*, called for slavery to be abolished in the United States. He founded an antislavery group called the Connecticut Society for the Promotion of Freedom. His influential *Blue-Back Speller* included an essay by Thomas Day calling for the abolition of slavery. Day argued that this was in accordance with the nation's *Declaration of Independence*. He warned Americans that consistency required that they either acknowledge the rights of the Negroes or surrender their own rights.

### **The Constitutional Convention**

During the Constitutional Convention (1787), when the U.S. Constitution was written and the American nation was formed at the federal level, there was a strong effort to abolish slavery. The opponents of slavery found, though, that it was impossible to form the nation on that basis, since the southern colonies refused to agree with the principle.

### **America's Civil War**

America fought its most terrible and bloody war on the ground of slavery. The Civil War was fought between 1861-1865 after southern states seceded from the Union. A majority of Americans were so strongly opposed to slavery that they were willing to go to war against their fellow Americans to settle the matter. The southern states were called the Confederacy, and the northern states, the Union. About 750,000 died in the war.

The Republican Party was formed chiefly on the antislavery platform, and it won 55% of the vote in the North in the 1860 election that put Abraham Lincoln into office. With no help from the southern states, Lincoln won 25 more electoral votes than he needed to win the presidency.

There were other great issues involved in the American Civil War, particularly the issue of states rights, but slavery was definitely a fundamental issue in the conflict. This was stated plainly by the Confederate leaders.

Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, made the following statement on March 21, 1861, in Savannah, Georgia:

“The new Constitution has put at rest forever all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institutions--African slavery as it exists among us--the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution. ... Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas [opposite from ‘all men are created equal’]; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth” (Stephens, *Cornerstone Speech*).

In May 1845, Baptists in southern states separated from their Baptist brethren in the northern states and formed the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The founding meeting was held at First Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia, and a majority of delegates voiced their approval of the institution of slavery. (In 1995, the Southern Baptist Convention formally apologized for its former stance on slavery, and in 2012 the SBC elected a black pastor as president.)

On January 27, 1861, Ebenezer Warren, pastor of First Baptist Church of Macon, Georgia, a prominent congregation in the SBC, preached a sermon entitled “Scriptural Vindication of Slavery.” This expressed the thinking of a large number of Southern whites in that day. He said:—

“Slavery forms a vital element of the Divine Revelation to man. Its institution, regulation, and perpetuity, constitute a part of many of the books of the Bible. ... The public mind needs enlightening from the sacred teachings of inspiration on this subject. ... Both Christianity and Slavery are from heaven; both are blessings to humanity; both are to be perpetuated to the end of time. ... Because Slavery is right; and because the condition of the slaves affords them all those privileges which would prove substantial blessings to them; and, too, because their Maker has decreed their bondage, and has given them, as a race, capacities and aspirations suited alone to this condition of life.”

The January 1864 issue of the *Religious Herald*, the official paper of the Virginia Baptists, went so far as to call abolition “the final Antichrist.”

Southern Baptists justified slavery on the basis of the law of Moses. Following are some of the Mosaic principles on slavery:

- A Jewish slave was to be given his liberty after six years (Exodus 21:2), and the liberated servant was to be furnished liberally with goods (De. 15:12-15).
- If a master injured a slave so that he died, the master was to be punished (Ex. 21:20).
- If a slave was injured by his master, he was to be given his liberty (Ex. 21:26).
- Slaves were not to be “ruled with rigour” (Le. 25:53).

- If a slave escaped from his master, he was to be protected (De. 23:15-16).

But a reading of the Bible as a whole supports the abolition of slavery, because both the law of Moses and the Lord Jesus Christ taught that the heart and soul of God's law is to "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18; Mat. 22:39). It is impossible to obey this divine command while enslaving another individual.

And any concept of racial superiority has zero biblical support. All men are children of Adam. All nations are "made of one blood" (Acts 17:26).

Why, then, did the law of Moses allow for slavery? Jesus explained this in Matthew 19. Like divorce, slavery was allowed because of the hardness of man's heart and his weak fallen condition (Mt. 19:7-8).

The Baptists in the north recognized that slavery was the chief cause of the Civil War. The Illinois Baptists issued the following statement in June 1863:

"We recognize human slavery now, as we have heretofore done, to be the cause of the war and its kindred evils, and we reiterate our convictions that there can be no peace and prosperity in the nation until it is destroyed" (B.F. Morris, *Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States*, 1864, p. 754).

The outcome of the American Civil War was the abolishment of slavery. In December 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution was ratified, which abolished slavery in the United States. It was passed by the white Republicans in Congress and came at great cost in the wealth and blood of white Americans.

# Missionary Work among Blacks in America Prior to the War of Independence

The vast majority of churches were Episcopalian and Congregational. They practiced infant baptism and sacramentalism and did not have a regenerate church membership. The members were brought in by baptism and confirmation.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was established in London in 1701 for missionary work among the Indians and Negroes.

The Moravians sought to evangelize blacks and Indians beginning in the 1730s. Count Zinzendorf, meeting with General Oglethorpe and the trustees of the new Georgia colony, made arrangements for Moravian missionaries to minister there and in South Carolina. They also preached in the West Indies, but there was opposition from the plantation owners. August Spangenburg and other Moravians preached to the blacks in Philadelphia in 1749. He wrote, "On my arrival in Philadelphia, I saw numbers of Negroes still buried in all their native ignorance and darkness, and my soul was grieved for them. Soon after some of them came to me, requesting instruction, at the same time acknowledging their ignorance in the most affecting manner. They begged that a weekly sermon might be delivered expressly for their benefit. I complied with their request and confined myself to the most essential truths of scripture. Upwards of seventy Negroes attended on these occasions, several of whom were powerfully awakened, applied for further instruction, and expressed a desire to be united to Christ and his church by the sacrament of baptism, which was accordingly

administered to them” (cited from Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, 1903).

Thus we see that the gospel preached by the Protestant missionaries was confused by the heresy of sacramentalism. It is impossible to know how many of the black converts were trusting in Christ alone for salvation and how many were trusting in Christ plus baptism and the church.

Samuel Thomas and E. Taylor of Goose Creek, South Carolina, had some success evangelizing black slaves.

- By 1705, there were 1,000 slaves under instruction, “many of whom could read the bible distinctly and great numbers of them were engaged in learning the scriptures” (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

- In some congregations, the Negroes constituted one-half of the communicants.

- In 1743, a school was established at Charleston to train Negroes for missionary work. It was under the charge of Harry and Andrew. Young missionaries ministered in various parts of the colony. It operated for 20 years until the death of the main teacher.

- In NC there were hundreds of conversions among the slaves. a school was founded by Thomas Bray.

- In New York City, Elias Neau established a school for Negro slaves in 1704 when he saw that they “were without God in the world and of whose souls there was no manner of care taken.”

- There was also missionary work among the black slaves in Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and Georgia.

- In New England, Cotton Mather called for the evangelization of slaves and drew up rules “by which masters should be governed in the instruction of their slaves.” He did not believe that God made black people

“only to serve the lusts of epicures or the gains of mammonists.”

- Jonathan Sewell, in *The Selling of Joseph*, condemned slaveholders for not following the example of Abraham, who commanded his household that they should keep the way of the Lord.

- Richard Baxter denounced slaveholders who used men as beasts. “[Masters who] betray or destroy or neglect their souls are fitter to be called incarnate devils than Christian though they be no Christian whom they so abuse.”

The Methodists had some success in evangelizing blacks prior to the War of Independence.

- “From 1773 to 1776 there was a great revival of religion in Virginia under the preaching of the Methodists in connection with Rev. Mr. Jarratt of the Episcopal Church, which spread through fourteen counties in Virginia and two in North Carolina. One letter states ‘the chapel was full of white and black’; another, ‘hundreds of Negroes were among them, with tears streaming down their faces.’ ... The first return of colored members distinct from white occurs in the minutes of 1786: White 18,791, colored 1,890. ‘It will be perceived from the above,’ says Dr. Bangs in the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, ‘that a considerable number of colored persons had been received into the church, and were so returned in the minutes of the conference. Hence it appears that at an early period of the Methodist ministry in this country it had turned its attention to this part of the population’” (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, 1903).

Presbyterian preacher Samuel Davies (1723-1761) had an effective ministry to black slaves. He was converted during the First Great Awakening and was one of the most famous speakers of his day. The great orator Patrick Henry called

Davies the greatest orator he ever heard and said he “was first taught what an orator should be” by listening to Davies’ sermons. He labored for the education and conversion of blacks. During his missionary labors in western Virginia from 1747 to 1759, he “converted hundreds of slaves to Christianity, with the help of Presbyterian ministers he mentored, brought his literacy campaign to more than one thousand enslaved men and women” (“Samuel Davies, Princeton and Slavery,” [princeton.edu](http://princeton.edu)). Davies preached by circuit at seven meeting places across five counties, as far as 40 miles apart. The London-based Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor donated Bibles, spelling books, and hymnals that he distributed among the slaves. He found that they were eager to read and were quick learners, though many of them “spoke little English or only creolized dialects.” The books were shared throughout Virginia and parts of North Carolina, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. One hundred years later, Presbyterian pastor Charles Colcock Jones reported seeing some of the books still being used by slaves. He was called to be the fourth president of Princeton College (1759-1761) (first called the College of New Jersey). He promoted spiritual revival at Princeton, telling his students, “There is not one in a thousand of the sons of men that enjoys your advantages ... You have nothing to do but polish your minds, and, as it were, render them luminous. But let me put you in mind, that unless you admit the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine in your hearts, you will still be the children of darkness, and confined in the blackness of darkness forever.”

Like the first nine presidents of Princeton, Davies owned slaves but believed in educating them, preaching the gospel to them, seeking their salvation, and treating them well. Jonathan Dickinson, Princeton’s first president, owned a slave girl named Genny. He wrote, “You are under a like obligation

to take care of the souls of your servants, as of your children; and in like manner to instruct them, and to impress upon their minds the vast concerns of eternity. For you should always remember, that the soul of your meanest slave is of more value than this whole world” (Dickinson, *Familiar Letters to a Gentleman*).

There was resistance on the part of many slave owners to the conversion and education of the blacks.

- “It is clear from these citations that in the seventeenth century not only was there little missionary effort to convert Negro slaves, but that there was on the contrary positive refusal to let slaves be converted, and that this refusal was one incentive to explicit statements of the doctrine of perpetual slavery for Negroes ... So throughout the colonies it is reported in 1678 that masters, ‘out of covetousness,’ are refusing to allow their slaves to be baptized; and in 1700 there is an earnest plea in Massachusetts for religious instruction of Negroes since it is ‘notorious’ that masters discourage the ‘poor creatures’ from baptism. In 1709 a Carolina clergyman writes to the secretary of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in England that only a few of 200 or more Negroes in his community were taught Christianity, but were not allowed to be baptized. Another minister writes, a little later, that he prevailed upon a master after much importuning to allow three Negroes to be baptized. In North Carolina in 1709 a clergyman of the Established Church complains that masters will not allow their slaves to be baptized for fear that a Christian slave is by law free” (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, 1903).

- “When these blacks approached the communion table, however, some white persons seriously objected, inquiring, whether it was possible that slaves should go to heaven anyway. But having the cooperation of a number of liberal

slaveholders in that section and working in collaboration with Mrs. Haig, Mrs. Edwards, and the Rev. E. Taylor, who baptized a number of them, the missionaries in that colony prepared the way for the Christianization of the Negro slaves” (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

- “Now and then, however, as in the case of Rev. Mr. Pugh, a missionary at Appoquinimmick, Pennsylvania, the missionaries received very few Negroes, because their masters here, as elsewhere, were prejudiced against their being Christians” (Woodson).

- J. Usher in Massachusetts said “several Negroes desired baptism and were able to render a very good account of the hope that was in them, but he was forbidden by their masters to comply with the request (Woodson).

The majority of slave owners were Christian in name only, by rite of infant baptism and sacramentalism.

- They were Anglican and Congregationalists. And many were not Christian by any profession. S. Frink, a missionary in Georgia in 1766, found that the whites were “as destitute of religion” as the Indians (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

- “The colonial clergy, therefore, too often became corrupt in this independent economic position. They spent much of their time at games and various sports, tarried at the cup and looked upon the wine when it was red, in fact, became so interested in the enjoyment of the things inviting in this world that they had in some cases little time to devote to the elevation of the whites, to say nothing about the elevation of the Negroes” (Woodson).

- “in 1670 In Jamaica the number of tippling houses has greatly increased, and many planters are ruined by drink” (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, 1903).

# History of Black Baptist Churches

Baptist churches in America were founded in the face of opposition by the predominant Protestants and grew very slowly prior to the founding of the nation and the resultant dissolution of national churches and the guarantee of religious liberty.

Roger Williams founded the first Baptist church in 1639 in spite of fierce persecution by the Episcopalians of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was banished in 1635 for preaching “new and dangerous opinions,” which included separation of church and state and religious liberty. He founded Rhode Island as “the first place in modern history where citizenship and religion were separate.” The stated purpose was “to hold forth a lively experiment, that a most flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained with full liberty in religious concernments.” The 1663 charter stated, “... no person within the said colony, at any time hereafter, shall be any wise molested, punished, disquieted or called in question, for any differences in opinion in matters of religion, and do not actually disturb the civil peace.” In March 1639, Williams was publicly immersed in baptism by Ezekiel Holliman, and the first Baptist church in America was formed. It is still called the First Baptist Church in America, though it is liberal and apostate today. A few years later, John Clarke established a Baptist church in Newport, Rhode Island. Historians have long debated which is the legitimate first Baptist church, though it really doesn't matter.

The first black person baptized in a Baptist church is thought to be a man named “Jack,” who was baptized in a Baptist church in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1652 (Robert Gardner, *Baptists of Early America*, 1983, p. 39).

In the early 1700s, one hundred years after the founding of the first English colony at Jamestown, there were fewer than 20 Baptist churches in America (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, 1903).

Baptists included blacks in their congregations from the inception. “The first Separate Baptist congregation in Virginia, albeit a short-lived one, may have been formed among slaves on the plantation of William Byrd III in 1758. African American and Virginia Indian men occasionally served as exhorters, deacons, and even elders (the highest office of leadership among Baptists) in mixed-race congregations. ... Blacks had the right to bring charges against whites in Baptist disciplinary proceedings. While these actions had predictable limitations and often seemed to favor whites’ testimony over blacks, they were the only judicial formats in colonial Virginia in which slaves could expect their grievances to be taken seriously. Occasionally, white masters were punished for treating their slaves harshly, as in a 1772 case at the Meherrin Baptist Church in Lunenburg County when master Charles Cook was rebuked for burning one of his slaves. But Cook gained readmission to the congregation a month later when he asked for forgiveness before the membership, presumably including the blacks” (Thomas Kidd, “The Great Awakening in Virginia,” [EncyclopediaVirginia.org](http://EncyclopediaVirginia.org)).

It was after the War of Independence that Baptist churches began to spread quickly.

“Revivals of religion were enjoyed, particularly one in Virginia, which commenced in 1785 and continued until 1791 or 1792. ‘Thousands were converted and baptized, besides many who joined the Methodists and Presbyterians. A large number of Negroes were admitted to the Baptist churches during the seasons of revival, as well as on ordinary occasions. They were, however, not gathered into churches

distinct from the whites south of Pennsylvania except in Georgia” (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, 1903).

By 1793, the number of Baptists in the United States was about 73,000, with one-fourth of them blacks (Du Bois).

The first black Baptist church in America was at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, across the river from Augusta, Georgia. This was about 1773. It was under the patronage of “the kind master, George Galphin.” The first preacher was **George Liele** (also called Lisle and Sharpe). His master was a deacon in a Baptist Church pastored by Matthew Moore, and he was converted by attending services with his master. He was permitted to preach to slaves along the Savannah River and was liberated to pursue this ministry. At the end of the War of Independence in 1783, Liele went to Jamaica and started a Baptist church, thus becoming the first Baptist foreign missionary and the first black missionary from America. “Within a few years he had a following of about 500 communicants, and with the help of a number of inspired deacons and elders extended the work far into the rural districts. In addition to his ministerial work he administered the affairs of these various groups, taught a few schools, and conducted a business at which he earned his living. ... Within a few years we hear of the purchase for a sum of nearly 155 pounds of about three acres of land at the east end of Kingston, on which they built a church. ... Contemporaries speak of his family life as pleasant. He had a wife and four children, three boys and a girl. He was not a well educated man, but he found time to read some good literature” (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

Another early black Baptist church was the **First Colored Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia**. It was founded by **Andrew Bryan**. He was converted under the ministry of George Liele, and his master, Jonathan Bryan, allowed him to preach on his plantation. The church was organized in 1788

by Abraham Marshall of Kioke Baptist Church who baptized 45 members and ordained Bryan. Kioke was the first Baptist church in Georgia, founded in 1772 by Abraham's father, Daniel. Bryan's black church endured much persecution. "This recognition of Bryan as a minister, however, did not solve all of his problems. The greater his influence among the slaves, the more the masters were inclined to believe that his work could result only in that of servile insurrection. It became more difficult, therefore, for slaves to attend his meetings; the patrols whipped them sometimes even when they had passes, and finally a large number of the members were arrested and severely punished. The culmination was that Andrew Bryan, their pastor himself, and his brother, Sampson Bryan, one of the first deacons, were 'inhumanly cut and their backs were so lacerated that their blood ran down to the earth, as they, with uplifted hands, cried unto the Lord; but Bryan, in the midst of his torture, declared that he rejoiced not only to be whipped but would freely suffer death for the cause of Jesus Christ.' Accused of sinister plans, Andrew Bryan and his brother Sampson were, upon the complaint of their traducers, imprisoned and dispossessed of their meeting house" (Woodson). With the assistance of their master and other sympathetic whites, they were released and allowed to continue their meetings. "They held meetings at Brampton about two years, during which they made a number of influential friends among the whites, who, along with the communicants of this group, assisted Bryan in raising funds to purchase a lot upon which to begin the erection of a church in 1794." Bryan was able to purchase his own freedom and that of his wife. His daughter married a free man, but her seven children were still owned by her master.

Byran had strict biblical standards for membership. "He required candidates for baptism to give full proof of their marriage relationship. If they lived together as was commonly

done without benefit of marriage, Bryan made them come to him and have a wedding ceremony performed” (William Banks, *A History of Baptist Baptists*, p. 51).

This church grew to a membership of 800 by 1800 and produced the Second African Baptist Church of Savannah (1802) and the Third African Baptist Church. It also sent out missionaries to other parts of Georgia, including Augusta, “where a flourishing Baptist church was established.” Upon Bryan’s death in 1812, the Savannah Baptist Association issued a memorial commending him and noting that hundreds of blacks had come to Christ through his instrumentality.

Black churches sent and supported missionaries in Africa.

Lott Carey was one of the first African-American missionaries to Africa. (The first was probably Daniel Coker in 1820.) He grew up in a slave family of God-fearing Baptists, but at age 24 he was sent to Richmond, Virginia, where he began to run with the wrong crowd and to drink and swear. In 1807, at age 26, the prayers of his family were answered when he was converted at the First African Baptist Church after hearing a sermon on John 3. He attended night school to learn to read the Bible. Extremely hard working and thrifty, he was able to save \$850 to purchase his freedom and that of his two children. He also purchased a house and educated his children. He was licensed to preach the gospel in Virginia. In 1815, he helped organize the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society with the goal of sending missionaries to Africa. The churches of Richmond contributed \$700 in the first five years. In 1821, Cary and his family, Collin Teague, and Joseph Langford were the first missionaries. He had such a good testimony with his employers that they offered him a large raise in salary if he would stay. Before he left America, he wrote, “This step is not taken to promote my own fortune, nor am I influenced by

any sudden impulse. I have counted the cost and have sacrificed all my worldly possessions to this undertaking. I am prepared to meet imprisonment or even death in carrying out the purpose of my heart. It may be that I shall behold you no more on this side of the grave, but I feel bound to labor for my brothers, perishing as they are in the far distant land of Africa. For their sake and for Christ's sake I am happy in leaving all and venturing all." They traveled to Liberia and founded the Providence Baptist Church. Lott's second wife died the first year. Lott envisioned Liberia as the base for extending missionary work across Africa. Lott died in 1828 in an accidental explosion while preparing cartridges to defend the colony from native tribes.

In 1879, C.H. Richardson established a mission station in Bakunda in the African interior, where the king encouraged their work. All of the youth of the region were required to attend Richardson's school. When the king died, he told his people, "Hear what the missionaries teach you, for I believe they bring you a message from God" (Leroy Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 114).

In 1883, the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention sent W.W. Colley and five other missionaries to Liberia, West Africa, but after ten years "disease, death, and furlough decimated their numbers and finally tribal wars so endangered their lives that the remaining two, J.J. Cole and his wife, were called home in July 1893, and the mission houses were sold" (Fitts, p. 117). In 1895, black American missionaries were again sent to Africa. J.C. Jackson in Cape Town, South Africa, won men to Christ who had migrated to the coast city for work and sent them back to their homes in the interior to preach the gospel.

There have been many prominent black Baptist preachers, including James Holmes of First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia; Richard Wells of Ebenezer Baptist Church of Richmond; Anthony Binga of First Baptist Church

of Manchester, Virginia; Richard DeBaptiste of Olivet Baptist Church in Chicago; Rufus Perry, pastor of the Baptist Church at Ann Arbor, Michigan, editor of *The Sunbeam*, the *People's Journal*, and *The National Monitor*; C. T. Walker, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia, one of the most popular speakers in America of his day.

**John Jasper** (1812-1901) was an influential black preacher. He was converted at age 27 while working in a tobacco warehouse in Virginia and called to preach. He taught himself to read with a Bible and a children's speller. He founded and pastored the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church of Richmond. He was a dynamic and popular preacher. "He had an excellent memory, with an ability to put in words what his mind so vividly imagined. Coupled with his common sense approach and practical experiences, he demonstrated his good grasp of the Bible in such a way that he became an outstanding preacher, popular with the whites as well as with his own people" (Banks, *A History of Baptist Baptists*, p. 57).

The African Baptist Church of Boston was founded by Thomas Paul in 1805. The Abyssinian Baptist Church of New York City was founded in 1808. It had 424 members by 1846. The First African Baptist Church of Philadelphia was founded in 1809. By 1806, the First African Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia, had 2,000 members.

The blacks in mixed Baptist churches in the south outnumbered the whites two to one and sometimes three to one or four to one (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*). First Baptist Church in Charleston, SC, had 216 white members and 1,382 blacks. Georgetown Baptist Church had 33 whites and 298 blacks. Welsh Neck Baptist had 83 whites and 477 blacks. One-fourth of the Baptists in Tennessee were black. The proportion was higher in Kentucky.

Black Baptist churches began forming associations in 1836. The first was the Providence Baptist Association in Ohio. The Wood River Baptist Association in Illinois was founded in 1838 and the Western Colored Baptist Convention in 1853. Beginning in 1866, black Baptist churches held state conventions across the south. That year, they formed the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention and began sending missionaries to Africa. The first four were J.H. Pressly, W.W. Cooley, J.J. Coles, and H. McKinney. In 1880, the National Baptist Convention was formed as a split from the Consolidated Convention. There were also the Baptist Association of the Western States and Territories and the New England Missionary Convention and the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention of the United States.

The number of black Baptists in America grew from 150,000 in 1850 to 1,604,000 in 1894; from one ordained preacher in 1777 to 10,000 in 1894; from one church in 1788 to 13,100 in 1894 (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, 1903).

The National Baptist Convention was organized in 1895. There have been bitter splits from the NBC involving lawsuits (Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 101).

Today the main black Baptist denominations are the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. (NBC Inc.), the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); the National Primitive Baptist Convention; and the United Free Will Baptist Church.

In 1989, the NBC Inc. had 30,000 churches with 7.5 million members and 29,000 ministers. The NBCA had 7,800 churches with a membership of 2.4 million. The PNBC had 1,000 churches with a membership of 1.2 million.

Since the "Azusa Street Revival" of 1906-1909, black Pentecostal churches have multiplied rapidly. The Azusa Street Mission was led by black Holiness preacher William Seymour and was predominately black. "Pentecostals are

widely acknowledged to be the fastest-growing segment of the black religious family” (Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church*).

The largest black Pentecostal denomination is the Church of God in Christ with a membership of 3.5 million in about 10,000 churches. It is the second largest black denomination after the National Baptist Convention USA. It is ruled by territorial bishops, with 126 bishops in 116 “ecclesiastical jurisdictions.”

The next eight largest black Pentecostal groups have a combined membership of 300,000. These include the Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God, Triumph the Church and Kingdom of God in Christ, Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Bible Way Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the United House of Prayer for All People.

The Methodists had great success among the blacks. As one Methodist bishop said, “[W]hile the good Presbyterian parson was writing his discourses, rounding off the sentences, the Methodist itinerant had traveled forty miles with his horse and saddle bags; while the parson was adjusting his spectacles to read his manuscript, the itinerant had given hell and damnation to his unrepentant hearers; while the disciple of Calvin was waiting to have his church completed, the disciple of Wesley took to the woods and made them reecho with the voice of free grace” (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

The black Methodist churches in the north organized the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1821. By 1829 it had reached membership of nearly 10,000. They have bishops that rule over territories. In the south, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America was formed in 1870.

The result of the great effort to evangelize the freed blacks was astounding. “The freedmen unto whom the gospel had never been successfully preached were generally evangelized and provided with some sort of facilities for religious

instruction. ... the freedmen specialized in the study of this one concern thrown open to them, mastering in a few years the principles of the Christian religion and the study of the Bible to the extent that their friends and enemies were all but startled. As a result, therefore, Negroes of today have a much more thorough knowledge of those fundamentals than most white men” (Woodson, 1921).

By 1890, there were more than 23,000 black churches in America (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, 1903).

In 1817, the American Colonization Society (ACS) was founded to establish a colony in Africa for free blacks and liberated slaves. It was led by Presbyterian minister Robert Finley. In 1822, the ACS founded Liberia as a republic. Both the United States and Britain had outlawed the slave trade, and when their navies captured slaves, they settled them in Liberia. Approximately 5,000 Africans were captured from slave ships and liberated in this way. Eventually, approximately 12,000 slaves were colonized in Liberia (William Banks, *A History of Baptist Baptists*, p. 47). Colonization, though, was never popular with blacks in America.

There were many cases of whites purchasing the liberty of black slaves. One of these was Harrison Ellis of Alabama. While working as a blacksmith, he used every opportunity to pursue an education. He learned to read English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and studied theology. White Presbyterians raised the money to purchase him and his family at a cost of \$2,500, a very large amount of money in that day, and ordained him as a missionary to Liberia in Africa. He was liberated to serve Christ, and he pursued that calling, though he died not long after arriving in Liberia (Carter Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, 1921). Another was Jack of Virginia, whose freedom was purchased by whites. He was

also given a tract of land and a house (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*).

### **Condition of the Churches**

Many of the conversions were emotional rather than substantive. This was of the product of camp meetings and annual revival meetings.

“The religious experience of such Negroes ... was more nominal than rational. Many of them obtained their first religious impressions in some camp meeting during a special effort in behalf of the lost. ... they flocked in large numbers to the spontaneous exercises of the Methodists and Baptists, who, being decidedly evangelical in their preaching had a sort of hypnotizing effect upon the Negroes, causing them to be seized with certain emotional jerks and outward expressions of an inward movement of the spirit which made them lose control of themselves. ... Statistics show that such a conversion of people who were given no opportunity for mental development amounted to very little in the edification of their souls. Not long after these exciting camp meetings and protracted efforts had passed over many of these persons, who had been most vociferous in their praise of God for cleansing them of their many sins, readily fell thereafter by the wayside in engaging in what is known as pleasurable evils” (Carter Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

In the South, particularly, many of the black churches mixed elements of African spirit worship, including hypnotic music rhythms, with Christianity. “Through signals, passwords, and messages not discernible to whites, they called believers to ‘hush harbors’ where they freely mixed African rhythms, singing, and beliefs with evangelical Christianity. We have little remaining written record of these religious gatherings. But it was here that the spirituals, with their double meanings of religious salvation and freedom

from slavery, developed and flourished; and here, too, that black preachers, those who believed that God had called them to speak his Word, polished their ‘chanted sermons,’ or rhythmic, intoned style of extemporaneous preaching. Part church, part psychological refuge, and part organizing point for occasional acts of outright rebellion. Nat Turner, whose armed insurrection in Virginia in 1831 resulted in the deaths of scores of white men, women, and children, was a self-styled Baptist preacher. These meetings provided one of the few ways for enslaved African Americans to express and enact their hopes for a better future” (Laurie Maffly-Kipp, “The Church in the Southern Black Community,” *Documenting the American South*, University of North Carolina, May 2001).

The **ring shout**, derived from African dance, was an example of syncretism. “Men and women moved in a circle in a counterclockwise direction, shuffling their feet, clapping, and often spontaneously singing or praying aloud.” Called an “ecstatic transcendent religious ritual,” it was a type of a hypnotic drumming circle which would sometimes go on for hours.

Booker T. Washington, who was a Baptist, describes the concept of a preacher’s call that was widely practiced:

“At my home in West Virginia the process of being called to the ministry was a very interesting one. Usually the ‘call’ came when the individual was sitting in church. Without warning the one called would fall upon the floor as if struck by a bullet, and would lie there for hours, speechless and motionless. Then the news would spread all through the neighbourhood that this individual had received a ‘call.’ If he were inclined to resist the summons, he would fall or be made to fall a second or third time. In the end he always yielded to the call” (Washington, *Up from Slavery*).

Many of the preachers were uneducated and even boasted in this. "Preaching to his congregation, the ignorant minister would often boast of having not rubbed his head against the college walls, whereupon the congregation would respond: 'Amen.' Sometimes one would say: 'I did not write out my sermon.' With equal fervor the audience would cry out: 'Praise ye the Lord'" (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

In about 1898, the Home Missionary Society reported on the black churches in the South: Not one in 12 have preaching every Sunday. Most preachers do very little pastoral work. "Of a great number [of pastors], however, it must be said in sorrow, that their moral standards are not at all in accord with those of the New Testament for the ministry. ... There are sixty percent of the ministers whose libraries do not average a dozen volumes. ... it may be safely said that two-thirds of the preaching is of the crudest character, emotional, hortatory, imaginative, visionary, abounding in misconceptions of scripture, the close of the sermon being delivered with powerful intonations and gesticulations to arouse the audience to a high pitch of excitement, which both preacher and people regard as indispensable to a 'good meeting.' Two members of a minister's class recently made these statements to their colored instructor: one had preached that Joshua never had father or mother, because he was 'the son of Nun,' (none); the other wrought up his congregation mightily by repeatedly shouting 'Mesopotamia.' Such instances can be multiplied indefinitely. ... Converts with weird and rapturous experiences are quickly baptized. With the survival of old-time notions concerning conversion, probably two-thirds of the churches are made up largely of 'wood, hay and stubble'" (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*).

William Harvard Holloway (1875-1968) published a survey of black churches in Thomas county, Georgia, entitled "A

Black Belt County, Georgia” in *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made under the Direction of Atlanta University*, 1903. A graduate of Talladega College and Yale Divinity School, he pastored Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches.

### Church Splits

He said **church splits** were common.

“Some brother is called to preach. This call is so thunderous, and the confidence that he can ‘make a better preach’ than the present pastor so obtrusive, till he soon finds that there is little welcome in the sacred rostrum of the old church. He therefore takes his family and his nearest relatives and moves away. Study the rolls, therefore, of many of the churches and you will find that they are largely family churches, and that the first preacher was some venerable patriarch. I think one will be perfectly safe in concluding that two-thirds of the growth in churches of the various denominations has been made in this way; and that little has been accomplished by the church executives as the result of direct effort at church extension. It will be readily seen that churches having their origin in this way merely duplicate the old institution; often is not a creditable duplicate. I know of no rural church in Thomas county whose inception had the careful nursing of an educated, cultured leader. ... The largest churches and the biggest preachers in Thomas county do little home missionary work and organize no new churches” (Holloway).

Historian William Banks confirmed this: “Black Baptists still sue one another; most of the litigation is carnal jockeying for power: Pastor, Deacons, Trustees, Musicians, etc., fight one another. They adjudicate such issues as defamation of character, tenure of office, authoritarianism, fraudulent elections, mishandling of money, and immorality. Our

litigious spirit violates Christian brotherhood, and is in direct disobedience to First Corinthians 6:1-8” (*A History of Black Baptists in the United States*, p. 119).

The Black associations, too, have been prone to splitting. Leroy Fitts traces these in his *History of Black Baptists*. For example, the National Baptist Convention of America split from the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. in 1915. The issue was over the ownership and management of the National Baptist Publishing Board. It was an ugly split that involved “a tremendous legal battle.” “Hard feeling between the two National Baptist conventions prevailed for several years” (Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 93).

The Progressive National Baptist Convention, led by Gardner C. Taylor, split from the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. in 1961. One cause of the split was the division between J.H. Jackson and Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ralph Abernathy over the approach to the civil rights movement and racial integration, with Jackson tending “to be more gradual or conservative in his approach to civil rights” (Fitts, p. 101). The Progressives were more theologically liberal, socialistic, and political-oriented. The split was not over theology, though. It was over politics. Leroy Fitts says the black churches “became largely political in nature” (p. 222).

Holloway warned about the focus on emotionalism rather than sound Bible education.

“The supreme element in the old system was emotionalism, and, while we hate to confess it, truth demands that we affirm it as the predominating element today. The church which does not have its shouting, the church which does not measure the abilities of a preacher by the ‘rousement’ of his sermons, and indeed which does not tacitly demand of its minister the shout-producing discourse, is an exception to the rule. This is

true of the towns as well as the country. Of course we all understand that it has always occupied first place in the worship of the Negro church; it is a heritage of the past. In the absence of clearly defined doctrines, the great shout, accompanied with weird cries and shrieks and contortions and followed by a multi-varied 'experience' which takes the candidate through the most heart-rending scenes--this today in Thomas county is accepted by the majority of the churches as unmistakable evidence of regeneration" ("A Black Belt County, Georgia," 1903).

Holloway said that many of the preachers knew that the emphasis on emotionalism above sound doctrine is wrong, but they bend to the will of the people and care more about maintaining a position than standing for the truth of God's Word and leading the people away from their errors.

"Now, the preachers who have had some advantages of study ... know that the old order of things is wrong. Talk with them and they all confess it. Confront them with the truth that it prevails in their own churches, and their reply puts the question upon the basis of supply and demand. They say, 'My people have been used to it, my predecessor was thought to be the embodiment of perfection, and this was his standard; therefore, if I would succeed, if I would hold my people, I must supply this demand; and if I would make the record of my success more enduring than my predecessor I must supply this demand in greater quantities and more acceptable quantity than he.' The spirit of rivalry also has much to do with the continuance of this emotional feature. Two churches in the same community--one presided over by an educated ministry, with lofty ideals and correct standards, and to whose better nature the old order is repulsive, and the other presided over by a typical representative of the old school: the educated minister will often preach unseen and waste his

eloquence on the desert air” (“A Black Belt County, Georgia,” 1903).

Holloway warned of the worldliness and entertainment orientation of the churches.

“The first condition I would speak of is the relation of the church to the popular amusements. The supreme end of the church is spiritual: the bringing of the individual up to the higher ideals as exemplified in the life and teachings of Christ. When, therefore, the institution subordinates, even for a moment, this supreme end to a lower one, there can but be a perceptible lessening of the moral force of the institution. Now this is just what the church is doing. They view with each other so strongly, the rivalry in new inventions and performances is so intense, till it has led them into the realm of the questionable” (“A Black Belt County, Georgia,” 1903).

Holloway warned about the failure to maintain high moral standards for pastors, for members, for workers, and the failure to discipline sin.

“The prominent place in church circles taken by characters whose lives in the community are a constant contradiction to the creed prescribed to when they entered the church, is another condition which lessens the moral force of the church. ... It is true in Thomas county that some of the secret societies, especially among women, are more vigilant as to their constituencies than the church. I am personally acquainted with people who occupy first place in all the affairs in the church whose applications to the societies have been repeatedly turned down. The fact that their monied connections and their popularity are sufficient guarantees for the success of any church enterprise, seem to make their fitness for church membership unquestioned. **Their lives may be bad but no notice is**

**paid to it. Now what is the effect of all this? Nothing other than that the young people, and the older people who do their own thinking, lose regard for the moral standards of the church.** The preacher may discourse frequently on purity of life, but if he shuts his eyes to the impurity of some of his own members, and seems to insist that they be placed at the forefront of the church's activities, then his precepts become sounding brass and tinkling cymbals; and his example, weightier by far than his precepts, becomes a barrier to the highest usefulness of his institution as a moulder of the community's morality" ("A Black Belt County, Georgia," 1903).

Holloway warned about the lax business standards, churches even cheating their own pastors.

"Another condition which gives rise to our assertion that the church is not exercising its highest moral influence, is seen in its lax business methods. Let us give one example, which we dare assert is true of nine-tenths of the churches in Thomas county and in the South: A contract is made with every incoming minister. They promise him a stipulated sum for his year's service and when the year ends, he goes to conference with only about two-thirds of the pledge fulfilled. If he is sent back to the same field, the second year finds the church still deeper on the debit side of the ledger. If he is sent to another field the debt is considered settled, a new contract is made with the new preacher, and the same form is gone through. **As far as I have been able to learn fully 76 per cent of the churches in the county are in debt to their former preachers. ... Now, this may seem a too minute selection of ecclesiastical faults, but when it is remembered that the simple virtues of honesty, truthfulness, and business promptness are the qualities most needed by the race, then that institution which represents the embodiment of all**

**that is perfect in its precepts loses its moral force by the laxity of its example**, and this laxity which is characteristic of the body must find counterpart in the individuals who compose the body. We ventured the assertion that the church in this county is not too potent a factor in the moral betterment of the race. ... You will notice that I have not said that the church is doing nothing toward this betterment. Some of them are, and some of the denominations more than others; but what we are talking about is the weight of the combined influence of all the churches; and we still claim that its power is small, smaller to be sure than it should be, when it has such exalted example of all that is good to draw from in the enforcement of its teachings" ("A Black Belt County, Georgia," 1903).

Holloway warned that most of the pastors were not properly educated for the ministry.

"The majority of the ministers are unlearned or ignorant men, ignorant in the sense of fitness for leadership; for, learned or unlearned, the Negro preacher is today the leader of the race. If they are ignorant, then this ignorance manifests itself in any number of ways: 1st. His home life as a general rule is on no higher level than that of his neighbor. In most cases he married before he began to preach and his wife is ignorant. ... I beg you to note that the pulpit is not the only place where the minister is to do powerful and eloquent preaching. 2d. In morality he has much to learn. Morality as it affects: (1) Temperance; (2) debt paying and business honesty; (3) sexual morality" ("A Black Belt County, Georgia," 1903).

Survey responses included the following sad observations about the moral condition of the churches:

"Little spiritual life."

"Ten percent of the membership is honest, pure, and upright."

"Influence is bad, but there are some earnest folks."

“Out of ten pastors, three are sexually immoral, one drinks, three are careless in money matters.”

“More centers for amusement than for worship.”

“Not what they should be.”

“Lack competent leaders.”

“The church amuses the young people.”

“Much laxity.”

Holloway concluded by expressing hope for the future through the rising education of the young people.

### **The Social Gospel**

A social gospel has long been prominent in black churches. “They hoped and prayed for a day of liberation. Their historic cognizance synthesized with aspirations for liberation developed into a social gospel of tremendous impact” (Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 224).

This is contrary to Paul’s teaching in Colossians 3:1-4. There is nothing wrong with educating and feeding people, but the true gospel is not a social gospel. It is the gospel of individual salvation through personal faith in the blood, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When a social gospel takes first place, the true gospel disappears, and that is what has happened in a vast number of black churches. The prominence of a social gospel has increased throughout the history of black churches in America. Leroy Fitts said that **Harvey Johnson** was “one of the foremost social thinkers and proponents of a social gospel among black Baptists” and that “his views were usually welcomed and highly respected by black Baptist leadership” (Fitts, p. 247). Johnson led the Texas Movement, which called for setting aside the entire state of Texas as a nation for black Americans. Johnson preached racial division and claimed that Ham was the great builder of Noah’s sons. Consider an

excerpt from his sermon called “The Hamite--The Only Historical Nation”:

“We again assert that the Bible shows that neither Shem nor Japheth ever settled a country, or built a town or city. Of three sons of Noah, Ham, and he alone, is accredited with settling countries, and building cities. ... The white man has been, and still is, a failure in government, wherever found; and since we have our own leaders both great and grand, let us follow them, and be content to do so” (Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 248).

**Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.** is another example of a prominent black Baptist leader who was committed to a social gospel. His father was the pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City. Powell, Jr., studied liberal theologians and black social gospelers such as Marcus Garvey. When he became the pastor of Abyssinian, he turned it into a social institution. “Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., church operated a day nursery for working mothers, a grocery store, and other services all with a staff of twenty workers. He got jobs in 125th Street by demands, marchers, and selective buying campaigns” (Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 272). Powell traded the pastorate for politics and was elected to Congress in 1944 as Harlem’s first black congressman, becoming “the single most powerful black American” ((Fitts). He was devoted to passing laws for racial equality, such as a Federal Anti-Lynching Act, but “his personal standard of public morality left a lot to be desired” (Fitts, p. 279). He misused public funds and “became the first congressman in modern times to be excluded by a vote of the House.”

The social gospel has produced a large number of black churches that are predominately social conglomerates, with housing projects, retirement homes, job placement centers,

credit unions, large recreation facilities, athletic departments, blood banks, mini markets, day nurseries, elderly homes, AA programs, food banks, voter registration drives, even shopping centers. These churches take large government funds and submit to government control. Leroy Fitts gives several examples of these in *A History of Black Baptists*, pp. 320-325. "Pastors and churches have readily grabbed government money in order to establish recreation centers, cooperative apartments, senior citizen homes, etc." (Banks, *A History of Baptist Baptists in the United States*, p. 119).

These churches have not stemmed the tsunami of the social devastation that has overwhelmed black communities. They feed food to the hungry but they don't feed the living Word to the saints. They don't regenerate souls by the pure gospel. They don't build strong, intact, biblical homes that raise a godly seed for the glory of Jesus Christ.

The black civil rights movement of the 1960s was a social gospel movement, with Martin Luther King, Jr., at its head. "The clergy ... utilized their pulpits on Sunday to set the stage for the boycott" (Fitts, p. 281). "The Social Gospel provided King a means of dialogue with liberal white Americans to recruit their support for the black revolution" (Fitts, p. 285).

**Martin Luther King, Jr.** (1929-1968), was a Baptist pastor who "was highly influenced by the social ethics of Christianity and the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi of India. He was able to synthesize the thought of Gandhi with the Social Gospel of Christianity. A third ingredient was later introduced into King's synthesis--the sociopolitical theories of Henry David Thoreau" (Fitts, pp. 283, 284).

King said, "The social gospel is as important as the gospel of personal salvation. Any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and ignores social and economic conditions that cripple the soul is a spiritually moribund and dead religion, and it is only waiting for the day

to be buried” (William Brink and Louis Harris, *The Negro Revolution in America*, p. 105). King was wrong. The apostle Paul taught no social gospel. He led no revolution. To mix a social gospel with the true gospel destroys the true gospel. The social gospel is a false gospel.

**Raphael Warnock**, the current pastor of New Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King pastored, carries on the liberal social gospel trend. On Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021, Warnock tweeted, “The meaning of Easter is more transcendent than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whether you are Christian or not, through a commitment to helping others we are able to save ourselves” (“Warnock deletes Easter tweet,” *Fox News*, Apr. 4, 2021).

The social gospel, with its multitude of prominent proponents (e.g., Ralph Abernathy, Jesse Jackson, Jeremiah Wright, Jr., Calvin Butts, III) and its crown political jewel, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, has not been the salvation of black people in America. “The decade of the seventies witnessed high black unemployment, street violence, drug addiction, and a gradual decline of the black church and family. Some of these problems resulted from the general rise of secularism and the new morality in American culture. Blacks were largely caught up in the general spirit of the age” (Fitts, p. 290). No doubt this is true, but historian Leroy Fitts fails to acknowledge the major role that the black churches themselves have played in the social destruction of black people.

The “old order” included practices like the “Rocking Daniel” dance. This was practiced by St. Annis Primitive Baptist Church in Deland, Florida.

“The service generally ends with a kind of a dance, which they call ‘Rocking Daniel.’ No information could be gained as to the origin of this most peculiar custom. A leader stands in the center of a circle, which the

members form in front of the pulpit. They begin with singing the lines: 'Rock Daniel, rock Daniel, Rock Daniel till I die.' Gradually they move round in the circle, single file, then begin to clap hands and fall into a regular step or motion, which is hard to describe. Finally, when they have become worked up to a high state of excitement, and almost exhausted, the leader gives a signal, and they disperse. This ceremony reminds one quite strongly of an Indian war dance, except that it is on a somewhat tamer plan" (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*).

### **Worldliness**

A 1903 survey of 75 "intelligent colored laymen in Georgia" - "the majority think that the present condition of the churches is bad. ... the ministers are said not usually to be the right sort of men, their faults being ignorance and immorality, and in some cases, drunkenness." Following are comments from the survey: "The thought of right doing and right living seems to be secondary." "We have many loyal and faithful members in our churches, and, I may add, altogether too many bad ones." "I know some good, pure, and upright men in the ministry, but I know some who are not ... In my observations, I have noticed drunkenness, poor paymasters, lack of interest in their families, and very much tainted with sexual impurity." "I regret to say some of those in our larger churches have not conducted themselves as Christian ministers should, numerous scandals having arisen about them."

In Philadelphia, the condition of the churches was described as follows: "In direct moral teaching and setting moral standards for the people, however, the church is timid ... The congregation does not follow the moral precepts of the preacher, but rather the preacher follows the standard of his flock, and only exceptional men dare seek to change

this. ... On the whole, then, the average Negro preacher in this city is a shrewd manager, a respectable man, a good talker, a pleasant companion, but neither learned nor spiritual, nor a reformer” (Du Bois, *The Negro Church*).

As time has passed, there has been a complete breakdown between the sacred and the secular in large numbers of black churches. In other words, there is no separation from the world.

“The blurred nature of what is distinctively Christian and what is African American is commonly displayed at our national, non-Christian music and video award shows. It would be typical for an African American artist, who is receiving an award for a song or video full of lyrics and/or scenes completely contrary to the moral standards of the Gospel, to receive the award with the words, ‘First, I would like to thank my Lord Jesus Christ for...’ giving something related to the talent of the singer or the award itself. The thanksgiving, though obviously hypocritical, is received with great acclamation, seemingly without the hosts or audience being put off by the references to the Lord among the secular throng. ... Many African American church-goers are fine with Christianity as long as we, as African Americans, can bring our cultural gods with us. We see no problem with our secular artists, their words or their behavior, as long as our fellow church members see God’s blessings as being consistent with our entertainers’ debauchery” (Eric Redmond, “The Gray Matter of African American Syncretism,” June 29, 2009).

The broad capitulation of black churches to the mores of the world is acknowledged by black historians. Leroy Fitts says,

“The signs of accommodation to secular culture are seen almost everywhere in the life of black Baptists. More and more, sermons and literary productions in the church’s

life tend to reflect little more than social treatises with religious overtones. ... Both the issues of homosexuality and common-law marriages [living together without marriage, which the Bible calls adultery] affect the black community. These alternate life-styles are very visible within and without black Baptist churches. Black pastors tend to overlook quietly their prevalence in the life of congregations. ... Black churches everywhere are experiencing tremendous difficulties in holding youth. Pornography is one significant factor in turning young minds from the traditional moral and spiritual values of the church to the characteristic secularism of this age” (*A History of Black Baptists*, pp. 328, 329).

At the same time, at least pre-World War II, there were black churches that preached separation from the world. The only sources for this information that I have found are some histories of the Blues.

Blacks in America in the first half of this century were notably religious and more often than not were churchgoers. They were divided into two distinct categories, though: Pious and impious; those who lived a sincere Christian life and those who maintained only a veneer of Christianity to cover an immoral lifestyle. Pious blacks who took Jesus Christ and the Bible seriously and who were faithful to sound biblical churches, condemned immorality and drunkenness and violence as well as the blues and boogie-woogie type music that was associated with those things. On the other hand, those who played the blues were commonly in contact with the Bible and church during their youth, but they did not repent of their sin and reject the lusts of the flesh and live faithfully for God.

“If you played blues, you played where people drank and gambled and carried on and committed adultery—all the things that the black church and the white church stood against: gambling, fornication, adultery, violence,

murder” (Gayle Wardlow, *Chasin’ That Devil Music*, p. 144).

“Sex was inextricably linked with blues and jazz. It was not a prejudice: it was a fact of life. ... In truth, black parents were also disapproving of blues and jazz music, and often pulled out the broomstick when their daughters showed an interest in the ‘devil’s music’” (James Dickerson, *Goin’ Back to Memphis*, pp. 29, 30).

Blues historian Robert Palmer, though glorifying the blues musicians in his book *Deep Blues*, admits that the bluesmen were looked upon as immoral and shiftless by their own people, by black preachers, schoolteachers, small landowners, and faithful churchgoers (*Deep Blues*, p. 17).

Booker Miller, who played the blues with Charlie Patton in the late 1920s and became a Baptist preacher after he was converted from a blues lifestyle, testified: “Them old folks did believe the devil would get you for playin’ the blues and livin’ like that” (*Chasin’ That Devil Music*, p. 197).

Henry C. Speir, who was responsible for the recording careers of Son House, Willie Brown, Robert Johnson, Charlie Patton, Tommy Johnson, and many other black bluesmen, testified, “You were either serving the Lord or you were serving the devil. And if you played blues and lived that lifestyle, you served the devil and you were going to hell. Good church people didn’t have anything to do with blues singers” (H.C. Speir, interview, *Chasin’ That Devil Music*, p. 142).

W.C. Handy, whose autobiography is titled “Father of the Blues,” was from a Christian home. Both his grandfather and his father were preachers. When he brought a guitar home in his early teen years, his parents were shocked. Handy’s father said, “A guitar! One of the devil’s playthings. Take it away. Get it out of your hands. Whatever possessed you to bring a sinful thing like that into our Christian home?” (*Father of the Blues*:

*An Autobiography*, p. 10). Handy's father felt that "becoming a [blues] musician would be like selling my soul to the devil" and that those who are living the licentious blues lifestyle are "trotting down to Hell on a fast horse" (Ibid., p. 303). Handy's Christian music teacher warned him that blues music would bring him to the gutter (Ibid., p. 303).

When Muddy Waters, who organized the first influential electric blues band, started learning to play the blues as a boy, his godly grandmother warned him, "Son, you're sinning. You're playing for the devil. Devil's gonna get you" (James Rooney, *Bossmen Bill Monroe and Muddy Waters*, p. 105). Muddy Waters ignored his grandmother, but she was right. He was playing the eevil's music, the music that fit his immoral lifestyle like a hand and glove.

When Charlie Patton started playing the blues, his preacher father looked upon it as a sin. "To a man of God, guitar picking was a sin, and playing reels and other sinful tunes at parties and picnics where gambling and fornication were rampant was tantamount to selling one's soul to the Devil. So when Bill [Charlie Patton's father] caught his son making music, he considered it his Christian duty to deliver stern warnings and, as the warnings continued to go unheeded, increasingly severe corporal punishment" (Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues*, p. 51). Charlie ignored his father, wasted his life on liquor and loose women, and died at age 43 of a heart attack.

Jazz/blues researcher Gayle Dean Wardlow, who went house to house in black neighborhoods in search of old records, said, "I also discovered that women who were active churchgoers only had sacred music, never blues or jazz records" (Gayle Wardlow, *Chasin' That Devil Music*, p. 12).

It was not uncommon for blues players eventually to get saved and become serious about serving God; and when they did, they usually gave up their blues music. An example was

Ishmon Bracey (1900-1970). He played with some of the well-known bluesmen, including Tommy Johnson, and recorded for Victor and Paramount Records. He lived the immoral blues life for many years, but in 1951 he repented of his sin, trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior, and returned to the Baptist church in which he was raised and became a preacher of the gospel. From then until his death of natural causes at age 70 he thanked the Lord for his conversion from the wicked life of blues. He refused thereafter even to play the blues recreationally. When interviewed in 1963 by blues researcher Gayle Dean Wardlow, Bracey described the immorality and violence that went on in the “juke houses” (*Chasin’ that Devil Music*, pp. 58-60).

Another example is Freddie Spruell. He also recorded with Paramount and lived the wicked blues life until 1944. His mother had asked him to stop playing blues, and he obeyed and started going back to the Baptist church. A few months later he began preaching the gospel.

Another example is Skip James, who “got religion on him and wouldn’t play the blues.”

The point is that blues and boogie-woogie represented the unwholesome side of early twentieth-century Negro American society. Rock & roll, in turn, represents the unwholesome side of society at large.

By the third quarter of the 20th century, a large percentage of black churches had grown so carnal that the most worldly of blues singers were accepted and acclaimed. These included Aretha Franklin (“the Queen of Soul”), daughter of Pastor C.L. Franklin of the New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit; Whitney Houston (“I’m Your Baby Tonight”), died of drowning due to cocaine abuse; Otis Redding (“Satisfaction” and “Try a Little Tenderness”); Marvin Gaye (“I Heard It Through the Grapevine”) who was shot and killed by his pastor father; The Emotions (“Best of My Love” and “Boogie

Wonderland”); Donna Summer (“Queen of Disco”), Faith Evans (married and sang with rapper Notorious B.I.G.); Curtis Mayfield (“Don’t Worry If There Is a Hell Below”).

In 2020 I asked a black preacher friend in Chicago if he knew any other predominately black churches that stand against the filthy hip-hop culture, and he said he did not.x

### **Liberal Theology**

Theological liberalism entered black churches at the turn of the 20th century. “During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the conservative and progressive elements in the church unconsciously drifted far apart. ... It was a difference of ideas. ... The progressive element commonly dubbed by the conservatives as the educated Negroes could not accept the crude notions of Biblical interpretation nor the grotesque vision of the hereafter as portrayed by the illiterate ministers of the church. ... The educated Negro, moreover, no longer thought of religion as the panacea for all the ills of the race. ... The educated Negro ... thought of the church as existing for the good of the individual. It was to him a means for making the bad good, and if the institution were defective it might be so reshaped and reorganized as to serve the useful purposes of men. ... Religion, the progressive element insisted, is a social virtue not an individual born. ... The educated Negro began to see little harm in dancing and card playing when representative white churches abrogated such prohibitions or suffered them to fall into desuetude” (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

“During the early twentieth century, blacks became more and more influenced by the secular changes in the general American society. Secular humanism found a lodging place in the theology as well as the general philosophy of education” (Fitts, p. 216).

Historian William Banks says, “As for theological orientation, the majority of well-trained black Baptist ministers are graduates of liberal schools” (*A History of Black Baptists in the United States*, p. 116).

There seems to have been no organized protest of theological liberalism among the black churches and associations. Leroy Fitts, who was himself tainted with theological modernism, calls this “fortunate.” “Fortunately, the black Baptist denominational development was spared the turbulent ordeals of doctrinal struggles that so often characterized denominational development among white Americans” (*A History of Baptist Baptists*, p. 106).

Again, this is not because theological liberalism did not invade black churches, it is because there was no organized resistance to it as there was among white churches in the form of the fundamentalist movement.

The liberal ecumenical spirit of the black Baptist associations is evident by the fact that they have aligned with the Baptist World Alliance, the National Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches (Fitts, p. 315). These are cesspools of rank heresy. (See *World Council of Churches*, available as a free eBook from the Books section of [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

Blacks in the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., also illustrate the liberalism that has permeated black churches. By 1977, the ABC had more blacks than any other denomination. In 1971, Thomas Kilgore, Jr., black pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Los Angeles, California, was elected to head the American Baptists. The black historian who reported this as a blessing fails to mention that the American Baptists have been corrupted by theological liberalism since the end of the 19th century.

“Even before the turn of the twentieth century, the five Baptist seminaries in the North were showing signs of liberalism” (David Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, p. 175).

Consider a few examples:

**Henry Vedder** taught Baptist history at Crozer Theological Seminary from 1894 to 1926 and published 27 books on church history and theology, including *A Short History of the Baptists*. Of Christ’s substitutionary atonement on Calvary, Vedder said, “Of all the slanders men have perpetrated against our Most High, this is positively the grossest, the most impudent, the most insulting” (cited from *Baptist Fundamentals: Addresses at the Pre-Convention Conference*, 1927).

**Nels F.S. Ferré** taught theology at Andover Newton Theological School (1937-1950, 1957-1960) and denied practically every doctrine of the Christian faith, including Christ’s virgin birth, miracles, vicarious atonement, and bodily resurrection. In *The Christian Understanding of God*, Ferré wrote, “We have no way of knowing, even, that Jesus was sinless” (p. 186). On page 191 he blasphemously claimed that Mary was possibly impregnated by a Roman soldier. In *The Sun and the Umbrella*, Ferré said, “Jesus never was nor became God” (p. 112), and, “The use of the Bible as the final authority for Christian truth is idolatry” (p. 39), and, “Hinduism is good and wise” (p 117).

Another prominent Baptist liberal was **George Foster** who taught at the University of Chicago. In 1906, he published *The Finality of the Christian Religion* in which he claimed that “a God outside the cosmos is dead.” He hated a religion of “facts” and “authority.” He claimed that the divine inspiration of the Bible is “untrue historically and impossible psychologically.” He claimed that an intelligent man who believes the miraculous accounts of the Bible “can hardly know what intellectual

honesty means.” He said the evidence does not support Christ’s bodily resurrection. His home church, Hyde Park Baptist, refused to retract his ordination or discipline him in any way.

Another example of liberalism in the Northern Baptist Convention was **Harry Emerson Fosdick**, who pastored Park Avenue Baptist Church in New York City. This was where John D. Rockefeller, Jr., had membership. Fosdick denied every fundamental doctrine of the faith, including Christ’s virgin birth and substitutionary atonement. In his 1918 book *The Manhood of the Master*, he denied that Jesus is God. In 1926, after a debate lasting almost five hours, the Northern Baptist Convention voted by a margin of about three to one *not* to evict Fosdick’s church for its modernism. In 1930, Rockefeller spent \$10 million to build the Riverside Church in Manhattan for Fosdick, and it remained one of the most liberal of churches. Pastor John Straton of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City rightly called Fosdick “a religious outlaw--the Jesse James of the theological world.”

**Martin Luther King, Jr.**, represented the liberal infiltration of black Baptist churches. “Martin Luther King, Jr., ... was educated in liberal theology at Boston University where he received a doctorate in theology” (Fitts). “King believed in God and evolution. ... King was an ecumenist, interested in inter-faith harmony” (“Process Theology and Martin Luther King, Jr.” OpenHorizons.org). King wrote, “I have been greatly influenced by liberal theology, maintaining a healthy respect for reason and a strong belief in the immanence as well as the transcendence of God” (King, *Karl Barth’s Conception of God*). “Because they are familiar only with famous sound bites, there are many people who do not know that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., an American Baptist minister, was a liberal Christian not only in his concern for

racial integration and social justice, but also theologically liberal” (James McGrath, “Martin Luther King and Liberal Theology,” patheos.com). “Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s perspectives, shaped by liberal theology and critical scholarship, led him to challenge traditional Christian beliefs like the virgin birth and resurrection” (*The AR Bernard Show*, Nov. 22, 2024).

King won Planned Parenthood’s Margaret Sanger award in 1966 for his support of abortion and population control. “Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood was an advocate of racial eugenics who supported the reduction of the black population through abortion, sterilization, and other forms of ‘birth control’” (“Martin Luther King Accepted the Margaret Sanger Award,” *Reformation Charlotte*, Jan. 20, 2020). That same year, Pastor Patrick Wooden, Sr., of the Upper Room Church of God in Christ, rebuked black pastors who support Planned Parenthood, saying, “You bishops and pastors and leaders out there, have you ever told your congregations about the number one killer of African Americans, an organization that kills more African Americans every two weeks than the [Ku Klux] Clan did in its entire history?”

**James Cheek**, president of Howard University from 1968-1989), is another prominent liberal black Baptist. He graduated from the ultra-liberal Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in 1958 and the liberal Drew University in 1962. He cussed and smoked (four packs a day until his first heart attack). He praised Malcolm X and called Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young “chords in a symphony” who were “all marching to Zion by different roads but each road was necessary and all headed for one destination” (“A Candid Conversation with James Edward Cheek,” *New Directions*, Vol. 16, Is. 3, 1989).

**Leroy Fitts**, author of *A History of Black Baptists*, which was published by Broadman Press (1985), represents the liberalism that has infiltrated black churches. He gives positive space to a discussion of critical race theory. For example, he cites Allen Ballard's *The Afro-American's Struggle for Knowledge in White America* in which Ballard "carefully traces 'evidences of racism' throughout the entire black experience in American public education" (Fitts, p. 162). Fitts complains that "white Americans were generally not appreciative of the African education or culture," claiming that Africa was not a "Dark Continent" but only dark "so-called," and that the blacks from there were not ignorant. But what blacks brought from Africa was ignorance and spiritual darkness. Gustavas Vassa, a slave who wrote a narrative of his experiences, described their beliefs: "As to religion, the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things, and that he lives in the sun, and is girted round with a belt; that he may never eat or drink, but, according to some, he smokes a pipe, which is our own favorite luxury" (Abraham Chapman, ed., *Steal Away: Stories of the Runaway Slaves*). Fitts repeats the liberal heresy that there was an "oral period" in early Christian history before the writing of the gospels (p. 163). It is impossible for a true Bible believer to say that what the black slaves brought from Africa was not darkness and ignorance. That's not a racial observation, it is the truth.

**Jesse Jackson** (1941-2026) was an ordained Baptist minister, but he was disqualified by his covetousness and lack of financial ethics, his adultery and the fathering of a child out of wedlock, and the preaching of a false gospel of social change and universalism. Speaking at the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, Jackson said, "I want us to bow our heads in prayer. It does not really matter who your God is, whether you call him Allah, Buddha, Jehovah, Elohiym, or Yahway" (*Summer of Soul*, video documentary).

In the North, particularly, there was a plethora of “flamboyant messiahs, cultists, and shysters,” such as the following:

- **Father Divine** (George Baker) (1876-1965); founded the International Peace Mission; preached racial superiority; claimed to be God; had a fleet of expensive, chauffeured automobiles; lived in a 32-room mansion; purchased the tallest apartment building in New York City (“Not of Heaven,” *Afropean*, Mar. 28, 2024).

- **Daddy Grace** (Marcelino Manuel da Graca) (1881-1960); founded the United House of Prayer for All People; engaged in a multiplicity of financial enterprises (e.g., Daddy Grace Soap, Daddy Grace Toothpaste, Daddy Grace Cookies); called the Black Christ; dressed like an oriental king; owned fleets of expensive cars and extravagant mansions, including an 85-room palace; traveled with armed body guards (“Not of Heaven,” *Afropean*, Mar. 28, 2024)

- **Prophet Jones** (Francis Marion Jones) (1907-1971); founded the Church of the Universal Triumph, Dominion of God; ruled by his own 50 decrees; traveled with a portable throne and body guards; lived in a 54-room mansion stuffed with his wealth (e.g., 400 suits, a full-length white mink coat, fine jewelry); arrested for homosexuality.

- **Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux** (1885-1968); founded East Coast Church of God and the Gospel Spreading Tabernacle Association; built the National Memorial to the Progress of the Colored Race in America, an 1100-acre farm on the in James City County, Virginia; Known as the “Happy Am I” preacher, his message was heavy on the power of positive thinking; his radio audience was estimated to be as much as 25 million; pioneered black television programming; built the 594-unit Mayfair Mansions in Washington, D.C. (*Wikipedia*).

- **Frank Cherry** (1875-1963); claimed a vision that African Americans are descendants of the ancient Hebrews; founded Black Hebrew congregations known as the Church of the

Living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth for All Nations; claimed that white people are evil and hated by God; espoused antisemitism; claimed the earth is square; prophesied that Jesus would return in 2000 to begin a race war (*Wikipedia*). He was succeeded by his son Prince Benjamin Cherry.

- **Mother Rosa Horn** (1880-1776); ordained in 1913 by the Pentecostal preacher and healing evangelist Maria Woodworth Etter; reported healings and resurrections; together with a biological daughter Jessie and an adopted daughter Gladys, Horn founded Pentecostal faith healing churches in Harlem, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and the Bahamas (“Curious Life of Mother Rosa Horn,” Patheos.com).

- **Reverend Ike** (Frederick Eikerenkoetter II) (1935-2009) was a popular prosperity gospel preacher based in New York City. With his slogan “You Can’t Lose with the Stuff I Use,” he promised prosperity to those who supported his ministry. His weekly radio sermons from the seven-story Palace Cathedral, a restored movie palace, were broadcast on hundreds of stations. Promoting the power of positive thinking and positive imagining, he taught his followers to “close your eyes and see green; money up to your armpits, a roomful of money and there you are, just tossing around in it like a swimming pool.” He founded the Science of Living Institute and the Business of Living Institute (Thinkonomics).

### **The Urban Black Church as a Community Center and Business Empire**

“Under J. Milton Waldron and later under Dr. J.E. Ford, the Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, made itself, through its clubs and Bible Institute, an effective community center. Dr. H.H. Proctor, a Congregational minister of Atlanta, practically converted his church into an organization of such groups as the day nursery, kindergarten, gymnasium, school of music, employment bureau, and Bible school. Dr. W. N. DeBerry, the pastor of a Congregational church in Springfield, Massachusetts, has probably solved the problem

about as well as any of these workers. In the first place, the church has a well-equipped modern plant so beautifully located and managed as to attract large numbers. It has, moreover, a parish home for working girls and a branch church at Amherst, Massachusetts. In the main plant are maintained a free employment bureau, a women's welfare league, a night school of domestic training, a girls' and a boys' club emphasizing the handicrafts, music, and athletics. This church has solved the problem of supplying the needs of the people during the week as well as their spiritual needs on Sunday, by emphasizing some life activity for every day of the week. ... In the Negro churches, moreover, as with Dr. J.C. Austin in Pittsburgh, there are being organized banks, housing corporations, insurance companies, and even steamship projects in keeping with the ideas of Dr. I.G. Jordan" (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

# Blacks in America after the Civil War

## The Reconstruction Era (1865-1877)

The federal government under a Republican majority set out to liberate and empower blacks with the same civil rights enjoyed by others.

At the end of the war, Republicans in Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery (the Senate in April 1864 and the House in January 1865). It passed with the support of 100% of Republicans and 23% of Democrats. This shows that a large number of white people in America cared for the rights of black people and wanted to help them. A great many whites gave their lives for this cause, both before, during, and after the Civil War.

In 1866, Republicans in Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment granting citizenship to former slaves and equal protection under the law. 94% of Republicans voted for the amendment and 100% of Democrats voted against it. When it was submitted to the states for ratification, it was rejected by the southern Democrat governments. “These new governments accepted the emancipation of the Negro but accorded him only varying degrees of limited citizenship, always excluding the ballot” (David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*). The amendment was finally ratified in 1868.

Under President Ulysses Grant (1868-1876), Republicans, backed by federal troops, sought to “Reconstruct” the South by enforcing federal laws granting liberties to blacks.

“To entrench the Civil Rights Act’s statutory equalization of citizenship in the nation’s basic law, Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1866, then submitted it to the states for ratification. Republicans campaigned on this program in the 1866 midterm elections. **Voters rewarded them**

**with veto-proof majorities in both houses of Congress.** [Again, it is obvious that a majority of whites outside of the South were sympathetic to black civil rights.] In 1867, Congress passed three Reconstruction Acts ... The laws grouped ten of the eleven formerly seceded Southern states into five military districts, with each district governed by an Army general and patrolled by several thousand troops. (Tennessee had already returned to the Union through a separate process.) The ten states would be excluded from congressional representation pending the rewriting of their constitutions by state conventions. The conventions, in turn, would be elected by black and white male voters, except for former Confederate leaders, who would be ineligible based on their past role in the rebellion. Then voters would go to the polls again in April 1868, to ratify the constitutions in statewide elections. Only after its voters ratified a new constitution, and its legislature ratified the Fourteenth Amendment, could any of these ten former Confederate states be restored to the Union and send representatives to Congress. By early 1868, it seemed Congress might indeed accomplish what had come to be called 'radical' Reconstruction. Originally an exclusively Northern antislavery movement, the Republican Party would achieve national viability, based on black votes in the Southern states. That, in turn, would help sustain the great legislative achievements of the postwar Republican Congresses--equal rights, regardless of race or caste, for every man in every state. What had been an agglomeration of fractious states would at last be a true nation-state, steered by a federal government responsible for security and the economy, and, above all rededicated to the Declaration of Independence's self-evident truth, 'that all men are created equal'" (Charles Lane, *Freedom's Detective: The Secret Service, the Ku Klux Klan and the Man Who Masterminded America's First War on Terror*, p. 19).

Republicans gained majorities in the new southern state governments. They were called “Radicals” by the Democrats. Nearly 800 black men served in the legislatures. In Georgia, a Republican congress and governor were elected in 1868, with the 188,000 votes evenly divided between whites and blacks (Lane, *Freedom’s Detective*, p. 30), thus demonstrating that large numbers of whites even in the South supported equal rights for blacks.

In 1869, Republicans in Congress passed the 15th Amendment granting the right to vote to all men regardless of race. 100% of Republicans voted for it and 100% of Democrats voted against it. It was ratified by the states in 1870 under Republican majorities.

In 1872, the first seven black members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives were seated. All were Republicans. Between then and 1900, nearly 40 blacks would serve in the U.S. Congress, all Republicans.

Republican-controlled Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited discrimination in public accommodations, including inns, theaters, public conveyances on land or water, and other places of public amusement. The act was approved by 100% of Republicans and opposed by 100% of Democrats.

### **Education of Blacks after the Civil War**

After the Civil War and the liberation of the blacks from slavery, there was a massive movement to educate them and to otherwise lift them out of their desolate condition, and there was a phenomenal eagerness on the part of the liberated slaves to obtain education.

Literacy among Southern blacks increased from 5% in 1870 to 70% by 1900.

By December 1865, the Freeman’s Commission had “organized more than seven hundred schools, with twelve

hundred teachers to serve seventy thousand pupils” (Mayer, *All on Fire*, p. 594).

It was an unprecedented event in history. Booker T. Washington, who was in the midst of the phenomenon both as a learner and as a teacher, described it as follows:

“This experience of a whole race beginning to go to school for the first time, presents one of the most interesting studies that has ever occurred in connection with the development of any race. Few people who were not right in the midst of the scenes can form any exact idea of the intense desire which the people of my race showed for an education. As I have stated, **it was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn.** As fast as any kind of teachers could be secured, not only were day-schools filled, but night-schools as well. **The great ambition of the older people was to try to learn to read the Bible before they died.** With this end in view, men and women who were fifty or seventy-five years old would often be found in the night-school. Sunday-schools were formed soon after freedom, but the principal book studied in the Sunday-school was the spelling-book. Day-school, night-school, Sunday-school, were always crowded, and often many had to be turned away for want of room” (Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 1901).

Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) was a slave who was liberated at age eight by Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation during the U.S. Civil War. The illiterate boy pursued an education and became a prominent educator, businessman, author, and orator. He promoted the uplifting of his people through education, moral integrity, and skilled labor. He was the first head of the Tuskegee Institute (today the Tuskegee University) where he befriended George Washington Carver.

Booker T. Washington was a Christian. He began and ended each day in prayer and read the Bible to his family every morning. “As a man of deep personal faith in God, he would never speak publicly unless he had first sought ‘*the blessing of God upon what [he] was about to say*’” (“Christians You Should Know: Booker T. Washington,” [EnjoyingtheJourney.org](http://EnjoyingtheJourney.org)). “Throughout his life, Washington insisted that religion should be woven into everyday life, and that education without moral and spiritual cultivation was incomplete. At Tuskegee Institute, the school he founded, this conviction was reflected in a vibrant religious life: weekly preaching services, Sunday classes, prayer meetings, Christian Endeavor activities, and student involvement in the YMCA testified that the institute was not merely secular in purpose, but ‘thoroughly Christian.’ He declared that if nothing else had convinced him of Christianity’s worth, the Christlike work carried out by churches of all denominations for the uplift of Black Americans over decades would have made him a Christian. His perspective was shaped not by bitterness over injustice but by a heartfelt commitment to a faith that calls believers to patience, integrity, sacrifice, and love of neighbor” (“Booker T. Washington: A Spiritual Journey Rooted in Christ,” [DewayneDunaway.com](http://DewayneDunaway.com)).

Washington’s own experience illustrates the passion that liberated blacks had for education. He learned to read by grabbing a little education here and there in the midst of hard labor (household servant, salt furnaces, coal mines), attending night classes, reading whatever he could put his hands on. Finally, at age 16, he determined to attend the Hamilton Institute in Virginia.

“By walking, begging rides both in wagons and in the cars, in some way, after a number of days, I reached the city of Richmond, Virginia, about eighty-two miles from Hampton. When I reached there, tired, hungry, and

dirty, it was late in the night. I had never been in a large city, and this rather added to my misery. When I reached Richmond, I was completely out of money. I had not a single acquaintance in the place, and, being unused to city ways, I did not know where to go. I applied at several places for lodging, but they all wanted money, and that was what I did not have. Knowing nothing else better to do, I walked the streets. In doing this I passed by many food-stands where fried chicken and half-moon apple pies were piled high and made to present a most tempting appearance. At that time it seemed to me that I would have promised all that I expected to possess in the future to have gotten hold of one of those chicken legs or one of those pies. But I could not get either of these, nor anything else to eat. I must have walked the streets till after midnight. At last I became so exhausted that I could walk no longer. I was tired, I was hungry, I was everything but discouraged. Just about the time when I reached extreme physical exhaustion, I came upon a portion of a street where the board sidewalk was considerably elevated. I waited for a few minutes, till I was sure that no passers-by could see me, and then crept under the sidewalk and lay for the night upon the ground, with my satchel of clothing for a pillow. Nearly all night I could hear the tramp of feet over my head. The next morning I found myself somewhat refreshed, but I was extremely hungry, because it had been a long time since I had had sufficient food. As soon as it became light enough for me to see my surroundings I noticed that I was near a large ship, and that this ship seemed to be unloading a cargo of pig iron. I went at once to the vessel and asked the captain to permit me to help unload the vessel in order to get money for food. The captain, a white man, who seemed to be kind-hearted, consented. I worked long enough to earn money for my breakfast, and it seems to me, as I remember it now, to have been about the best breakfast

that I have ever eaten. My work pleased the captain so well that he told me if I desired I could continue working for a small amount per day. This I was very glad to do. I continued working on this vessel for a number of days. After buying food with the small wages I received there was not much left to add to the amount I must get to pay my way to Hampton. In order to economize in every way possible, so as to be sure to reach Hampton in a reasonable time, I continued to sleep under the same sidewalk that gave me shelter the first night I was in Richmond. Many years after that the coloured citizens of Richmond very kindly tendered me a reception at which there must have been two thousand people present. This reception was held not far from the spot where I slept the first night I spent in that city, and I must confess that my mind was more upon the sidewalk that first gave me shelter than upon the reception, agreeable and cordial as it was. When I had saved what I considered enough money with which to reach Hampton, I thanked the captain of the vessel for his kindness, and started again. Without any unusual occurrence I reached Hampton, with a surplus of exactly fifty cents with which to begin my education. ...

“As soon as possible after reaching the grounds of the Hampton Institute, I presented myself before the head teacher for assignment to a class. Having been so long without proper food, a bath, and change of clothing, I did not, of course, make a very favourable impression upon her, and I could see at once that there were doubts in her mind about the wisdom of admitting me as a student. I felt that I could hardly blame her if she got the idea that I was a worthless loafer or tramp. For some time she did not refuse to admit me, neither did she decide in my favour, and I continued to linger about her, and to impress her in all the ways I could with my worthiness. In the meantime I saw her admitting other students, and that added greatly to my discomfort, for I

felt, deep down in my heart, that I could do as well as they, if I could only get a chance to show what was in me. After some hours had passed, the head teacher said to me: 'The adjoining recitation-room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it.' It occurred to me at once that here was my chance. Never did I receive an order with more delight. I knew that I could sweep, for Mrs. Ruffner had thoroughly taught me how to do that when I lived with her. I swept the recitation-room three times. Then I got a dusting-cloth and I dusted it four times. All the woodwork around the walls, every bench, table, and desk, I went over four times with my dusting-cloth. Besides, every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned. I had the feeling that in a large measure my future depended upon the impression I made upon the teacher in the cleaning of that room. When I was through, I reported to the head teacher. She was a 'Yankee; woman who knew just where to look for dirt. She went into the room and inspected the floor and closets; then she took her handkerchief and rubbed it on the woodwork about the walls, and over the table and benches. When she was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor, or a particle of dust on any of the furniture, she quietly remarked, 'I guess you will do to enter this institution'" (Washington *Up from Slavery*).

The Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, was one of the first educational institutions established for black freedmen after the Civil War. It was founded in 1868 by the American Missionary Association, a biracial association composed largely of Congregational and Presbyterian ministers. The first AMA missionary teacher was Mary Peake, who had been teaching slaves in Virginia clandestinely since the 1850s in spite of the state's prohibition. Hampton was the location of the Grand Contraband Camp which was built under the protection of the Union Army as a refuge for slaves

who escaped their masters. The Union army refused to return them, defining them as “contraband of war.” In 1863, all slaves in the South were liberated by President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. It was read under an oak tree in Hampton which was called the Emancipation Oak. The school’s first leader was Samuel C. Armstrong (1839-1893), a former Union General. He was born in the Sandwich Islands (which later became the U.S. state of Hawaii) to missionaries Richard and Clarissa Armstrong. Richard established schools for the native Polynesians that emphasized learning a trade in addition to basic education. Hampton Institute focused on producing teachers and skilled laborers. All students were required to work in the school’s farms and trade shops for two days per week. “At Hampton I not only learned that it was not a disgrace to labour, but learned to love labour, not alone for its financial value, but for labour’s own sake and for the independence and self-reliance which the ability to do something which the world wants done brings” (Booker T. Washington). There was a heavy emphasis on Christian morality and personal discipline (honesty, chastity, orderliness, neatness, cleanliness, punctuality, time management). All of the students had classes in the Bible. Booker T. Washington said, “Perhaps the most valuable thing that I got out of my second year was an understanding of the Bible. ... Before this I had never cared a great deal about it, but now I learned to love to read the Bible, not only for the spiritual help which it gives, but on account of it as literature.” Hampton had the first program for educating black librarians. Most of the graduates became teachers. In 1888, an estimated 15,000 children were being taught by Hampton’s alumni (Robert Lamb, *Our Twin Cities of the Nineteenth Century: Norfolk and Portsmouth*).

Hampton Institute under Armstrong promoted racial harmony and brotherly love. “In all my acquaintance with

General Armstrong I never heard him speak, in public or in private, a single bitter word against the white man in the South. From his example in this respect I learned the lesson that great men cultivate love, and that only little men cherish a spirit of hatred. ... It is now long ago that I learned this lesson from General Armstrong, and resolved that I would permit no man, no matter what his colour might be, to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him. With God's help, I believe that I have completely rid myself of any ill feeling toward the Southern white man for any wrong that he may have inflicted upon my race. I am made to feel just as happy now when I am rendering service to Southern white men as when the service is rendered to a member of my own race. I pity from the bottom of my heart any individual who is so unfortunate as to get into the habit of holding race prejudice" (*Up from Slavery*).

Hundreds of men and women, black and white, devoted their lives to educating the liberated blacks and otherwise uplifting their status in society. Many who moved to the South to assist them were killed for their efforts by Democrat white supremacist vigilantes.

There were dozens of schools founded for blacks by Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and others.

Baptist schools included Shaw University at Raleigh (1865); Roger Williams at Nashville (1867); Morehouse at Atlanta (1867); Leland at New Orleans (1871); Benedict at Columbia (1871); Virginia Theological Seminary and College at Lynchburg; William J. Simmons University of Louisville; Arkansas Baptist College; the National Training School for Girls at Washington, D.C.; and Storer College at Harpers Ferry (1867).

Methodist schools included Walden at Nashville (1865); Rust at Holly Springs (1866); Morgan at Baltimore (1867);

Haven Academy at Waynesboro (1868); Claflin at Orangeburg (1869); Clark at Atlanta (1870); Western University in Kansas; Allen University at Columbia (1881); Morris Brown at Atlanta (1885); Livingstone College (1879); and Lane College at Jackson, Tennessee (1882).

Presbyterian schools included Biddle at Charlotte (1867).

Congregationalist schools included Avery Institute at Charleston; Ballard Normal School at Macon (1865); Washburn at Beaufort, NC (1865); Trinity at Athens, Alabama (1866); Gregory at Wilmington, ND (1866); Fisk at Nashville (1866), Talladega in Alabama (1867), Emerson at Mobile (1867), Storrs at Atlanta ((1867); Beach at Savannah (1867); Knox at Athens (1868); Burwell at Selma (1968); Ely Normal in Louisville (1868); Straight University at New Orleans (1869); Tougaloo in Mississippi (1869); La Moyné at Memphis (1869); Lincoln at Marion, Alabama (1869); Dorchester Academy at McIntosh (1870); and Albany Normal in Georgia (1870).

There were many Freedmen Aid Societies, such as the National Freedmen Relief Association of New York (14 teachers); the Philadelphia Society (60 teachers); and the Northwestern Freeman's Aid Commission (50 teachers). Millions of dollars in aid was contributed by the Freedmen societies, geared primarily toward education. Funding came from whites and blacks, individuals, businesses, societies, and the government.

A large part of the education included religious instruction. "While education was necessary for the Negroes as for all other persons, the chief need of the Negro, as most of these workers observed it, was religion. Acting upon this idea, therefore, almost every Negro school provided in some way for religious instruction. If the course of study were not sufficiently broad to base thereupon a more advanced course, there was usually provided some instruction in the English

Bible. In case the course of study became so pretentious as to style itself a college curriculum, there was usually added the regular course in theology” (Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*).

The schools sought to impart a love for learning. “While they did not always hold the students long enough to impart all that a college graduate or a professional man should know, they so inspired the youth with the love of study that the habit once formed led them into fields of research and endeavor which men much better trained often failed to reach” (Woodson).

*Baptist Missionary Pioneers among Negroes*, published in about 1922, contains biographical sketches of 21 men and women who founded 12 Baptist educational institutions for blacks. Their sacrifice was great.

Consider Spelman College of Atlanta, Georgia, which was founded by Harriett Giles and Sophia Packard of Boston. On a visit to the South in 1880, Miss Packard saw the need for the education of black women, but when she submitted the plan to the American Baptist Home Mission Society, it was disapproved for lack of funds. Packard and her friend Miss Giles were invited to present their plan to the church of Pastor J.P. Abbott of Medford, Massachusetts. The church gave them \$100, and they moved to Atlanta by faith. There they met Pastor Quarles of Friendship Baptist Church who told them that he had been praying for 15 years for God to send teachers to start a school in his city. He gave them use of the church basement, and the school opened on April 11, 1881, with a staff of two white women and 11 black women and no equipment except Bibles, notebooks, and pencils. The basement was dark and damp. “There were no desks, the seats being plank benches. The floor was loose and the smoke so dense it was difficult to distinguish teachers from pupils.” That winter, Pastor Quarles traveled to New York and Boston

in an attempt to secure funds for the school, but he died on the journey. The second year, there were 75 students, but the financial situation was bleak. By the summer of 1883, the two women knew that if help did not come they would have to close the school. They prepared to travel to Boston. The night before, Miss Packard walked the floor all night pleading with God to make his will known. "In the morning a letter came from Rev. Mr. King, Pastor of the Wilson Avenue Church, Cleveland, Ohio, a former pupil of theirs in Suffield Academy, asking them to go to Boston via Cleveland, Ohio, and present the needs of their work in his church. Mr. John D. Rockefeller was in the audience and heard their plea for the school. He emptied his purse into the plate as it was passed, and after the meeting asked this question: 'Are you going to stick? If so, I will help you.'" The women set out to raise \$15,000 for nine acres of land with five wooden buildings, which they raised in one summer. "Men and women of means gave freely, but the poor seamstresses and washerwomen sacrificed needful supplies so that Negro girls could have a school." Rockefeller funded four new buildings. Miss Packard died in June 1891 and Miss Giles in November 1909. By 1921, there were more than 50 teachers and 800 pupils. The school owned 20 acres of land and property worth half a million dollars. "Many graduates are teaching, and others are nursing; some have gone to Africa as missionaries, others are in many lines of social service, and many have made happy Christian homes which testify to the value of Christian teaching in Spelman Seminary."

Another example is Henry Martin Tupper, founder of Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was born and raised in Massachusetts and had a zeal for learning from his youth, reading everything he could find. He was saved at age 18 and walked 20 miles to the nearest Baptist church to be baptized. He graduated from Amherst College and Newton

Theological Seminary and fought in the Civil War on the side of the Union, engaging in the famous battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg. While in seminary, he had taught a large Sunday School class of young black men and had considered being a missionary to Africa. After the war, he was asked by the American Baptist Home Mission Society to go South as a missionary to the freedman, and he chose Raleigh as his place of service. In October 1865, he and his wife arrived in North Carolina. There was a lot of bitterness toward the North and the condition of the black freedmen was pitiable. "Many were literally homeless. He secured food and clothing for them from the Freedman's Bureau, and at one time he had 175 people over 75 years old whom he assisted daily in obtaining rations." He organized a Baptist church in 1866 and purchased land for a church house from the money he had saved as a soldier. He opened a school in 1868 and was the only teacher for some time. "He began his recitations at seven a.m., and taught until five p.m., with one hour of intermission. He also taught the evening school." The students were poor, and some funds were obtained from the Freedman's Aid and the Peabody Fund. In 1870, he began receiving black females into the school. "He soon found that in order to elevate the race, Christian young women must be educated, if the wives and mothers were to make the right kinds of homes." There were many difficulties during the first ten years. "[O]ften the hostility and opposition of the white people led to many fines, litigations and persecutions." Tupper's custom when money was needed was first to have seasons of special and united prayer. "Often the money needed was received at the precise time of the services." In 1881, a property was purchased with \$13,000 that Tupper raised in a six-week trip to the North. He and the students manufactured their own bricks to build the first buildings and to sell for the needs of the school. In 1880, a medical school was founded with the pledge of the first \$5,000 by a brother of

Mrs. Tupper. The pledge was made on the condition that an equal sum could be raised, and Tupper raised the second \$5,000 in less than three weeks on a trip North. The legislature of North Carolina granted a gift of land for the school. One of the graduates of Shaw, C.S. Brown, founded the Waters Institute at Winton, North Carolina. When he first visited Winton, he returned with a discouraging report. "The colored people were ignorant and irreligious; the white people were not in favor of Negro education, and the location was undesirable." Tupper gave Brown \$10 and said, "I want you to go to Winton and start a school with this money." And he did by God's grace. He had learned faith, hard work, and persistence from his mentor. Tupper died in November 1892 after saying, "All is happy with me. I have passed the final examinations." Graduates of Shaw built Christian homes, established churches, taught in schools, and were missionaries in Africa, South and Central America, and the West Indies.

In the face of much hardship, these schools had great success in raising the educational and cultural and moral standard of the black freedmen. H.L. Moorehouse, corresponding secretary of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society, testified, "I am prepared to say that the investment made in the Negro race has paid a hundredfold" (*Baptist Missionary Pioneers among Negroes*, p. 69).

The American Missionary Association was founded in 1868 and eventually had more than 500 missionaries and teachers working among the blacks.

Sunday schools were formed across the south for the training of black children.

The American Bible Society and the American Tract Society distributed millions of copies of Bibles and religious materials among freed blacks.

Blacks made great progress in the decades after the Civil War, in spite of starting out from the depraved condition created by 200 years of slavery and in spite of the southern Democrats' ferocious attempt to put keep them in bondage. The following is from Congressman George H. White's farewell speech of 1901:

“Since that time we have reduced the illiteracy of the race at least 45 percent. We have written and published nearly 500 books. We have nearly 800 newspapers, three of which are dailies. We have now in practice over 2,000 lawyers, and a corresponding number of doctors. We have accumulated over \$12,000,000 worth of school property and about \$40,000,000 worth of church property. We have about 140,000 farms and homes, valued in the neighborhood of \$750,000,000, and personal property valued about \$170,000,000. We have raised about \$11,000,000 for educational purposes, and the property per-capita for every colored man, woman and child in the United States is estimated at \$75. We are operating successfully several banks, commercial enterprises among our people in the South land, including one silk mill and one cotton factory. We have 32,000 teachers in the schools of the country; we have built, with the aid of our friends, about 20,000 churches, and support 7 colleges, 17 academies, 50 high schools, 5 law schools, 5 medical schools and 25 theological seminaries. We have over 600,000 acres of land in the South alone. The cotton produced, mainly by black labor, has increased from 4,669,770 bales in 1860 to 11,235,000 in 1899. All this was done under the most adverse circumstances. We have done it in the face of lynching, burning at the stake, with the humiliation of ‘Jim Crow’ laws, the disfranchisement of our male citizens, slander and degradation of our women, with the factories closed against us, no Negro permitted to be conductor on the railway cars...no Negro permitted to

run as engineer on a locomotive, most of the mines closed against us. Labor unions--carpenters, painters, brick masons, machinists, hackmen and those supplying nearly every conceivable avocation for livelihood--have banded themselves together to better their condition, but, with few exceptions, the black face has been left out. The Negroes are seldom employed in our mercantile stores. ... With all these odds against us, we are forging our way ahead, slowly, perhaps, but surely."

White concluded that speech with the plea that his people simply be given the same opportunity as other Americans.

"Mr. Chairman, before concluding my remarks I want to submit a brief recipe for the solution of the so-called 'American Negro problem.' He asks no special favors, but simply demands that he be given the same chance for existence, for earning a livelihood, for raising himself in the scales of manhood and womanhood, that are accorded to kindred nationalities. Treat him as a man; open the doors of industry to him. Help him to overcome his weaknesses, punish the crime-committing class by the courts of the land, measure the standard of the race by its best material, cease to mold prejudicial and unjust public sentiment against him, and he will learn to support and join in with that political party, that institution, whether secular or religious, in every community where he lives, which is destined to do the greatest good for the greatest number. Obliterate race hatred, party prejudice, and help us to achieve nobler ends, greater results and become satisfactory citizens to our brother in white."

In 1925, James East, corresponding secretary of the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., reported as follows on the advancement of blacks:

"The world has watched carefully the progress of the American Negro: the wonderful strides he has made in

civilization, the rapid way he has reduced his illiteracy since the Civil War, the thousands and thousands of professional men, lawyers, doctors, teachers, and business men that have developed within the last half century, the vast amount of real estate and wealth he has acquired, the number of wonderful institutions he has built; and this progress of the black man has made the white world tremble as they question themselves, ‘What will happen if all of Africa awakens as the black man of America awakened?’” (Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, pp. 119, 120).

Fitts, a former missionary to Africa, warned that the European nations that controlled Africa had taken steps to keep American black missionaries out.

“We are now at the point where with the exception of Liberia, a Negro Republic, with about 360 miles of coastline, all of the dark continent is practically closed to Negro missionaries who go out under independent Negro churches such as the Baptist, A.M.E., and A.M.E.Z.” (Ibid.).

### **The Dismantling of Reconstruction**

Southern Democrats hated reconstruction. From their standpoint, the federal government had destroyed states’ rights. (They were partly correct in that. The Civil War and its aftermath marked a major increase in the power of the federal government.) Southern whites who supported black civil rights and reconstruction were derided as *scalawags* (also *scallawag* or *scallywag*). *Scalawag* originally referred to worthless farm animals. Democrats defined a scalawag as “a native Southern white man, who says that a negro is as good as he is, and tells the truth when he says so.”

“A world in which the traditional white leadership was dispossessed and the freedman walked abroad, insolently and

without restraint, was to many Southern eyes a perilously criminal disorder” (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*).

Democrat Ryland Randolph, editor of the *Independent Monitor* of Alabama, wrote of the “galling despotism that broods like a nightmare over these southern states ... a persistent prostitution of all government, all resources, and all powers, to degrade the white man by the establishment of Negro supremacy.”

Democrats formed terrorist organizations to destroy reconstruction.

### **The Original Ku Klux Klan**

**The Ku Klux Klan** (KKK) was formed in 1865, but it didn't prosper until 1867 when it came under the leadership of Nathan Bedford Forrest, former Confederate cavalry commander. “In April of 1867, representatives met in Nashville, at the Maxwell House, and turned out a flavor more to their liking. With much talk of unity of purpose, concert of action, proper limits, and authority to the prudent, a Constitution or prescript was drawn up. ... Nathan Bedford Forrest, lately of the armies of the Confederacy was elected Grand Wizard, and his Empire divided into realms, dominions, provinces, and dens, headed by Grand Dragons, Titans, Giants, and Cyclopes, and composed of Ghouls” (David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*).

Forrest's life reads like a novel. He had a Christian mother and married a Christian woman named Mary Ann Montgomery (who was advised against it by her uncle, a pastor), but he was anything but a Christian himself. He made a fortune before the war of an estimated \$1.5 million, a vast sum in those days, but he made it as a gambler, a slave owner and slave trader, and other wicked pursuits. He killed his first man at age 24 when his uncle was attacked by four

brothers named Matlock who were seeking payment for a debt. He shot two of them with a gun and stabbed two with a knife, and only one survived. Forrest was the only man in the Civil War to rise from private to general, and this was because of his genius as a calvary commander. He was called the *Wizard of the Saddle*. He killed 31 men during the war in hand-to-hand combat and had 30 horses shot out from under him. Once he fought four men at once and managed to escape. Union General William Tecumseh Sherman called him “that devil Forrest” and called for his death “even if it takes 10,000 men and bankrupts the Federal treasury.” His battlefield tactics have been studied ever since.

In 1868, Forrest was a delegate to the Democratic Convention in New York City. Horatio Seymour was nominated as the Democratic presidential candidate, and Frank Blair, Jr., a friend of Forrest, was nominated vice presidential candidate. Their campaign slogan was, “Our Ticket, Our Motto, This Is a White Man’s Country; Let White Men Rule.” The Democratic Party called for termination of the Freedman’s Bureau and “any government policy designed to aid blacks in the South” (Charles Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant*).

**“Their goal would be to disrupt radical Reconstruction through intimidation of Republican voters and politicians, starting with the 1868 elections.** The new Klan leaders formalized the hierarchy of the ‘Invisible Empire,’ as it would come to be known, with a ‘Grand Wizard,’ Forrest, at the top, commanding rank-and-file ‘ghouls’ initiated in secret grips, passwords, and rituals. [Forrest was a] slave trader before the Civil War, and a commander of forces notorious for massacring surrendered black Union soldiers during the conflict ... New Klansmen swore to support ‘a white man’s government,’ and to maintain absolute secrecy about Klan

activities, upon pain of death” (Lane, *Freedom’s Detective*, p. 23).

“Whenever the Klan was getting organized in a state the inevitable Tennessee Klansman, usually General Forrest himself, coincidentally appears to take care of some railroad or insurance business. ... and state Grand Dragons were usually ex-Confederate generals such as George W. Gordon in Tennessee and John B. Gordon in Georgia. However, despite the Nashville Convention and attempts at cooperation and co-ordination, the Ku Klux Klan remained an anarchic, localist organization, whose membership, discipline, and method varied from state to state and locality to locality” (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*).

It is heartwarming to report that Forrest left the KKK in 1869 and tried unsuccessfully to disband it. Six years later, he was converted under the preaching of his wife’s pastor, George Stainback, of Court Avenue Presbyterian Church in Memphis, Tennessee. In the fall of 1875, he came under conviction by Christ’s words of Matthew 7:24-27. He told the pastor, “Sir, your sermon has removed the last prop from under me. I am the fool that built on the sand; I am a poor miserable sinner.” Stainback told him to go home and read the account of David’s repentance in Psalm 51. He wanted Forrest to come to true repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). The next evening, Forrest did repent and put his trust in Christ as his Lord and Saviour during a visit by the pastor. The prayers of his Christian mother and wife were finally answered. The fearsome KKK Grand Wizard was a changed man.

Forrest’s final speech, in 1875, was to the Pole-Bearers Association, an organization of blacks devoted to equal rights for all citizens. He called for the advancement of the black race and peace and harmony between black and white Americans. **He said, “I came to meet you as friends, and**

welcome you to the white people. I want you to come nearer to us. When I can serve you I will do so. We have but one flag, one country; let us stand together. We may differ in color, but not in sentiment. ... Go to work, be industrious, live honestly and act truly, and when you are oppressed I'll come to your relief. I thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for this opportunity you have afforded me to be with you, and to assure you that I am with you in heart and in hand” (Shane Kastler, *When the Devil Got Saved: The Christian Conversion of Nathan Bedford Forrest*). When offered a bouquet of flowers by a young black girl named Lou Lewis as a sign of reconciliation between the races, he accepted them and kissed her on the cheek. He died two years later of diabetes. On his deathbed he testified that there was “not a cloud that separated him from his beloved Heavenly Father.”

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only thing that has the power to reconcile man with God and to change men’s hearts so that they are reconciled with their fellow man. Politics, philosophy, religion, reformation, economics, none of it has this power, and God’s people need to keep their hands to the plow to preach the gospel and build life-changing New Testament churches instead of being sidetracked by worldly pursuits.

Returning to the subject of the KKK, “the Ku Klux Klan-- numbering tens of thousands of sworn members across the southeastern United States, and enjoying the informal support of many times that number in the white population-- **constituted the Democratic party’s terrorist wing**” (Lane, *Freedom’s Detective*, p. 134).

Large numbers of white pastors supported the KKK or at least refused to speak against it. In 1922, at the New England Baptist Convention, L.B. Brooks said,

“[W]e find thousands of white preachers who hold the pulpits of the churches where lynchers are members, there men and women sit in the pews each Lord’s Day who are members of State Legislature, where corrupt laws have been enacted, lawyers, judges of the courts, and jurors who are vile and unjust to men because of their color or race; and are too cowardly to raise their voices against these criminals in high places” (Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 255).

During the election campaign of 1868, there were 336 murders or attempted murders of blacks in Georgia alone to suppress Republican voting (Jonathan Bryant, “Ku Klux Klan in the Reconstruction Era,” [georgiaencyclopedia.org](http://georgiaencyclopedia.org)).

Hundreds more were killed that year in Louisiana (not only by the KKK, but also by other white terrorist groups such as the Knights of the White Camellia). In one rampage that occurred in September in the town of Opelousas in the St. Landry parish, more than 200 blacks were killed. The violence began with the vicious beating of 18-year-old Emerson Bentley, a white school teacher from Ohio who also worked at the Republican paper *The St. Landry Progress*. Beaten in front of his young students by three Democrats, including James Dickson who later became a judge, Bentley escaped with his life, but that episode began an open season on black Republicans.

“The bloodshed continued for two weeks, with African-American families killed in their homes, shot in public, and chased down by vigilante groups. C.E. Durand, the other editor of the *St. Landry Progress*, was murdered in the early days of the massacre and his body displayed outside the Opelousas drug store. By the end of the two weeks, estimates of the number killed were around 250 people, the vast majority of them African-American. ... The groups managed to achieve their ultimate purpose, as was borne out by the results of the November

presidential elections. Even though Republican nominee Ulysses Grant won, not a single Republican vote was counted in St. Landry Parish. Those who oversaw the election felt ‘fully convinced that no man on that day could have voted any other than the democratic ticket and not been killed inside of 24 hours thereafter’ (“The Deadliest Massacre in Reconstruction-Era Louisiana,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, Sept. 28, 2018).

All of the Republican presses in the parish were destroyed, and it was nearly a decade before there was another Republican newspaper in St. Landry Parish.

Of the 4,750 lynchings that took place between 1882 and 1968, 1,307 were whites who were killed for their support of blacks (William Banks, *A History of Black Baptists in the United States*, p. 77).

Terrorism suppressed the voting rights of Republicans. “... mobs and well-armed white supremacist groups attacked African Americans in order to restore white-only, Democratic Party control” (David Krugler, 1919, *The Year of Racial Violence: How African Americans Fought Back*, p. 13). They also attacked whites who supported blacks.

“The method of the Klan was violence. It threatened, exiled, flogged, mutilated, shot, stabbed, and hanged. It disposed of Negroes who were not respectful, or committed crimes, or belonged to military or political organizations such as the Loyal and Union Leagues. It drove out Northern schoolteachers and Yankee storekeepers and politicians, and ‘took care of’ Negroes who gained land and prospered, or made inflammatory speeches or talked about equal rights. It assaulted carpetbag judges, intimidated juries, and spirited away prisoners. It attacked officials who registered Negroes, who did not give whites priority, or who foreclosed property” (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*).

The first KKK political assassination was that of George Ashburn, a leading white Republican in Georgia who assisted in writing Georgia's new reconstructionist constitution. He was among the white minority in the South who had opposed secession. Before the Civil War, he came to see slavery as evil and quit his job as a plantation overseer. He fought on the side of the Union and returned home to Georgia after the war with the following dream: "I only hope to live to see Georgia reconstructed and to lay my bones in soil consecrated to liberty, within her borders" (Lane, *Freedom's Detective*, p. 17). Ashburn was appointed a judge by the military governor George Meade and called to order the Georgia Constitutional Convention of 1867 to remove restrictions on the civil rights of African Americans. Ashburn was shot to death on the evening of March 30, 1868, in his boarding room by four KKK shooters. All were Democrats. One was the chairman of the local Democratic Party; another was the Democratic clerk of the Muscogee County court. They were captured and brought to trial in a federal court. One of the defense lawyers was Alexander Stephen, former vice president of the Confederate States. In his "Cornerstone Speech" in favor of secession in March 1861, Stephen said the Confederacy is "founded upon ... the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition." The federal government made a deal with the Georgia Democrats to stop the trial in exchange for Georgia's ratification of the 14th Amendment. No one was ever punished for the assassination.

The Klan followed up with countless acts of intimidation and violence. "[W]hite supremacist Democrats set about overturning the new Reconstruction political order. By September 1868 they had engineered the expulsion of twenty-eight African American lawmakers, all Republicans, from the [Georgia] state legislature on the spurious grounds that the

state's new constitution did not specifically allow black men to serve. Republicans, most of them black, staged a protest march; when they reached the town of Camilla on September 19, 1868, an armed white mob opened fire, killing twelve. The Klan replicated these tactics across the South, and the terror continued for the next three years. In October 1868 an Arkansas Klan leader murdered a white Republican congressman; that same year the South Carolina Klan assassinated three black members of the state legislature. Late in 1869, a mob in North Carolina shot at the home of freedman Dan Blue, a witness against several Klansmen in an arson case, wounding him and killing his pregnant wife and five children. In 1870, armed whites attacked a political rally of two thousand mostly black Republicans in Eutaw, Alabama, leaving two dead and fifty-four injured. In March 1871, the Klan massacred thirty African Americans in Meridian, Mississippi, at a time when state legislators still selected United States senators, and Southern and border states combined controlled roughly half of the electoral college, Republican leaders realized that the violence against their supporters in the South posed a political threat as well as a moral one" (Lane, *Freedom's Detective*, pp. 133).

The Ku Klux Klan was one of several paramilitary groups that were founded to overturn the black civil rights that were guaranteed by federal law. "They used organization, intimidation and force to achieve political purposes of restoring the Democrats to power, overturning Republicans, and repressing civil and voting rights of freedmen" (Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*, p. 76). These groups were "the military arm of the Democratic Party" (George Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 1984, p. 132). **The White League** (also called the White Man's League) was founded in 1874 in Louisiana. Its purpose was to defend a "hereditary civilization and Christianity menaced by a stupid

Africanization.” In 1874, League members murdered 17-year-old Julia Hayden, a black schoolteacher in Hartsville, Tennessee. That same year, the League murdered six white Republican officeholders and between five and twenty black witnesses. “Through violence and intimidation, its members reduced Republican voting and contributed to the Democrats taking over control of the Louisiana Legislature in 1876” (Americanhistoryusa.com.). **The Red Shirts** was another white supremacist movement formed to destroy Reconstruction. They originated in Mississippi in 1875 and also operated in the Carolinas. The founders were “southern brigadiers of the Democratic Party.” Freedmen who voted were driven from their homes, whipped, and some were murdered. During elections, they rode around the black-majority precincts on horses, brandishing rifles and shotguns and threatening black voters. After helping Democrats win in North Carolina in 1898, Red Shirt leader Josephus Daniels cheered “white supremacy and rescuing the state from Negro-rule.” **The Knights of the White Camelia** were formed in 1867 in Louisiana by Democrat-Confederate Colonel Alcibiades DeBlanc. Members pledged to support “the supremacy of the white race” and restore white control of the government. Their tactics (harassment, floggings, and murder) “produced a reign of terror among the state’s black population during the summer and fall of 1868” (James Dauphine, “The Knights of the White Camelia,” *Louisiana History*, Spring, 1989, pp. 173-1900). The White Camelia consisted mainly of upper-class southerners.

The states’ efforts to stop the Klan proved ineffective. In 1869, North Carolina passed a voting rights enforcement law and Republican Governor William Holden called up 300 militia to stop Klan activity. They arrested 100 Klansmen, but Democrats won the next election, abolished the anti-Klan force, and impeached Holden.

In 1871, Congress passed the Ku Klux Klan Act to facilitate the federal battle against the Klan. The newly-formed Secret Service sent detectives to the south to investigate the Klan and bring them to justice. They had great success. In North Carolina, 40,000 Klansmen were arrested in 1871 and 1,100 indicted. In South Carolina, hundreds were arrested or turned themselves in to the 7th Cavalry.

Undercover agents gained access to Klan cells and discovered a wealth of information about their terror campaigns. KKK secrets and activities were exposed in a 144-page report *The Nation's Peril* that. The Secret Service had documentary proof that 23,000 people, black and white, were whipped or murdered by the KKK in the first 10 years after the Civil War. The following are a few examples:

“The den at Moore County, North Carolina, was responsible for a notorious spate of violence earlier in 1871, near the boundary between Moore and Chatham counties. The rampage began in April, when the Klan attacked Frances Gilmore, a twenty-year-old African American mother of two: they stripped her, beat her with a board, slashed her with a knife, and burned her [hair]. A few nights later, thirty disguised men burst into the house of a sixty-year-old white woman, Sally Gilmore—no relation—who was known for letting African American men hold political meetings at her home. A black man who was there at the time, Murchison McLean, tried to flee, but two Klansmen caught him and shot him at point-blank range; he died the next day. The rest of the mob beat the two remaining African American men at the Gilmore house unconscious with clubs and switches, then dumped the victims in the mud outside. Next, they stripped Gilmore’s teenage son and daughter and forced them to dance, as Klansmen lashed them with a cowhide whip. The attackers administered similar cruelties to the naked

bodies of Sally Gilmore and a female houseguest” (Lane, *Freedom’s Detective*, p. 152).

“Calhoun County, Alabama, in the northeastern corner of that state, had been the scene of a spectacular Klan mass murder on the night of June 11, 1870. A mob of robed and hooded Klansmen hanged William Luke, a Canadian who taught school for black children, and who had supplied firearms for self-defense to black men. The same night, after a brawl broke out in town between blacks and whites, the Klan shot or hanged five African American men” (Lane, *Freedom’s Detective*, p. 161).

“On August 27, 1871, Klansmen shot and killed Wilkinson County’s white Republican sheriff, and drowned his African American common-law wife, the mother of their five children. Then, on the night of September 2, the Klan came for Henry Lowther, accusing him of plotting an armed uprising of black men, and sleeping with a white woman. They locked him in jail until 2:00 a.m. on September 4, when one hundred eighty Klansmen appeared on horseback outside Lowther’s window. Some entered his cell, tied him up with a rope, and led him to a swamp two miles away. There, a hooded Klansman told Lowther he could either be lynched or ‘altered’--castrated. Lowther soon found himself writhing and screaming in pain under a knife wielded by the town’s physician, a former Confederate Army surgeon” (Lane, *Freedom’s Detective*, p. 169).

Blacks and white Republicans in the south gained a semblance of security during the federal crackdown and military oversight, but it soon ended. “Washington’s ever-changing political winds were shifting yet again.”

The federal efforts to destroy the Klan were criticized and slandered by the Democratic press. They “harped on the supposed unfairness and cruelty of incarcerating Klan

‘political prisoners.’ The *New York World* depicted the convicts as victims of ‘hordes of detectives’ sent to the South to fabricate charges against them. Parallels were goofily drawn between the Bastille, or Siberia, and the Albany Penitentiary in New York’s capital, where the federal government housed Klan convicts from the South. The *New York Sun* said Klansmen had been ‘sentenced to rot to death,’ and implicitly likened their journey north from South Carolina, ‘stowed away between decks’ of a federally chartered ship to slave ship voyages from Africa to the United States” (Lane, *Freedom’s Detective*, p. 179). It was a pack of lies. Democratic congressmen like James Beck of Kentucky did everything possible to oppose investigation of the KKK.

Democrats committed massive election fraud in the South that stole elections from Republicans. Freemen who voted were threatened, whipped, and many were murdered. “Despite the presence of federal troops, white southerners deployed violence in a sustained campaign to topple the new Republican majorities, oust black officeholders, and disfranchise black voters. At times the violence resembled warfare” (David Krugler, 1919, *the Year of Racial Violence*, p. 9).

Consider a tiny example of the brazen type of fraud that was committed widely. In 1900, the town of Scotland Neck, North Carolina, had a registered white vote of 395, mostly Democrats, and a registered black vote of 534, all Republicans. In the election for the congressional seat that year, the tally was 831 Democrats and 75 Republicans. In Halifax, North Carolina, there were 345 registered Republicans and 194 registered Democrats, a total of 539 voters. The vote tally was 990 Democrats to 41 Republicans (George H. White’s Farewell Address to Congress, 1901).

In 1874, Democrats won control of the U.S. House of Representatives. “Democratic control of the House for the

first time since before the Civil War meant that that chamber would favor the South's white supremacists. The Democratic members, many of them former Confederate military officers, could not pass legislation over Senate opposition and President Grant's veto, but they could use investigation and oversight to harass and discredit the Republican administration" (Lane, *Freedom's Detective*, p. 233).

In 1876, the Democrat's fraud and intimidation in the southern states brought the national presidential election itself into confusion. The states of Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina submitted two sets of election returns with different results. South Carolina gubernatorial candidate Wade Hampton was a former Confederate general who used violence to silence the Republican majority. An estimated 150 blacks were murdered in that state by white supremacist Red Shirts, who were 100% Democrat (Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*, p. 174). Democratic presidential candidate Samuel Tilden and Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes each had 184 electoral votes, not counting the three disputed states. Rightly accusing the Democrats of fraud and intimidation, the Republicans contested the electoral ballots from the three Southern states. The nation had no duly elected president from November 1876 to late February 1877. With the country in a constitutional crisis, Congress set up a commission to settle the matter. It consisted of five U.S. representatives, five senators, and five Supreme Court justices, a total of 15 so there could be no tie vote. With eight of the 15 being Republican, the Democrats sought a private compromise. The Democrats would not filibuster the commission's vote if the Republicans would agree to withdraw all federal troops from the South and the federal government would no longer interfere with Southern elections. This is called the Compromise of 1877. In spite of the agreement, there was

talk of forming armed groups to march on Washington to forcibly install Tilden in office, but sitting president Ulysses Grant tightened military security to thwart any such attempt. Hayes was hated by Democrats throughout his term and derided as “His Fraudulency.” As part of the compromise, Southern Democrats had pledged that they would “recognize the civil and political equality of blacks.” This promise was not kept, to say the least.

“Thirty years later on the Senate floor, South Carolina’s Benjamin ‘Pitchfork Ben’ Tillman, a leader of the Red Shirts, boasted about the vote frauds of 1876. ‘We set up the Democratic Party with one plank only, that this is White man’s country, and White men must govern it. Under that banner, we went to battle. It was then that we shot them. It was then that we killed them. It was then that we stuffed ballot boxes, because this disease needed a strong remedy’” (“The ugliest presidential election,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 24, 2020).

In 1877, all federal troops were removed from the southern states and the era of reconstruction ended.

By 1878, all of the southern states were captured by Democrats. They were called “Redeemer” governments.

In 1901, the last black congressman from the south, George White, Republican from North Carolina, gave his farewell address. It was called the “Phoenix Speech,” because he predicted that African Americans would return to Congress.

By 1905, the majority of black men were effectively disenfranchised by state legislatures in every Southern state.

### **The Jim Crow Era (1877-1964)**

“The Democratic party came to be more than a political party in the South--it came to be a defender of a way of life. And that way of life was the restoration as much as possible of white supremacy. ... The Confederate statues you see all

around were primarily erected by Democrats” (David Goldfield, *The Gifted Generation: When Government Was Good*).

Democratic-controlled southern governments enacted segregation policies, called “Jim Crow Laws,” which effectively disenfranchised blacks and segregated all aspects of society. (Jim Crow was a black face comedy routine that denigrated blacks.) “The region then became the *Solid South*, giving overwhelming majorities of its electoral votes and Congressional seats to the Democrats through 1964” (“History of the United States Republican Party,” *Wikipedia*).

“Segregated waiting rooms in bus and train stations were required, as well as water fountains, restrooms, building entrances, elevators, cemeteries, even amusement-park cashier windows. Laws forbade African Americans from living in white neighborhoods. Segregation was enforced for public pools, phone booths, hospitals, asylums, jails and residential homes for the elderly and handicapped. It was not uncommon to see signs posted at town and city limits warning African Americans that they were not welcome there” (“Jim Crow Laws,” *History.com*).

The *Negro Motorist Green Book*, published under sponsorship of Esso and Ford Motor Company, “listed by city and state the names and addresses of hotels, restaurants, taxi services, and gas stations that would accommodate blacks.”

New segregation laws continued to be passed through the 1950s. In 1956, an Alabama law “barred blacks and whites from playing cards, dominoes, checkers, pool, football, baseball, basketball, or golf together.” In 1958, Virginia voted to close any school that enrolled both blacks and whites. In 1959, an Arkansas law required all buses to designate blacks-only seating areas.

In 1921 the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill was introduced by Lemidas Dyer, a Republican from Missouri, “to assure

persons within the jurisdiction of every state the equal protection of the laws and to punish the crime of lynching.” The bill would have inflicted heavy fines “upon any county in which a lynching occurred, requiring part of the money to be given to the victim’s relatives.” The bill was defeated by the Democrats. “The ‘solid South’ with its powerful political machine was able to block the passage of the bill in the Senate through an extensive filibuster” (Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, p. 256).

Democratic President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) enacted segregation in the federal civil service. “Discrimination in the military was rampant. The marine corps refused to enlist blacks; the navy limited blacks to menial service occupations; and the army, which segregated its units, channeled most of its black conscripts and recruits into labor battalions” (Krugler, *1919, the Year of Racial Violence*, p. 16).

**The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** was founded in 1909 by W.E.B. De Bois, Mary Ovington, Moorfield Storey, and Ida Wells. The NAACP fought white supremacist violence against blacks and segregation policies.

“The NAACP pursued a two-pronged strategy: first, to document and publicize each instance of the crime; and second, to convict lynchers and law enforcement officials who colluded with lynchers. If existing law inhibited convictions, then antilynching legislation, at the state and federal levels, must be enacted. The first National Conference on Lynching, organized by the NAACP and held in New York in May 1919, forcefully stated this strategy” (Krugler, p. 278). By 1919, there were 155 NAACP branches in the South with 42,000 members (MacLean). Many of the leaders of the NAACP were adulterers. This includes Walter White, who divorced his wife Gladys in 1949 and married

Poppy Cannon, a white South African socialite, and Thurgood Marshall who had a “predilection for the ladies” (Gilbert King, *Devil in the Grove*, p. 47). In May 1954 in New York, at a celebration of a Supreme Court ruling, Marshall’s wife, Buster, was ill and bedridden, but instead of going home, Thurgood “left the Blue Ribbon with Cecilia Suyat, Gloster Current’s secretary” (p. 339).

There was a communist wing of the NAACP. In 1949, it published a resolution to stop the Marshall Plan, which aimed to use “massive U.S. funding to jump-start the European economy and thereby prevent the spread of communism” (Gilbert King, *Devil in the Grove*, p. 206). The communist faction left the NAACP in 1950, but communist influence continued and NAACP leader Walter White admitted that “we have always kept the door open” (*Devil in the Grove*, p. 207).

### **The Revived Ku Klux Klan (1915-1960)**

**The Ku Klux Klan was revived in 1915 and thrived through the 1940s.** The founder was William Simmons and the founding ceremony was held on Thanksgiving night, 1915, on top of Stone Mountain near Atlanta. “With a flag fluttering in the wind beside them, a Bible open to the twelfth chapter of Romans, and a flaming cross to light the night sky above, Simmons and his disciples proclaimed the new Knights of the Ku Klux Klan” (Nancy MacLean. *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, p. 5).

***Birth of a Nation***, an epic, 2 hour 45-minute silent movie directed by D.W. Griffith, had a prominent role in the popularizing of the revived KKK. It was released the same year the Klan was founded and showed to massive audiences across the nation. It depicted the original KKK as the saviour of white American civilization from lazy, rapacious blacks. It described slave life on southern

plantations as “not unhappy.” But Reconstruction was an opportunity for liberated blacks to “drag society into chaos and stalk white women.” In the final scene, black men besiege a white girl in a cabin, intending to rape her, but she is saved by the hooded KKK, who arrive in the nick of time and hang the black leader. The movie was lying propaganda, but it harnessed the full power of Hollywood filmmaking to move the emotions of the viewers and shape their thinking. The soundtrack, featuring Negro spirituals and Richard Wagner’s music, was created by a 30-piece orchestra. “The tension became unbearable. An orchestral passage from *Die Walküre* heralded the assembling of the Klansmen. A bugle blast from the pit brought the audience shouting to its feet as the hooded horsemen rode to the rescue. The orchestra matched passages from “The Hall of the Mountain King” to the galloping of the horses’ hoofs, as the scene shifted back and forth between the approaching Klansmen and the pale heroine in the cabin surrounded by frenzied blacks” (*Hooded Americanism*). There were plenty of voices raised against the movie and it was nearly banned by the Massachusetts legislature, but it was praised by President Woodrow Wilson and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Edward White. It grossed \$18 million, a massive amount of money at the time.

At its height in the mid-1920s, the revived KKK had as many as five million members in 4,000 local chapters (MacLean. *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*). On August 8, 1925, 40,000 Klansmen marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. From midafternoon to dusk, they marched 16 to 20 abreast. At the head was a masked horse and rider, followed by the Imperial Wizard, Hiram Evans, “wearing a flowing royal-purple robe, trimmed in gold, and surrounded by the rich-colored garments of his Dragons, Klokards, and Kleagles.”

The KKK prospered in many states outside of the South. In Colorado, the KKK “filled the seats of government, from city hall to the governor’s mansion.” In 1925, one out of every seven people in Denver, Colorado, were members. The Klan membership in Ohio was the largest in the nation. The Klan was large in Oklahoma, Arkansas, California, Kansas, Washington state, Oregon, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. It had a significant following in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maine, and Vermont. Thousands of Klansmen attended a New England rally in western Massachusetts in 1927.

The revived KKK was not a single-issue force like the original KKK. Segregation was only one of its platforms, and segregation was not emphasized in every place. “Declaiming against organized blacks, Catholics, and Jews, along with the insidious encroachments of Bolshevism, the order put itself forward as the country’s most militant defender of ‘pure Americanism.’ It stood for patriotism, ‘old-time religion,’ and conventional morality, and pledged to fend off challenges from any quarter to the rights and privileges of men from the stock of the nation’s founders” (MacLean. *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, p. 5).

The revived KKK arose in an era of great social change, turmoil, and uncertainty. Communism was on the march. Klan writers warned that “bolshevism “is now threatening the whole civilized world.” Immigration was changing the religious and social face of America. Feminism was on the march. Many believed that giving women the vote “would overturn the social order.” The jazz era was breaking down morality by creating a youth culture characterized by dating, dancing, movies, smoking, drinking, drugs, immodest dress styles, an arrogant attitude, and rebellion to authority. “Perhaps new standards of female dress were the most visible marker of change, they served as a potent symbol in the

renegotiation of female roles. Casting off the long skirts and high-necked blouses of their mothers' generation..." (MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*). "... deference to youth increasingly supplanted the veneration of age that has described classic patriarchy. Willingly or not, parents and churches ceded cultural authority to their children's peers and a commercial mass culture. ... Movie-mania, 'dance madness,' 'joy-riding,' and even the newly discovered phenomenon of juvenile delinquency all seemed to express disregard for the authority of parents and disdain for their gender roles" (MacLean, p. 41). Preachers warned that "girls spurned femininity, boys acted sissy, and their nighttime joyrides were taking them down the surest road to hell." A Georgia Klansman warned that "pleasure has become the god of the young people of America, and a very unwholesome and lascivious pleasure it is." Another warned that young people were being submerged "in a sea of sensuality and sewage." There was a multi-fronted assault on the home. There re increase in working moms. The divorce rate increased by 2,000 percent between the Civil War and the Great Depression, when one in six marriages ended in divorce (MacLean).

Samuel Saloman's *Red War on the Family* (1922) warned that "monogamic marriage is the sheet anchor of our civilization" and if it is weakened, gender roles would erode and men would become more effeminate and women more masculine, resulting in chaos and social decay. Psychology was increasing its influence in society, replacing biblical thinking. In child training, there was a move away from corporal punishment. The *Searchlight*, a Klan publication, observed, "The reason the old-fashioned boy worked more than the modern boy, was because of the hickory stick that lay in state above the kitchen door."

There was political corruption in government. Washington, D.C. was described as “Paris at its worst” with “the waste, greed, graft, thievery, and harlotage” (MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, p. 47).

There was a dramatic increase in government regulations and social welfare. E.Y. Clarke represented those who saw the danger in this. “When the government takes a too personal interest in the people, the people lose their will, their sense of responsibility” (*Macon Telegraph*, March 15, 1928).

National chain stores such as Sears and A&P Grocery were bankrupting local businesses.

Darwinian evolution was gaining in acceptance and was beginning to be taught in public schools.

American independence was being ceded to global organizations, beginning with the League of Nations. The *Kourier*, a Klan publication, warned about the establishment of a “Super State” that would “rule the world in the interest of a few.” The first World War brought vast destruction. There were race riots and union riots in many parts of the country. Anarchists were active. In 1921, a group of preachers in Georgia warned, “The world is seething in social unrest; anarchy overwhelms whole sections” (MacLean, p. 25).

“[The revived KKK’s] greatest selling point was the protection of traditional American values. These were to be found in the bosoms and communities of white, native-born, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, whether in the small towns or transplanted into a newly minted urban America. The changing world of the 1920s, which saw postwar restlessness and new waves of immigration combined with the Prohibition-accented erosion of both the small town and fundamentalist morality, brought the Klan millions of recruits The Invisible Empire was soon a factor to be considered in the communal and political life of the nation from Maine to California. ... Where in the 1920s Klansmen

had banded together against Catholic and alien, now in the thirties they discovered Communism and, soon afterwards, the New Deal. Anti-Semitism was also on the rise. Then, in the mid-thirties, organized Labor pushed its way to the fore among the enemies of one-hundred-percent Americanism” (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*).

“To the Negro, Jew, Oriental, Roman Catholic, and alien, were added dope, bootlegging, graft, night clubs and road houses, violation of the Sabbath, unfair business dealings, sex, marital ‘goings-in,’ and scandalous behavior, as the proper concern of the one-hundred-per-cent American. The Klan organizer was told to find out what was worrying a community and to offer the Klan as a solution” (Chalmers).

The elements of its program included “immigration restriction, Prohibition enforcement, opposition to American participation in the League of Nations and the World Court, tax relief, prohibition of interracial marriage, exclusion of Catholic teachers from public schools, the closing of parochial schools, and prohibition of property ownership by non-citizens” (MacClean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, p. 16).

Consider the signs carried in a Klan parade in Texarkana: “Law and order must prevail.” “Cohabitation between whites and blacks must stop.” “Bootleggers, pimps, hangers-on get right or get out.” “Wife-beaters, family-deserters, home-wreckers, we have no room for you.” “Law violators, we are watching you; beware.” “We stand for old glory and 100% Americanism.” “We invite all 100% Americans to join us.”

The KKK claimed to be a Christian organization. It used the cross as its symbol and recited Romans 12 as part of its initiation rite. Its view of America was that of a Christian America. In 1925, the Grand Dragon of Georgia said, “The Constitution of the United States is based upon the Holy Bible and the Christian religion, and an attack upon the one is an attack upon the other. If Christianity is destroyed in

America, how long would our Government endure?" A Klan manual stated, "The Klansman pins his faith to the Bible as the revealed will of God" (MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, p, 93).

Large numbers of pastors were members of the KKK, mostly Baptist, Methodist, and Church of Christ. "Hundreds upon hundreds did join, and in some areas constituted a major portion of the local officialdom. Others left their flocks for the wider Klan calling as either organizers or speakers. Almost all of the national Klan lecturers were ministers. Usually the presence of a Klan in a town was announced by a Saturday night parade of hooded horsemen down Main Street, a cross blazing on a nearby hillside, or a sudden appearance in the midst of the Sunday service. Robed in white, masked, they would divide into three columns and march silently down the aisles congregating in front of the pulpit to present a purse of thirty-five or forty dollars to the minister. If their appearance was not completely unexpected or unwelcome, they might file into the front rows that had been left vacant, while the minister or one among them propounded the principles of the Klan and read from the Twelfth Chapter of Romans, calling upon them to present their bodies, through the Klan, as 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.' Or, having made the donation, they might march out again while the church choir sang 'The Old Rugged Cross' or 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'" (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*).

In its heyday, the Klan had considerable political power. In Georgia, Klansmen included the governor, the chief justice of the state supreme court, state attorney general, the mayor of Atlanta, district attorney of Fulton County, and a Fulton superior court judge. A city attorney said, "Everybody in the courthouse belonged to the Klan, virtually every judge, the prosecuting officers ... all the police and the mayor and the

councilmen” (MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*). In 1923, at least 75 members of the House of Representatives “were said to owe their seats to the Klan” (MacLean). Anti-Klan governors were defeated in many states, including Oregon and Kansas.

The Klan promoted a wide variety of conspiracies based on false information and forgeries: Lincoln, McKinley, and Harding were assassinated by Catholic agents; the Knights of Columbus Oath is a pledge by Catholic laymen to “hang, burn, boil, flay, and bury alive” non-Catholics (it is a forgery); the pope had purchased high ground overlooking West Point and two canons on the grounds of Georgetown University pointed in the direction of Washington, signifying Rome’s plan to conquer America. The KKK used the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to prove an international Jewish conspiracy to rule the world.

The Klan was opposed to the immigration that was changing the character of America. William Simmons, the KKK Grand Dragon, said, “What were the dangers which the white men saw threatening to crush and overwhelm Anglo-Saxon civilization? The dangers were in the tremendous influx of foreign immigration, tutored in alien dogmas and alien creeds, flowing in from all climes and slowly pushing the native-born white American population into the center of the country, there to be ultimately overwhelmed and smothered.”

The Klan was a big proponent of Prohibition. “In almost every state the Klan was a champion of the ‘noble experiment’ of Prohibition, and in areas, such as New Jersey and upstate New York, this was its greatest rallying cry” (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*)

“Probably the greatest strength of the Invisible Empire lay not in its creed but in its excitement and its in-group fraternalism. ... The lodge nature and the ritual of the Ku Klux

Klan appealed to the joiner. Its mass initiations, masks and robes, parades, picnics, barbecues, and other ceremonies, its field days, and its midnight cross burnings enlivened the life of the American village. For the payment of ten dollars, the Klansman could become a member of the mysterious Invisible Empire, the masked protector of the virtue of white womanhood, and of one-hundred-per-cent Americanism. He could participate in the sacred ritual that connected him with millions of others in fraternity and mystic power” (Chalmers).

Much of the KKK vigilante activity was directed toward white men for adultery, wife beating, desertion of their families, gambling, bootlegging, theft, etc. In many places, the Klan and the local law enforcement were integrated toward this end. In Texas, there were an estimated 500 “tar-and-feather parties and whipping bees, plus other threats, assaults” (Chalmers). In Oklahoma “the usual victims were not Jews, Negroes, Roman Catholics, or aliens, but white native-born, Protestant citizens, women and youths as well as grown men.. ... While the Police stood by, men were kidnapped from the streets of even the largest cities to be carted off and flogged. ... the Georgia Klan seldom directed its violence toward Jew, Roman Catholic, and Negro. They were objects of its semantics, but its direct action was visited primarily on its fellow white, native-born Protestants” (Chalmers). “In 1927 the *Birmingham News* guessed that scores, perhaps hundreds, had felt the lash over the past five years, mainly for possession of slot machines and sale or possession of liquor” (Chalmers). In 1927, for example, in Stephens County, Alabama, a white woman was whipped 61 times for “immorality and failure to go to church,” and her 15-year-old son was beaten when he tried to assist her. “The man who held her head and directed the floggings turned out to be the principal of the Stephens County High School,

superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School, and moderator of the twenty Baptist churches of his association” (Chalmers).

In the South, the KKK was involved in a lot of violence toward blacks. Between 1882 and 1951, 3,438 blacks were killed, most prior to 1930. Following are some examples from one year: “All told, seventy-seven African Americans lost their lives to lynching in 1919. The victims included another black man named Will Brown, burned alive alongside his friend Jack Gordon in Washington, Georgia, on October 5. Gordon had allegedly shot a white deputy; this Will Brown helped him escape from jail. The mob also killed a third man, Moses Freeman, who had allegedly lied about Gordon and Brown’s whereabouts. By the standards of the era’s white supremacy, Freeman had committed a serious crime: he had obstructed a mob during its pursuit of rough justice. Many other lynching victims in 1919 lost their lives for similar transgressions against white supremacy. In April, a mob in Blakely, Georgia, beat black veteran Wilbur Little to death for ignoring warnings to stop wearing his military uniform. Another veteran and a female acquaintance lost their lives near Pickens, Mississippi, in May for allegedly writing an insulting note to a white woman. On August 1, two different Georgia mobs carried out lynchings: the first killed veteran Charles Kelly for failing to yield to a white driver; the second lynched Argie Robinson for refusing to address a white man as ‘Mister.’ A mob in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, dismembered Cicero Cage for pulling a white woman off her horse. Yet another Georgia mob hanged an inebriated man for praising blacks’ armed resistance to mob attacks during Chicago’s riot” (Krugler, 1919, *the Year of Racial Violence*, p. 272).

The following instance from Ocoee, Florida, in 1920, illustrates how the Ku Klux Klan stopped blacks from voting:

“Two black landowners, Julius Perry and Mose Norman, led a campaign to register the town’s 500 black residents,

drawing an ominous warning from the local Klan. Undeterred, both men, who had registered and paid the poll tax, arrived at the voting station, where they were told they were not eligible voters. Norman came back with a shotgun, only to be beaten and chased off. The Klan then dispersed throughout Ocoee, intent on lynching Norman and Perry and terrorizing black residents so that none would ever again try to vote. A mother and her baby were burned alive in their home. Perry and eight armed companions managed to hold a mob at bay, killing two, until the house was torched. Perry was arrested and jailed in Orlando, where a complicit sheriff allowed the Klan to lynch him. His desecrated corpse was dumped in Ocoee with a warning sign. By its end, the Klan's pogrom had killed as many as fifty blacks" (Krugler, p. 300).

Two cases from central Florida in the 1940s illustrate the terrible abuse that blacks in some parts of the South were still enduring in the mid-20th century. In 1943, 15-year-old Willie James Howard worked sweeping floors at Van Priest's Dime Store in Live Oak. The intelligent, good-natured boy was nicknamed "Giddy Boy." He made the very bad mistake of giving a Christmas card to a 15-year-old white cashier named Cynthia Goff. She informed her father, Phil, the local postmaster and a former member of the Florida House of Representatives. Willie gave her another note on New Year's Day, 1944, which stated that she was his choice for a sweetheart. On January 2, Goff and two other men kidnapped Willie from his home, dragging him from his mother's arms at gunpoint, picked up Willie's father, James, at the lumber company where he worked, and drove to the Suwannee River. "Inside the car, once the boy admitted that he'd written the letter to the girl, Goff and the two white men bound the fifteen-year-old's hands and feet with rope. When James Howard tried to speak to his son, he was ordered, at

gunpoint, to keep his mouth shut. The next order forced James Howard to remove his son from the car and stand him up several feet from the riverbank. With the boy in place, bound and now crying, Goff asked him if he understood 'the penalty of his crime.' Willie sobbed. 'Yes, sir.' By now, James Howard knew his boy would find no mercy in these woods, and finally permitted to speak, he said to his son, 'Willie, I cannot do anything for you now. I'm glad I have belonged to the Church and prayed for you.' Goff allowed the boy a last request, and Willie asked his father to take his wallet from his pocket. The postmaster lifted his gun and forced the boy to choose between a bullet and the Suwannee. Bawling and terrified of the gun, Willie staggered backward and toppled over the rock's edge, into the river, where the deep, dark water swallowed him" (Gilbert King, *Devil in the Grove*, p. 102). The three men presented an affidavit to the local sheriff that they only intended to warn the boy and that he had become hysterical and had jumped into the river and committed suicide. The case never went to trial.

In 1949, in Lake County, Florida, a 17-year-old white married girl, Norma Padgett, claimed that she was raped by four black men. In that time and place, any such claim was a death sentence for the black men concerned. The Democrat, KKK-associated Sheriff Willis McCall went on the warpath even though the evidence consisted only of the girl's testimony, and her reputation was less than sterling. The four men identified were Ernest Thomas, Charles Greenlee, Samuel Shepherd, and Walter Irvin. Thomas escaped capture but was chased down in a swamp by a sheriff's posse and riddled with bullets. Greenlee, Shepherd, and Irvin were arrested. A KKK mob burned homes and businesses in the black community in the Groveland area. After a series of severe beatings and threats against their lives, Greenlee and Shepherd confessed to the rape. At the trial, Padgett pointed

her finger at each of them and testified that they were the ones who had raped her, though previously she had told people that she couldn't recognize the men because it was dark. The all-white jury convicted them of rape and sentenced Shepherd and Irvin to the electric chair and Greenlee to life in prison on a chain gang. Greenlee had an irrefutable alibi that placed him away from the scene of the alleged rape. Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP took the case to the Supreme Court, which ruled for a new trial in 1951. In November, Sheriff McCall and his brutal racist deputy, Yates, picked up the two men from the Raiford State Prison to transport them to Tavares for the second trial. On the way, he drove down a dark country road, stopped and shot the men who were handcuffed together. He claimed that they tried to escape. When other men arrived to view the bodies, it was found that Irvin was still alive, so Yates shot him again in the neck. In spite of three bullet wounds, he survived to stand trial. Though the sheriff claimed that he shot both men when they were standing and attacking him, the bullet that was fired by Yates into Irvin's neck was found by the FBI in the ground where he had been lying, which confirmed Irvin's testimony. On Christmas night, 1951, unknown men dynamited the home of Harry T. Moore, executive director of the Florida NAACP, killing Moore and his wife. Previously they had been fired from their school teaching jobs because of Harry's activism for equal pay for black public school teachers in Brevard County. Moore had been campaigning for justice for the Groveland boys. Flowers had to be shipped from Miami as local florists refused to deliver flowers to "a Negro funeral." A lengthy investigation concluded that the likely perpetrators were Ku Klux Klan members, though there was not enough evidence to try them. In the second trial for Irvin, he was again sentenced to death by an all-white jury. He had been offered a deal to plead guilty to rape in exchange for a life sentence, but he refused,

saying he would not lie about the matter, which was evidence of his innocence. In 1955, his sentence was commuted to life by Gov. LeRoy Collins. In 1968, he was paroled, but he died soon thereafter. In 2019, the Groveland Four were pardoned by Gov. Ron DeSantis, and the Florida House of Representatives voted 117-0 to apologize to the families.

Republicans attempted to pass antilynching bills in the U.S. Congress, but they were resisted by Democrats. The first attempt was in 1918. “The bill never made it out of committee, however; the southern Democrats who still controlled Congress in 1918 had no intention of scheduling an antilynching bill for a vote” (Krugler, 1919, *the Year of Racial Violence*, p. 276).

Between 1910 and 1930, 1.2 million blacks migrated from the South to northern cities, and between 1930 and 1970, the number was 5 million. It was called the Great Migration (Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*).

At least 25 race riots occurred in 1919, 10 major ones. The national death toll exceeded 150. They were instigated by whites. The riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was the worst. A mob of hundreds destroyed the Greenwood black community. Dozens of blacks were killed. More than 1,200 homes and businesses were burned to the ground.

By 1928, Klan membership had declined to several hundred thousand, but it was still influential in some parts of the South into the 1950s. For example, in 1948, the Ku Klux Klan held five rallies in Lake County, Florida, to show support for Sheriff Willis McCall (who would become infamous the following year in the Groveland Boys case) and presidential candidate Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, who was running for a group of southern Democrats called the Dixiecrats.

“[O]n the eve of the election 250 hooded Klansmen formed a motorcade that snaked its way through Lake County, ‘warning blacks not to vote if they valued their lives.’ Trailing behind the motorcade in a big Oldsmobile, his trademark white Stetson visible to all, was the incumbent sheriff himself, ‘making no attempt to interfere’ when the Klansmen stopped to burn a cross in front of a black juke joint in Leesburg. The evening ended in a field just north of Lake Okahumpka, with Klan speeches and a barbecue. It may as well have been a celebration of what would prove by a landslide to have been the inevitable--the reelection of Willis V. McCall. ... McCall had attended meetings with Bogar at the Apopka Klavern of the Association of Georgia Klans, where many central Florida law enforcement officials were initiated into the Ku Klux Klan. As one reporter noted, it was impossible ‘to tell where the mob left off and law enforcement began’ (Gilbert King, *Devil in the Grove*, pp. 83, 91).

### **The Civil Rights Era (1940-1968)**

There was growing pushback against Jim Crow segregation from the beginning of the 20th century. The **New Negro movement** of the 1910s and 1920s encouraged blacks to stand up for their rights and to defend themselves against violent assaults.

This was a rejection of the non-resistance, non-political principle of men such as Booker T. Washington, who were called the “Old Crowd” and the “Old Negro.”

Many of the defenders were black men who fought in World War I and were demanding the full liberties they fought for under the American flag. It was expressed by W.E.B. Du Bois as follows: “We return *from fighting*. We return *fighting*. Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United

States of America, or know the reason why” (*Crisis* magazine, May 1919). “African Americans’ military service molded the prewar New Negro movement into a potent force to confront the structure and practices of white supremacy” (David Krugler, 1919, *The Year of Racial Violence*, p. 2).

In 1918, more than 100 blacks published a statement in Atlanta demanding their civil rights. They vowed to continue to “exert our righteous efforts until not only every eligible black man but every eligible black woman shall be wielding the ballot proudly in defense of our liberties and our homes” (*Atlanta Independent*, Aug. 28, 1918).

Many organizations and publications were founded to promote the New Negro.

- Hubert Harrison founded The Liberty League and the *Voice* newspaper in 1917.
- Marcus Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).
- William Monroe Trotter founded National Equal Rights League and the *Boston Guardian* paper.
- Osceola McKaine founded the League for Democracy.
- Harry Clay Smith founded the *Cleveland Gazette*.
- James Weldon Johnson founded the *New York Age*.
- Chandler Owen and Philip Randolph founded the *Messenger*.
- Robert Abbott founded the *Chicago Defender*.
- Calvin Chase founded the *Washington Bee*.
- Julius Taylor founded the *Broad-Ax*.

Some of these men were influenced by international Marxism, though they did not advocate the overthrow of the American government. The new mood was expressed by Johnson: “The Negro is in no temper to tamely submit to the kind of treatment which he has hitherto received, and he is not going to do it” (*New York Age*). William Byrd said, “[D]on’t start anything but when something is started make it

hot for them and finish it” (“Defend Lives to the Last,” *Cleveland Gazette*, Sept. 20, 1919).

In the 1920s, there was a drive to disarm blacks as they were organizing for self-defense. “With the cooperation of state and local officials as well as white gun dealers, federal and military officials seized weapons from individual black gun owners, monitored weapons sales to blacks, and asked gun dealers not to sell weapons and ammunition to African Americans” (Krugler, 1919, *The Year of Racial Violence*, p. 197).

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order opening government jobs and defense contracts to all Americans regardless of race. This was in response to a call by the NAACP and the National Urban League for 100,000 blacks to march on Washington, D.C.

In 1942, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded to protest racial segregation in northern states.

In 1948, President Harry Truman issued an executive order ending discrimination and segregation in the military. He also introduced a pro-civil rights platform at the Democratic Party’s convention that year. This resulted in a defection by a group of southern Democrats known as “**Dixiecrats**.” They held a separate convention in Birmingham, Alabama, and nominated Strom Thurmond, governor of South Carolina, to run for president on a “States’ Rights” ticket. Thurmond said in a speech that year, “I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that there’s not enough troops in the army to force the Southern people to break down segregation and admit the Negro race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into our homes, and into our churches” (“Former U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond Dies,” History.com, June 26, 2003).

The KKK was greatly weakened by the 1940s. “The Klan had its usual officeholding friends in Georgia, but it was increasingly parochial ... despite its parades and cross

burnings, its mystic initiations on Stone Mountain, its warnings, night raids, and floggings, it failed to gain any of the respectability and, outside of Georgia, the power it had held in the past. And it was beset by opposition as never before. The national and state attorney generals, the FBI, and the Bureau of Internal Revenue kept their eyes upon the shrunken Invisible Empire which was forced to close down its few remaining non-Southern branches” (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*).

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that public school segregation is unconstitutional.

In 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated bus seating is unconstitutional.

These rulings gave rise to a limited, short-lived revival of the KKK. “In a South marked by growing hysteria, the Klans burst into activity” (Chalmers). In Georgia, Eldon Edwards formed the U.S. Klans, which reached a peak membership of about 12,000 in early 1958. The hotspot of the revived Klan was central Alabama, particularly the region of Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, Anniston, and Montgomery. “Ringed in would be the major civil rights arena in Alabama, containing Montgomery where Martin Luther King and the bus boycott first made headlines, the battlegrounds of the freedom rides, beatings, bus burnings, and bombings, the Talladega home of Reverend Horn and the Tuscaloosa site of the University of Alabama and Robert Shelton’s headquarters. Within this field wherein the Klan had sown its dragon’s teeth, lay the one-time stronghold of Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor. From 1958 until his 1963 defeat at the polls and in the courts, the tough Birmingham police commissioner came close to making his own law. In its simplest form Bull Connor’s law read that Negroes and whites were not equal, either in the eyes of society or the police. By his violent tactics and his tacit acceptance of those private operators who followed his

example, encouragement was held out to Birmingham's Klansmen" (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*).

Though there was still white supremacist thinking in the South in the middle of the 20th century, the mood had changed greatly. Most people were opposed to the type of violence that the KKK had perpetrated in previous times. Law enforcement, judges, and juries could no longer be depended on to justify these things. "Throughout the South a growing local refusal to permit it to ride freely restrained the Klan as a vestigial doer of racial violence. Only a limited number of communities, whether through fear or approval, countenanced its night riding. In others, law was enforced and distaste for the Klan openly expressed" (Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*).

**The 1950s Klan was focused on anti-Semitism.** "One of the most pronounced aspects of the present Klan has been its violent anti-Semitism. While this has long been a Klan theme, it has become increasingly strong. ... the Klans found a ready, inexpensive supply of literature available from professional anti-Semites such as Conde McGinley and Gerald L.K. Smith, and other propagandists on the Citizen's Council lists. The tone was right and the words soon became their words. As the Klan turned more and more to anti-Semitic arguments and inspiration, the leadership of the two movements became more and more intertwined. Integration was denounced as a 'Communist-Jewish conspiracy plotting to overthrow white-Christian mankind'" (Chalmers *Hooded Americanism*).

In 1957, **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, became the first president of the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference**, which was devoted to ending segregation by means of boycotts, marches, and demonstrations. It was also devoted to the uplifting of black self-esteem. "The most potent catalyst

for the black consciousness movement was the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., beginning with the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955” (*The Black Church in the African American Experience*). In 1962, King wrote, “Once plagued with a tragic sense of inferiority, resulting from the crippling effects of slavery and segregation, the Negro has now been driven to reevaluate himself. ... He has come to feel that he is somebody. And with this new sense of ‘somebodiness’ and self-respect, a new Negro has emerged with a new determination to achieve freedom and human dignity whatever the cost might be” (“The Case Against Tokenism,” *New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 5, 1962).

**Some black pastors resisted King’s move to politicize the churches.** “Many ministers and religious leaders--both black and white--thought that the role of the church was to focus on the spiritual needs of the congregation and perform charitable works to aid the needy. To some of them, the social-political activity of King and SCLC amounted to dangerous radicalism which they strongly opposed” (“Southern Christian Leadership Conference,” *Wikipedia*). This resulted in a split in the National Baptist Convention (C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*).

Had the pastors of black churches kept their attention on Christ’s Great Commission--preaching the gospel of salvation, discipling believers to be strong in the Lord and in the Word of God, building godly Christian homes that can raise a godly seed (Mal. 2:15), leading the saints in effectual separation from the world--the black communities would have been much, much better off. Most pursued a pragmatic political and social program that actually weakened the spiritual condition of the churches.

In 1961, the **Progressive National Baptist Convention** (PNBC) was founded by a group of preachers who left the

National Baptist Convention. These included Martin Luther King, Sr., Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ralph David Abernathy. The PNBC became more radical as time passed, “supportive of the black power movement and one of the earliest groups to publicly oppose the war in Vietnam” (*The Black Church in the African American Experience*). In 1989, the PNBC had 1,000 ministers with 1.2 million members in 1,000 churches.

In **1957, the Civil Rights Act** was signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. It removed all restrictions to voting rights.

In 1960, hundreds of people demonstrated against segregated lunch counters in Greensboro, North Carolina, and elsewhere. In Jacksonville, Florida, the Klan led a three-day riot against demonstrators. It was called “Ax-handle Saturday” because of the prevalence of ax handles wielded by segregationists.

In 1961, **the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee** (SNCC) was founded by younger blacks who pushed for more aggressive tactics than those of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the SCLC.

In May 1961, **13 Freedom Riders** traveled in a Greyhound bus from Washington, D.C., to Alabama and Mississippi to protest segregated bus terminals. The bus was bombed and the riders beaten in Anniston, Alabama, and it was attacked by a mob in Montgomery. In Jackson, Mississippi, the riders were arrested for trespassing a “whites-only” facility and sentenced to 30 days in jail. That fall, the Interstate Commerce Commission prohibited segregation in transit terminals.

In 1964, three members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee were murdered by the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi while engaged in black voter registration.

Deacons for Defense and Justice was founded in 1964 to protect desegregation activists who were engaged in voter registration drives.

In 1964, the **Civil Rights Act** was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. It prevents employment discrimination due to race, color, sex, religion or national origin. The Democrats of the U.S. Senate filibustered the Act in an attempt to stop its passage. The filibuster was led by Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, former Ku Klux Klan Grand Cyclops. The act was passed with 82% Republican support and 63% Democrat support. It was eventually used by activist judges to support homosexual rights.

In 1965, President Johnson signed the **Voting Rights Act** which prevents literacy tests and provides for federal oversight of elections.

**Beginning in the late 1960s, many Democrats in the South switched to the Republican Party, and a myth has been perpetrated that this was for racist reasons, that somehow the Republican Party became the party of white supremacy.** This myth is promoted by the same media who have tried to hide the ugly history of the Democratic Party. It is claimed that the switch was the product of a “**Southern Strategy**” by Richard Nixon in 1968 that secretly appealed to racism. But Nixon in particular, and the Republican Party in general, never appealed to white supremacy or anti-black sentiment, never supported Jim Crow laws, never tried to hinder the civil rights of black people. With all its faults, it can be said for certain that the Republican Party stood for the rights of black people from its inception before the Civil War, and it has never veered from that. Thousands of Republicans died at the hands of Democrat white supremacists, and the role has never been switched. Far more Republicans voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act than Democrats. It was Democrats who filibustered those

acts. Nixon and his fellow Republicans ran on law and order, anti-drugs, anti-abortion, anti-communism, pro-military. They ran against the anarchist leftist forces, such as the Students for a Democratic Society, that were tearing the country apart. This platform appealed to a great many Southerners.

Dinesh D'Souza sets the record straight as follows:

“Nixon had an excellent record on civil rights. He supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He was an avid champion of the desegregation of public schools. The progressive columnist Tom Wicker wrote in the *New York Times*, ‘There’s no doubt about it--the Nixon administration accomplished more in 1970 to desegregate Southern school systems than had been done in the 16 previous years or probably since. There’s no doubt either that it was Richard Nixon personally who conceived and led the administration’s desegregation effort.’ Upon his taking office in 1969, Nixon also put into effect America’s first affirmative action program. Dubbed the Philadelphia Plan, it imposed racial goals and timetables on the building trade unions, first in Philadelphia and then elsewhere. Now, would a man seeking to build an electoral base of Deep South white supremacists actually promote the first program to legally discriminate in favor of blacks? This is absurd. Nixon barely campaigned in the Deep South. His strategy, as outlined by Kevin Phillips in his classic work, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, was to target the Sunbelt, the vast swath of territory stretching from Florida to Nixon’s native California. This included what Phillips terms the Outer or Peripheral South. Nixon recognized the South was changing. It was becoming more industrialized, with many northerners moving to the Sunbelt. **Nixon’s focus, Phillips writes, was on the non-racist, upwardly-mobile, largely urban voters of the Outer or**

**Peripheral South. Nixon won these voters, and he lost the Deep South, which went to Democratic segregationist George Wallace. ... The South, as a whole, became Republican during the 1980s and 1990s. This had nothing to do with Nixon; it was because of Ronald Reagan and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich's 'Contract with America.' The conservative appeal to patriotism, anti-communism, free markets, pro-life and Christianity had far more to do with the South's movement into the GOP camp than anything related to race. Yet the myth of Nixon's Southern Strategy endures--not because it's true, but because it conveniently serves to exculpate the crimes of the Democratic Party.** Somehow the party that promoted slavery, segregation, Jim Crow and racial terrorism gets to wipe its slate clean by pretending that, with Nixon's connivance, the Republicans stole all their racists. It's time we recognize this excuse for what it is: one more Democratic big lie" (D'Souza, "The Myth of Nixon's 'Southern Strategy,'" *The Hill*, Aug. 23, 2018).

By the 1940s there was the rise of a more militant **black power movement** which preached racial pride, black superiority, race division, Marxist redistribution of wealth, and anti-Americanism.

In fact, it began earlier than the 1940s.

In 1918, **Marcus Garvey** (1887-1940) founded the **Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)** in New York City and the newspaper *Negro World*. He preached a gospel of economic success. "Central to Garvey's appeal were his enthusiastic embrace of capitalism and his gospel of success; self-mastery, willpower, and hard work would provide the steps to life for black Americans. 'Be not deceived,' he told his followers, 'wealth is strength, wealth is power, wealth is influence, wealth is justice, is liberty, is real human rights'" (Manning Marable, *Malcolm X*, p. 31). Garvey

called for the unity of black people worldwide and attempted to found the “Empire of Africa,” with himself the potentate and his chief followers “Knights of the Distinguished Service Order of Ethiopia and Dukes of Niger and of Uganda.” At his meetings, Garvey would have the people chant, “Up, you mighty race, you can accomplish what you will!” **“Garvey held that people of African descent had to embrace a black God and a black theology of liberation”** (Marable, p. 34). Garvey was joined by James Walker Hood Eason, pastor of the People’s Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. (Eason was named for the prominent black pastor and activist James Walker Hood but was not related to him.) Without consulting the congregation, Eason sold the church’s property, gave the money to UNIA, and was appointed by Garvey “Leader of American Negroes.” By the 1920s and 1930s, there were a million or more members, “making it one of the largest mass movements in black history.” In January 1923, Eason was assassinated after speaking at St. John’s Baptist Church in New Orleans. That year, Garvey was convicted of mail fraud in connection with the financial dealings of UNIA and sentenced to five years in prison.

Even the **jazz music of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, and the zoot suits** associated with it were elements of black power protest.

“Similarly the zoot suit uniform was an act of defiance against white standards of behavior. In the wave of national patriotism following Pearl Harbor and the United States going to war, zoot-suiters were widely identified with draft dodging. ... Many who favored the radical new jazz coming from Harlem nightclubs described the 1943 insurrection as another ‘zoot suit riot.’ The term had become a common metaphor for black activities that seemed subversive to white order. ... As the critic Frank Kofsky observed of the bebop movement, **‘Jazz inevitably functioned not solely as**

music, but also as a vehicle ‘for the expression of outraged protest’ (Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, pp. 71-95).

In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote the following while in jail in Birmingham, Alabama, for leading a demonstration without a permit:

“I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency ... **The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up across the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad’s Muslim movement.** Nourished by the Negro’s frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination, this movement is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incorrigible ‘devil’” (“The Negro Is Your Brother,” *The Atlantic*, Aug. 1963).

King was referring to **The Nation of Islam** (NOI), which was founded in about 1930 by **Wallace D. Fard**, who claimed that blacks are the original race and white people are devils created by a mad scientist named Yakub. “Allah, in the person of an Asiatic black man, came into the world to reveal this extraordinary story, and to explain the legacies of the white race’s monstrous crimes against blacks. Only through complete racial separation could blacks survive” (Manning Marable, *Malcolm X*, p. 116). Fard mysteriously disappeared in 1934, and his disciple **Elijah Muhammad** (birth name Elijah Robert Poole) took over the leadership. The Nation of Islam is opposed to racial reconciliation. In the 1950s, **Malcolm X** became Elijah Muhammad’s most prominent disciple and the movement grew rapidly through his influence. Malcolm X adhered to the teaching of Fard and

Elijah Muhammad. On Dec. 7, 1961, he lectured on the nature of the devil, saying he was “not speaking of something under the ground. ... The devil is not a spirit, rather he has blue eyes, blond hair, and he has white skin” (Manning Marable, *Malcolm X*, p. 278). After Martin Luther King’s March on Washington in 1963, Malcolm said, “Who ever heard of angry revolutionists all harmonizing ‘We Shall Overcome’ ... while tripping and swaying along arm-in-arm with the very people they were supposed to be angrily revolting against?”

In 1963, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam and had a transformation in his thinking. He founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity in 1964 and backed away from treating all whites as the enemy. He said, “The slavemaster is no longer hindering us, we’re hindering ourselves,” and warned that “anger can blind human vision.” In 1965, he was assassinated by a fellow black Muslim.

After Elijah Muhammad’s death in 1975, **Louis Farrakhan** became the most prominent Nation of Islam leader. He continues to preach Fard’s black power racial superiority. In 2013, Farrakhan preached a year-long series of sermons on his wild-eyed views such as the “Mother Wheel,” a gigantic spaceship that will allegedly rescue the Nation of Islam from the earth, and a “shadow government” called “Final Call” that will destroy America for her treatment of blacks. Farrakhan has called for the murder of white people multiple times. Speaking before a packed auditorium at Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Miami, Florida, in 2021, Farrakhan told his enthused audience that he is looking for ten thousand men who will disdain death and retaliate against oppression of black people. The black Muslim leader said, “I’m looking for ... ten thousand men who say, Death is sweeter than continued life under tyranny. ... [The Quran says,] ‘Retaliation is prescribed in matters of the slain.’ Retaliation is

a prescription from God, to calm the breast of those whose children have been slain. So if the federal government will not intercede in our affairs, then we must rise up and kill those who kill us. Stalk them and kill them and let them feel the pain of death that we are feeling” (Facebook.com, OfficialMinisterFarrakhan). Congregants shouted agreement and gave the delusional man a standing ovation. A frightful number of blacks are killed every year, but they are being killed by their fellow blacks in the violent neighborhoods created by their race-baiting leaders who grown rich preaching endless victimization. Massive numbers of black babies are killed in the womb by their own mothers and the abortion industry led by Planned Parenthood.

In 1966, **Stokely Carmichael** became the head of the **Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee** (SNCC) and took it in a more aggressive, violent, racial-pride direction. He popularized the term “black power” and preached black superiority and opposed racial integration. He disallowed whites to join the SNCC and became bitterly anti-American and revolutionary. He said, “When you talk of black power, you talk of building a movement that will smash everything Western civilization has created.” In 1967, he visited Marxist leaders in Cuba, North Vietnam, China, and Guinea. He moved to Guinea and died there of cancer in 1998 at age 57. He said the cancer was “given to me by forces of American imperialism.”

**The Black Panther Party** was formed in 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Claiming to be an innocent self-defense party, it was actually a black supremacist movement that fostered anger, violence, and racial division. The members dressed in black berets and black leather jackets and sought to intimidate anyone who opposed them. The Black Panthers claimed that widespread racism existed in law enforcement and used extreme isolated cases and

misrepresented cases as evidence. An example was the police shooting of an unarmed black teen named Matthew Johnson in San Francisco. The Black Panthers were Marxist in philosophy, demanding “employment, land, housing, and justice for all.” Newton was convicted of killing police officer John Frey in 1967 by shooting him four times in the back, though the conviction was overturned by an appellate court. Black Panther treasurer Bobby Hutton was killed in a shootout with police in 1968. At least two Black Panther members were murdered by their fellows.

Destructive race riots broke out in many cities the summer of 1967 driven by the black power philosophy.

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