

# Black Elitism and the Failure of Paternalism in Postbellum Georgia: The Case of Bishop Lucius Henry Holsey

By GLENN T. ESKEW

**D**URING THE SPRING OF 1858 THE METHODIST CHURCH IN ATHENS, GEORGIA, sponsored a week-long revival exclusively for the slave and free black population of the city. The warm May nights fostered the religious fervor of the crowd gathered in the church to hear the two circuit riders who had been sent to Athens by the plantation missions board of the southern Methodist church. A young free black minister who would later have his own illustrious and controversial career, the Reverend Henry McNeal Turner, preached to the congregation. His powerful voice struck the innermost souls of many worshipers, and by the end of the week nearly one hundred people had been converted to Christ and had joined the Methodist church.

On the last day of the revival a white evangelist, the Reverend W. A. Parks, delivered the Sunday sermon. At the end of the service, after most of the congregation had departed, a sixteen-year-old slave tarried near the altar, struggling "in an agony too great to describe." Noticing that the young man had remained behind, Parks announced to those leaving, "Brethren, I believe God will convert this boy right now. Let us gather around him and pray for him!" As the crowd surrounded the young mulatto slave, the minister intoned to God to save his soul. The object of this attention later recalled, in the stereotypical language of religious autobiography, that the "Lord rolled the burden of sin from my heart and heaven's light came shining in. O what a happy boy I was!" Tears coursed down the cheeks of the convert as he looked into the face of the evangelist, pointed his forefinger upwards, and said, "Brother, when you get to heaven, and the blessed Lord places a crown on your head, I will be one star in that crown."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The chapter "Lucius Henry Holsey: The Slave Who Founded A College," in Michael L. Thurmond, *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women in Athens History* (Athens, Ga., 1978),

---

MR. ESKEW is a doctoral candidate in the Department of History at the University of Georgia and an Albert Einstein Institution Fellow.

The young mulatto slave, Lucius Henry Holsey, later became a bishop in the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church in America and from this lofty position articulated a plantation mission ideology of paternalism as the best method for improving the situation of his fellow black southerners. He believed that by being "Christianized" and "civilized," blacks would be assimilated with whites. As long as whites treated him with a degree of respect, Holsey accepted the hegemony of planters; but in the late 1890s, when they adopted a new racial code that treated him like common black folk, he abandoned his hopes for assimilation and advocated black nationalism. Holsey's transformation suggests how one member of the aristocracy of color responded to what Rayford W. Logan called the "nadir" of black America. As Jim Crow eroded the paternalism that supported a three-tiered system of race relations, members of the mulatto elite apparently withdrew into their own closed communities, migrated North, or passed for white. Those who remained openly in the South cast their lot with African Americans. By 1920, when Holsey died, a rigid black-white line divided the nation as never before.<sup>2</sup>

---

originally suggested the subject of this essay. The sources on Holsey are scarce. Many original manuscripts were destroyed in August 1968 in a fire that razed Haygood Memorial Hall on the Paine College campus in Augusta, Georgia. Much of the material used by John Brother Cade in his sympathetic account of Holsey's life, *Holsey—The Incomparable* (New York, 1964), was destroyed at that time. Lucius Henry Holsey, *Autobiography, Sermons, Addresses, and Essays* (2d ed.; Atlanta, Ga., 1899), includes sermons and essays collected from among his works and apparently written between 1873 and 1898, although they are all undated. Several of the essays were written as speeches made before the general conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. A limited edition of Holsey's brief autobiographical sketch and a new introduction by Paine College Professor George E. Clary, Jr., recently appeared as L. H. Holsey, *The Autobiography of Bishop L. H. Holsey* (Keysville, Ga., 1988). The account of Holsey's conversion is taken from Holsey, *Autobiography*, 18; quotations are from Alfred Mann Pierce, *A History of Methodism in Georgia* (Atlanta, Ga., 1956), 132–33, and originally appeared in William Pope Harrison, ed., *The Gospel Among the Slaves* (Nashville, Tenn., 1893; rpt. New York, 1973), 350–53, see also 384–88 in Chap. 18, "Testimony of Prominent Freedmen"; Mungo Melanchthon Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner* (Atlanta, Ga., 1917; rpt., New York, 1970), 155–58; and for a discussion of the revival and Turner's impression of Athens see Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1992), 27–30. The author thanks Numan V. Bartley, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Sherree H. Dendy, Eugene D. Genovese, William F. Holmes, John C. Inscoc, Virginia Kent Anderson Leslie, William S. McFeely, August Meier, and Bennett H. Wall for their helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> Historians tend to agree with C. Vann Woodward's analysis of a "capitulation to racism" as argued in his seminal work, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York, 1955), but the black elite's response to the "nadir" remains an open question. In his book *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877–1901* (New York, 1954), Rayford W. Logan describes "The Nadir Under McKinley," 79–96. For a discussion of postbellum paternalism see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, and London, 1971), especially Chap. 7, "The New South and the New Paternalism, 1877–1890," 198–227. In *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York and Oxford, 1984), Joel Williamson characterizes three strains of white thought on race—conservative, liberal, and radical—that vied for dominance in the South during this period. Between 1897 and 1907 the radicals held sway over the region instigating lynchings and other forms of violent racial

Born near Columbus, Georgia, in 1842, Holsey was the son of his white master, James Holsey. He remembered his "aristocratic" father as a "gentleman of classical education, dignified in appearance and manner of life" who could neither black his own boots nor saddle his own horse. With muted contempt, Holsey added that his father "never married, but mingled, to some extent, with those females of the African race that were his slaves—his personal property." These included his mother, Louisa, a beautiful woman of "pure African descent." She was an "intensely religious woman, a most exemplary Christian" who belonged to the Methodist church.<sup>3</sup> In 1848 Holsey's father died, and Holsey became the property of his white cousin, T. L. Wynn, who lived in Sparta, in Hancock County, Georgia. Holsey's white ancestors had lived in Hancock County, and thus the slave grew up among relatives. Holsey served Wynn as a body servant until 1857, when his dying twenty-six-year-old master asked Holsey to choose his next owner from between two of Wynn's intimate friends. Holsey selected Richard Malcolm Johnston, a planter and teacher in Hancock County who had just accepted a professorship at Franklin College in Athens.<sup>4</sup>

---

oppression. In his *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York and London, 1980), Williamson analyzes the antebellum three-tiered system of race relations that created a separate sphere for free blacks—often mulattoes—between the larger slave and white worlds. He describes the disintegration of mulatto society and the emergence of rigid segregation at the turn of the century. In the classic *Negro Thought in America, 1880–1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1963), 161–255, August Meier suggests that the black mind itself divided over the issue between the conservative ideas of Booker T. Washington and the radical challenge of W. E. B. Du Bois. John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era, 1900–1920* (Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1977), suggests that the black nationalism of Holsey and Turner offered a third solution in addition to those presented by Washington and Du Bois, especially for the black "poor and uneducated, who had little concern for philosophies of accommodation or protest" (p. 177); and Willard B. Gatewood notes in *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880–1920* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Ind., 1990), Chap. 11, that the black elite's response to Jim Crow varied.

<sup>3</sup>Holsey, *Autobiography*, 9.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Henry Phillips, *The History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America* . . . (Jackson, Tenn., 1898; rpt., New York, 1972), 213; Elizabeth Wiley Smith, *The History of Hancock County, Georgia* (Washington, Ga., 1974), II, 90, 97; Buster W. Wright, *Burials and Deaths Reported in the Columbus (Georgia) Enquirer, 1832–1872* ([Columbus, Ga.], 1984), 221; and Rhea Cumming Otto, *1850 Census of Georgia, Hancock County* (Savannah, Ga., 1980), 18, 41; for a description of Hancock County see James C. Bonner's essay, "Profile of a Late Antebellum Community," in Elinor Miller and Eugene D. Genovese, eds., *Plantation, Town, and County: Essays on the Local History of American Slave Society* (Urbana, Chicago, London, 1974), 29–49; John William Gibson and William Henry Croghan, *Progress of a Race, or the Remarkable Advancement of the American Negro* . . . (Atlanta, Ga., 1902; rpt., Miami, Fla., 1969), 532–34, mentions Wynn's owning Holsey's mother. For information on the white and mulatto branches of the Wynn family and on the aristocrats of color in Hancock County see Adele Logan Alexander, *Ambiguous Lives: Free Women of Color in Rural Georgia, 1789–1879* (Fayetteville, Ark., 1991); Holsey, *Autobiography*, 10, 16. After the Civil War, Johnston became a famous local colorist whose writings included *Dukesborough Tales*, published under the pseudonym Philemon Perch (Baltimore, 1871); and *Old Times in Middle Georgia* (New York and London, 1897). See also the *Autobiography of Col. Richard Malcolm Johnston* (Washington, D. C., 1900); and Edwin Anderson Alderman and Joel Chandler Harris, eds., *Library of Southern Literature* (13 vols.; Atlanta, New Orleans, and Dallas, 1907), VI, 2781–85.

Describing himself as the "property" of Johnston, Holsey recalled the move to Athens: "As an important part of his effects, I was carried along with him and his family as carriage driver, house servant, and gardener." His reference to being a "part of his effects" and Johnston's "property" demonstrates an awareness of the dehumanizing aspects of slavery, yet he recognized his favored status as a house slave by referring to his own importance. Three-fourths of the slaves in the South worked in the fields, and of the remaining one-fourth, only a few achieved the status of body servant or carriage driver. While mulatto slaves were not invariably house servants, those who were blood relatives of their owners often were.<sup>5</sup>

Holsey, whose red hair and blue-gray eyes identified him as a product of miscegenation, later wrote an essay on the topic in which he denounced the "shameful practice" because of its illegality. Obviously referring to his father, he described the "craving, heaving and impulsive passion of men, [which] goads them on to blacklisted indulgences that even racial prejudices, many of which are stronger than death, cannot restrain." After condemning miscegenation, Holsey then dismissed the concept of racial inferiority. While acknowledging racial differences, he identified them as "conditional and circumstantial rather than constitutional." Holsey argued that "no man is born higher, purer, and better than another, so far as his real nature and the faculties of his humanity are concerned. One man may be superior to another in degree of learning, refinement and intellectual acquisitions; but this is in degree and not in kinds."<sup>6</sup> Throughout his life, Holsey struggled to correct this inequality, especially focusing on the promise of education. Yet as a fifteen-year-old slave, Holsey was illiterate.

After arriving in Athens, Holsey developed an "insatiable craving for some knowledge of books." Despite laws against slaves learning to read and write, Holsey determined to "take whatever risks" were necessary to achieve his goal. He purchased two Webster blue-back spellers, a copy of *Paradise Lost*, the Bible, and a dictionary. He enlisted the assistance of an old black man and several white children to teach him the alphabet and then taught himself how to read.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 16; and Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1976), 328-30. Although little is known of Holsey's father, the information on Wynn and Johnston suggests that they were indulgent masters. See Genovese's discussion on paternalism, 3-7; approximately one-third (39 percent) of all mulattoes in the U. S. lived in the Deep South, and most of these were slaves. See Williamson, *New People*, 24-26.

<sup>6</sup> The essay, "Amalgamation or Miscegenation" appeared in Holsey, *Autobiography*, 233-38, (first quotation p. 238, second p. 233, third and fourth p. 234); and for a physical description of Holsey by his granddaughter, Kate Dickson McCoy-Lee, see Virginia Kent Anderson Leslie, "Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege: Amanda America Dickson, 1849-1893" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1990), Appendix II-1, pp. 139-43.

<sup>7</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 16-18 (quotations from p. 16); and William A. Hotchkiss, *A Codification of the Statute Law of Georgia . . .* (New York, 1845), 772. For a discussion on slaves'

Holsey's purchase of the Bible and *Paradise Lost* suggests that he learned to read following his conversion. In an effort to Christianize the slaves, the southern Methodist church had initiated plantation missions such as the one that sponsored the revival where Holsey was converted. Under the direction of Bishop William Capers, southern Methodists promoted a plantation mission ideology of paternalism with its mutual obligations and reciprocal duties that reinforced black subservience. By Christianizing and civilizing their slaves, southerners attempted to pacify the growing northern abolitionist movement while stabilizing their work force. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MEC,S), which was formed as a result of an 1844 schism in the national denomination over the issue of slavery, supported plantation missions. Between 1829 and 1864 the southern Methodist church spent \$1.8 million on the effort and claimed, by the outbreak of the Civil War, 207,766 black members, of whom 66,559 belonged specifically to the plantation missions. However practical Christianizing the slaves might have been, it is more likely that the black and white evangelists acted out of genuine missionary zeal.<sup>8</sup> Holsey praised "these men of

---

self-education, see Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *When I Can Read My Title Clear: Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia, S. C., 1991).

<sup>8</sup> In his "Testimony" included in Harrison, ed., *Gospel Among the Slaves*, 384-86, Holsey explained that he learned to read in order to read the Bible. Having financed missionaries to the native Americans since 1819—Bishop Capers originally served as a missionary to the Indians beginning in 1821—the Methodist church expanded its activity to include Africa in 1832 and China in 1848 as well as the plantation South. After its formation in 1844 the MEC,S continued financing foreign missions although not at the same level as the plantation missions. See James Cannon, III, *History of Southern Methodist Missions* (Nashville, Tenn., 1926); and William May Wightman, *Life of William Capers* (Nashville, Tenn., 1902), 291-96. Wightman was ordained a bishop in the MEC,S in 1866 and knew Capers personally. Capers's catechism for slaves reinforced the servile status of blacks, see William Capers, *Catechism for the Use of the Methodist Missions . . .* (Nashville, Tenn., 1861), 13. For a discussion of the catechism see Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The Rise of "Colored Methodism": A Study of the Background and the Beginnings of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* (Dallas, Texas, 1972); for an account of the schism see Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton, N. J., 1965). Mathews argues that the southern Methodists established the plantation missions as an answer to the growing antislavery movement; see also James P. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern: Bondage, Freedom, and Education of Black People* (New York, 1974); several scholars have developed the argument that planters used Christianity as a means of social and labor control. See Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 183-93, on Methodism, 233-35, on slave resistance, 658-59; see also E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1966), 34-42. Like Capers, the Reverend Charles Colcock Jones, a Presbyterian from Georgia, argued in his treatise *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States* (Savannah, Ga., 1842; rpt., New York, 1969), 104-5, 156-71, 206-11, that through Christianization, slaves would have a "better understanding of the relation of master and servant: and of their reciprocal duties" (p. 206) and that the "pecuniary interests of masters" would be "advanced as a necessary consequence" (p. 208) while contributing "to safety" (p. 210). An excellent study of Jones's paternalism is Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin' Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South* (Atlanta, Ga., 1979). Clarke recognizes the irony involved in the plantation missions in that whites were concerned with the salvation of their slaves and not just the desire to make them obedient and dependent servants. See also Blake Touchstone's essay, "Planters and Slave Religion in the Deep South," in John B. Boles, ed., *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870* (Lexington, Ky., 1988), 99-126.

God in [the] ante-bellum decades" as "the most apostolic since the days of Pentecost . . . ." <sup>9</sup> Holsey himself had experienced a "change of heart" after hearing the charismatic Turner. <sup>10</sup> Following his conversion, Holsey felt called "to preach the gospel" but "saw no opening for such a thing in the days of slavery. . . ." Yet a persistent hope remained that he would one day have an "opportunity to proclaim God's truth." <sup>11</sup>

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Johnston left Athens and took his family and slaves back to Hancock County. There Holsey met Harriett A. Turner (no relation to H. M. Turner), a young house slave formerly owned by Bishop George Foster Pierce of the MEC,S, who had given the young woman to his daughter as a wedding present. In 1862 Holsey married the fifteen-year-old Harriett, and a wedding ceremony was held for the two favored slaves in the "spacious hall of the Bishop's residence," Sunshine. Pierce personally conducted the service. Holsey recalled: "The Bishop's wife and daughters had provided for the occasion a splendid repast of good things to eat. The table, richly spread, with turkey, ham, cake, and many other things, extended nearly the whole length of the spacious dining hall. 'The house girls' and 'the house boys' and the most prominent persons of color were invited to the wedding of the colored 'swells.' The ladies composing the Bishop's family, dressed my bride in the gayest and most artistic style, with red flowers and scarlet sashes predominating in the brilliant trail." <sup>12</sup>

A strong friendship developed between Holsey and Pierce, who recognized the slave's hunger for knowledge, his strong Christian faith, and his evident leadership potential. The son of the Reverend Dr. Lovick Pierce, a leader of southern Methodism, George F. Pierce was born in Greene County, Georgia. Ordained a bishop in the MEC,S in 1854, Pierce had previously served as president of both Wesleyan

<sup>9</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 255.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 18; Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 156.

<sup>11</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 11; Hotchkiss, *Codification of the Statute Law*, 840-41.

<sup>12</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 11-12 (quotations), 18; R. M. Johnston gave another account of the wedding. Johnston's property adjoined Pierce's plantation, and, as a result, "there were several intermarriages between his Negroes and mine. I once attended one between one of mine, Lucius (now one of your colored bishops) and Harriet, a fine woman belonging then to the Bishop. He performed the ceremony in his mansion, after which the bridal party with Negro and the whites spent the evening together until a late hour. He seemed to have partaken of some of the joyousness of our humble dependents." Johnston described Pierce as a kind master who preached paternalism. Johnston added that if someone mistreated a slave, knowledge of the transgression would get around and that the offender, "stepping into the Methodist church at Sparta might hear words from Pierce on the treatment of slaves, that would make him feel like hastening to undo or repair any wrong he may have done." See R. M. Johnston to A. G. Haygood, February 12, 1885, Folder 1, Box 1, Atticus Greene Haygood Papers (Special Collections Department, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta); for information on the life of Harriet Turner Holsey see Sara Jane McAfee, *History of the Woman's Missionary Society in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church* (rev. ed.; Phenix City, Ala., 1945).

College and Emory College. During the early postwar years he took Holsey under his tutelage and trained him in theology. For the rest of his life, Pierce referred to Holsey as his pupil. The relationship between Holsey and Pierce reflected the interracial cooperation expressed through religion. By working together as evangelists, blacks and whites in biracial churches came closer to racial equality than in any other area of southern society.<sup>13</sup>

A deep faith sustained Holsey, and he experienced an almost “mystical” relationship with God. Holsey once recalled feeling “out of the body and in another sphere where God and angels stood nearer to men.” These strong religious beliefs enabled Holsey to predict that assimilation would occur through Christianity: “Shem, Ham, and Japhet are all nearly in the same house and eating at the same table, saying the same prayers, singing the same songs, and worshipping the same God. . . . In the onward trend and rounding out of this great civilization, white and black, red and swarthy, with all the seven colors of the rainbow, shall be ground to dust and calcined by the stately tramp of a golden civilization, culminating in the external fixedness of the golden standard and crowned with the age of diamonds.”<sup>14</sup>

Following emancipation, southern Methodist freedmen could leave the discriminatory MEC,S and join one of the black independents—the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church or the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) Church—or the northern Methodist Episcopal Church. Most left. By 1866, only 78,742 of the 207,766 black members of the MEC,S in 1860 remained in the church. That number dropped to 19,686 by 1869. In evaluating the inability of the plantation mission ideology to continue inculcating values of black subservience and white paternalism in the postbellum era, the bishops of the MEC,S feared that the African-American independents and northern branches of Methodism would radicalize the freedmen. Thus the leaders of the

<sup>13</sup> Following emancipation, Holsey remained with his former master, R. M. Johnston, renting land as a tenant farmer until 1868. His wife did the laundry of students taught by Johnston at his school, Rockby. George Gilman Smith, *The Life and Times of George Foster Pierce* . . . (Sparta, Ga., 1888); and Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History of the CME Church* (Memphis, Tenn., 1985), 127, 246–47. Lakey is a bishop in the CME Church. Smith, *History of Hancock County*, II, 123–24; Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*, 213; Isaac Lane, *Autobiography of Bishop Isaac Lane* . . . (Nashville, Tenn., 1916), 152; in his *Autobiography* (p. 11) Holsey described Pierce as a “wonderful preacher, with wide influence, and august presence. Everybody loved, respected, and some almost adored him.” See also pp. 10, 15, 20; for a discussion of antebellum biracial religion see John B. Boles’s introduction to and Randy J. Sparks’s essay, “Religion in Amite County, Mississippi, 1800–1861,” in *Masters and Slaves*, 1–18, 58–80; and Katharine L. Dvorak, *An African-American Exodus: The Segregation of the Southern Churches* (Brooklyn, N. Y., 1991), 59–60, 156.

<sup>14</sup> Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 396 (first two quotations); Holsey, *Autobiography*, 278 (third quotation). See the essay, “The Trend of Civilization,” *ibid.*, 273–78, in which Holsey predicts a new civilization where “racial prejudice must fall and bow to the better and higher interests of man” (p. 277).

MEC,S decided to ordain black preachers and to organize a black branch of southern Methodism that would exist under the direct influence and indirect control of the southern white church.<sup>15</sup>

In 1868 Pierce conducted a review board of Methodists that examined Holsey and granted his ministerial license. Appointed to the Hancock County circuit, the young preacher led the newly organized Ebenezer Methodist Church made up of black former members of the white Sparta Methodist Church. Pierce gave land to the new black church that was led by his pupil, and a year later he administered deacon's orders to Holsey and other black ministers in the Georgia Colored Conference of the MEC,S. Appointed pastor of the black Andrew Chapel in Savannah, Holsey found when he arrived in the port city that the congregation was under the influence of the AME Church. Holsey struggled to sway the black communicants back to the MEC,S. In 1869 Pierce ordained Holsey as an elder, and at that time Holsey was elected delegate to the Organizing General Conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church scheduled to convene the following December in Jackson, Tennessee. At the conference white leaders of the MEC,S ordained two black bishops, and the CME Church officially came under the direct control of African Americans. The black delegates to the conference determined not to use their churches for political purposes and in return received church property from the MEC,S. Three years later, in March 1873, the CME General Conference met in Holsey's parish, Trinity CME Church in Augusta, where Pierce assisted CME Bishop William Henry Miles in ordaining Holsey and two others as bishops in the CME Church.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Statistics from Dvorak, *African-American Exodus*, 121. Dvorak argues that the CME Church organized after a failed attempt by black members within the MEC,S to achieve ecclesiastical equality. William B. Gravely, "The Social, Political and Religious Significance of the Formation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (1870)," *Methodist History*, XVIII (October 1979), 3-25, especially 15-16; Gravely asserts that the property question led to the formation of the separate black church. Holland N. McTyeire, *A History of Methodism* . . . (Nashville, Tenn., 1884), 666-71; McTyeire was ordained a bishop in the MEC,S in 1866. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 411-13; Katharine L. Dvorak, "After Apocalypse, Moses," in Boles, ed., *Masters and Slaves*, 186; and C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N. C., and London, 1990), 60-61.

<sup>16</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 11-20; Forrest Shivers, *The Land Between: A History of Hancock County, Georgia, to 1940* (Spartanburg, S. C., 1990), 216-17; in *Ambiguous Lives*, Adele Logan Alexander notes that members of the CME chose their denominational name because they "considered themselves 'colored' rather than 'African,'" (p. 159); and she recounts an anecdote that characterizes the elitist nature of Ebenezer, also called Holsey Memorial Church: "A heavyset, dark-skinned woman wearing a bandanna around her head, an apron, and generally shabby clothing supposedly rushed into the service at the Ebenezer church and positioned herself in a front-row pew, interrupting Bishop Holsey's sermon. Her color, her unpolished manner, and her dress immediately told the more affluent and lighter-skinned parishioners, decked out in their finest attire, that she was neither a member nor an invited guest. The woman fanned herself, gasped for breath, and tried to recover from her exertions while the minister and church members stared in stunned silence following her unexpected intrusion. Then, slowly, a solemn hymn reportedly swelled around the visitor as the congregation began to sing: 'None but the yellow, None but the



Critics of the CME Church claimed that the MEC,S had “set up” the separate church in order to “set off” its remaining black members. As Holsey explained in 1897: “I understand that we were ‘set up’ and not ‘set off.’ In no sense does this ‘setting up’ business destroy, neither was it intended to destroy the religious inter-racial relation that had obtained in days of old.” As Holsey makes clear, the MEC,S could not have set off the CME Church because of the plantation mission ideology of paternalism. Atticus Greene Haygood, later a bishop of the MEC,S, explained that the CME Church needed the “help of its mother” and that if anyone thought that setting them up equated to setting them off in order to get “rid of a burden,” then “let them repent of this evil thought.”<sup>17</sup>

Many black communicants supported and others acquiesced in the MEC,S plan to set up the CME Church; but not all black members wanted to leave the MEC,S. Toward the end of his life, Holsey angrily recalled: “So far, therefore, as the Negro was concerned, many were pushed out of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, against their will, and had to set up organizations of their own, duplicating the mother church as far as possible in all things that seemed legitimate and necessary for its development and its perpetuity.” Apparently, some of the African Americans who joined the CME Church did so only because they could no longer stay in the MEC,S. They were not given this option.<sup>18</sup>

Although separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church retained strong ties to its white parent. CME Bishop Othal Hawthorne Lakey in his *History of the CME Church* noted that a “close affinity” between black and white Methodists had developed during slavery and that despite the social and political changes brought on by emancipation, “the personal rela-

---

yellow, None but the yellow . . . shall see God.” (p. 162). Holsey worked under the auspices of the MEC,S in Savannah, and the church ultimately regained control of Andrew Chapel, which it gave to the CME Church; see Haygood S. Bowden, *History of Savannah Methodism from John Wesley to Silas Johnson* (Macon, Ga., 1929), 139, 141. The renegade congregation then formed St. Phillip’s AME Church. Whereas the AME Church actively supported the Republican party during Reconstruction, the CME Church maintained an apolitical policy reflecting the conservative nature of its members, many of whom had ties to the white elite. Consequently, the MEC,S gave its former plantation mission properties to the CME Church. See Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*, 104–5; Clarence E. Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 1982); Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*, 26, 57–60; and Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 36, 126, 159–61, 220; on paternalism and the formation of the CME Church see Lakey, *Rise of “Colored Methodism”*; and Eula Wallace Harris and Maxie Harris Craig, *Christian Methodist Episcopal Church: Through the Years* (rev. ed.; Jackson, Tenn., 1965), 54–55.

<sup>17</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 247; Atticus G. Haygood, *Our Brother in Black: His Freedom and His Future* (Nashville, Tenn., 1881; rpt., Nashville, Tenn., 1887), 236–37. Haygood wrote: “The ‘Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America’ that was ‘set up’—I hope not ‘set off’—needs the help of its mother.”

<sup>18</sup> Quotation from Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 71; by 1892 only 357 black communicants remained in the MEC,S. See Dvorak, *African-American Exodus*, 168.

tionships and the rapport that had been established during slavery for the most part continued." Lakey concluded that "many of the leaders of the M.E. Church, South, had brought them [African Americans] the Gospel, and had served them as pastors, presiding elders, and bishops. Hence, the ties between the former slaves and the Southern Methodists were religious as well as personal." Certainly Pierce had been Holsey's teacher, mentor, and friend.<sup>19</sup>

During the turmoil of the postwar years and Reconstruction, when many blacks struggled for independence from whites through active involvement in politics, an apolitical Holsey remained loyal "to those who appeared to be my enslavers and oppressors." He described the reaction of other African Americans to his loyalty to whites when he recalled in 1919 that "in the seventies and eighties I was very much slandered, persecuted, and rejected by my own race and people."<sup>20</sup> Holsey's favorable references to slavery seem puzzling. In one essay he wrote: "However unrighteous or repugnant to a Christian civilization the institution seems to have been, and whatever changes have come over the public mind since its abolition, one thing is clear, and that is, the Negro race has lost nothing by it, but has gained a thousand pounds sterling where it has lost a penny."<sup>21</sup> A second passage on slavery written by Holsey is of a more personal nature: "The training that I received in the narrow house of slavery has been a minister of correction and mercy to me in all these years of struggle, trial, labor and anxiety. I have no complaint against American slavery. It was a blessing in disguise to me and to many. It has made the negro race what it could not have been in its native land. Slavery was but a circumstance or a link in the transitions of humanity, and must have its greatest bearing upon the future."<sup>22</sup>

Both references to slavery reveal important elements of Holsey's personal philosophy. First, Holsey believed that, as a result of slavery, the black man was Christianized and thus saved from damnation, hence gaining a "thousand pounds sterling." Second, as a result of slavery, the black man was exposed to the "superior" white civilization. Holsey dismissed the concept of racial inferiority, but he believed that blacks could learn from the "superior training, [and] higher culture" of whites.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 127.

<sup>20</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 10; the 1919 quote from Holsey is taken from a citation of his unpublished revised autobiography in Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 53; apparently an exception to the rule, Holsey's apolitical views during Reconstruction differed greatly from those of other black preachers. See Edmund L. Drago, *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia: A Splendid Failure* (Baton Rouge and London, 1982), especially 24–25, 33–34, 46–47.

<sup>21</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 253.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 235. See the essay "Amalgamation or Miscegenation" for Holsey's rejection of racial inferiority (pp. 233–38). However, Holsey described African Americans as a "semi-civilized people" (p. 22).

From a black perspective, Holsey espoused what John David Smith has described as the postbellum "new proslavery argument." The case of Holsey suggests that some black people viewed slavery as a civilizing and Christianizing influence and thus not as unmitigated evil. Holsey's position as a highly respected bishop of the CME Church grew out of the acceptance by his black constituency of his views on slavery and race relations. CME members could have joined more activist sects but chose to remain in the smallest of the African-American Methodist denominations, the "old Slavery church." Other bishops of the CME Church also expressed beliefs in keeping with those of Holsey and of the church's laity. Bishop Henry M. Turner of the AME Church accepted the slavery-as-school metaphor, as did the editor of the Indianapolis *Freeman*, George L. Knox, who had been a slave. Even Booker T. Washington, as Smith notes, thought of slavery as a "divine plan for black progress."<sup>24</sup> Thus Holsey was not alone in his attitudes.

Although it did not alter his belief in paternalism, a revealing incident occurred in 1875 when Bishop Holsey spent some time with northern Methodists at a camp meeting in Round Lake, New York. Holsey preached before the thousands of mostly white people gathered at the resort. Later he reported: "The impression had been made on my mind that these Northern white brethren would scorn us and would not receive us into their houses, and accordingly I expected to meet with such treatment; but far from it. We were kindly, cordially, and warmly received and entertained during the meeting. We were not treated as an

<sup>24</sup>John David Smith, *An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918* (Westport, Conn., and London, 1985; rpt., Athens, Ga., and London, 1991), especially pp. 197-238; Smith paraphrases Washington on p. 206. Smith emphasizes blacks who rejected the revised "old creed," especially the slavery-as-school analogy, and deemphasizes those who accepted it. In his current work, he addresses the acceptance of the proslavery creed by the mulatto conservative William Hannibal Thomas. See John David Smith, "How I became 'a doubting Thomas'—Methodological Problems with Local Black History Research" (unpublished paper, author's possession). For studies of the "old creed" see William Sumner Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1935; rpt., Gloucester, Mass., 1960), and for a different perspective see Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens, Ga. and London, 1987). For the other bishops' views on slavery see Charles Henry Phillips, *From the Farm to the Bishopric: An Autobiography* (Nashville, Tenn., 1932), 7-8; and Harrison, ed., *Gospel Among the Slaves*, 380-82; for a less favorable picture see Monroe Franklin Jamison, *Autobiography and Work of Bishop M. F. Jamison . . .* (Nashville, Tenn., 1912), 32; for "old Slavery Church" see Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*, 72. In 1884 the CME Church claimed some 155,000 laymembers as opposed to 391,044 for the AME and 300,000 for the AME Zion churches; see McTyeire, *History of Methodism*, Appendix A. On Turner see Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus: Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements, 1890-1910* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1969), 35-36 and Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*, 263; Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., ed., *Slave and Freeman: The Autobiography of George L. Knox* (Lexington, Ky., 1979); and Knox's essay "The American Negro and His Possibilities," in D. W. Culp, ed., *Twentieth Century Negro Literature* (Atlanta, Ga., 1902), 454-63. Indeed, aristocrats of color perceived themselves as carrying white culture and civilization to the black world; see Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 27-29; and Williamson, *New People*, 130.

inferior race of beings, neither were we known by the color of the skin or the peculiarities of the hair, but as brethren in the Lord. These good brethren did everything to make us happy." His surprise suggests that the damnyankee was not nearly the devil he had been led to believe.<sup>25</sup>

When the CME Church was invited to be a participant in the first Ecumenical Methodist Conference in London, England, Bishop Holsey traveled there in September 1881 to represent his church. Delegates from nearly thirty branches of Methodism worldwide attended the twelve-day meeting. Holsey addressed the conference and then toured Europe, including Paris, where one of his daughters studied piano. The next year, Holsey's nineteen-year-old daughter, Louisa M. Holsey, a student at Atlanta University, died at home in Augusta.<sup>26</sup> Holsey left the fifth General Conference of the CME church then meeting in Washington, D. C., to conduct the funeral. In his absence the CME Church elected Holsey "fraternal delegate" to the MEC,S General Conference concurrently held in Nashville, Tennessee, and instructed him to appeal to the MEC,S for educational assistance. After returning to Washington and receiving these instructions, Holsey left for Nashville.<sup>27</sup>

Holsey had long been an advocate for educating his fellow freed-

<sup>25</sup> Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*, 100. Toward the end of the decade, Holsey wrote an article on Methodist theology, "Wesley and the Love Feast," that he intended to be his (and the CME Church's) contribution to the *Wesley Memorial Volume*, a collection of essays edited by the Rev. James Osgood Andrew Clark of the MEC,S to commemorate the building of the Wesley Memorial Church in Savannah, Georgia. Instead of including Holsey's theological paper in the collection of essays, Clark replaced it with another essay by Holsey, "Wesley and the Colored Race." The substitution of subject matter—a black man's statement on race relations rather than his ideas on religion—sadly demonstrates Holsey's role in the church while suggesting he envisioned equal footing as a theologian; see J. O. A. Clark, *The Wesley Memorial Volume* (New York, 1880), 256–67; and L. H. Holsey to J. O. A. Clark, January 29, March 19, April 11, 1879, Box 2, James Osgood Andrew Clark Papers (Special Collections Department, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University).

<sup>26</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 28–30; and "World Methodist Conference" in Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (2 vols.; Nashville, Tenn., 1944), II, 2600–2. Apparently called "Ruth" by her family, Louisa "was becoming widely acclaimed as a talented musician." Of Lucius and Harriett Holsey's other children, James Henry graduated from Howard University and opened a dental practice first in Augusta, then in Atlanta; Katie M. married Charles Dickson—the grandson of white Hancock County planter David Dickson—but divorced him and afterward lived with her father; the Rev. C. Wesley served as the CME presiding elder of the Augusta District but failed in his attempt to be chosen bishop in 1922; and Ella B., Claud Lucius, and the painter and publisher Sumner L. moved to Boston, Massachusetts. Two other children died shortly after birth. Quotation from Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 148; Atlanta *Independent*, May 7, 1904; Leslie, "Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege"; and Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 392.

<sup>27</sup> Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*, 124–27; George Esmond Clary, Jr., "The Founding of Paine College—A Unique Venture in Inter-Racial Cooperation in the New South (1882–1903)" (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1965), 39–40; see also William L. Graham, "Patterns of Intergroup Relations in the Cooperative Establishment, Control and Administration of Paine College (Georgia) by Southern Negro and White People: A Study of Intergroup Process" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1955).

men, and he brought that concern to the 1882 MEC,S General Conference. As early as 1869 he had championed a school for black ministers and teachers to continue the evangelistic work of the plantation missions. Speaking before the assembled white clergy, Holsey explained the role of African Americans as threefold: "servants," "citizens," and "Church-children." He elaborated: "With this three-fold cable we are strongly bound together and united in a manner that cannot be analyzed or fully understood by a stranger. . . . It seems natural that we should follow you, and make ourselves a duplicate of you as far as we are able. We have looked, and still look, to you for guidance an [sic] counsel. We ask your sympathy, aid, and cooperation in redeeming your friends and former slaves from the long night of darkness and degradation. Who will come to the rescue? Who will hear the cries of the children of Ham?"<sup>28</sup> After thirteen years the MEC,S had at last heard the cries of the CME Church and endorsed Holsey's concept of education. The General Conference collected \$251 for CME educational purposes but did little else for black schools.

The ground for this limited success had been prepared by Haygood who, in *Our Brother in Black*, first published in 1881, had called on the white mother church "to establish a great 'training-school' for this colored daughter." During the summer of 1882 Haygood assisted his mentor Pierce and others on the MEC,S educational commission, which chartered Paine Institute in Augusta. Pierce was the senior bishop in the MEC,S and chaired the meeting that established the school and appointed Holsey to the board of trustees. Yet Pierce did not see education as leading to assimilation. Haygood later accused Pierce of throwing "cold water on the negro education business" and thus failing to support Paine Institute. Pierce viewed blacks as inferior and their efforts to achieve equality as committing "violence (contrary to) the ordination of nature."<sup>29</sup> Whether Holsey recognized this charac-

<sup>28</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 23; Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 80–81; Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*, 84–85; "Bishop Holsey's Address" before the MEC,S General Conference of 1882, meeting in Nashville, is reprinted in full as Appendix B in Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 667–70 (quotation from 669–70); see also 442–49. Holsey used the racist rhetoric of the day by describing African Americans as the descendants of Ham. See Thornton Stringfellow, "The Bible Argument: Or Slavery in the Light of Divine Revelation" in E. N. Elliott, ed., *Cotton Is King, and Pro-slavery Arguments . . .* (Augusta, Ga., 1860), 461–92.

<sup>29</sup> C. T. Wright, "The Development of Education for Blacks in Georgia, 1865–1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1977), 162–66; Clary, "Founding of Paine College," 64–65; Haygood, *Our Brother in Black*, 236–37. Haygood, who was a paternalist, dedicated his life to improving the condition of southern blacks, and he was at times ostracized for his efforts, being called the "Nigger Bishop." In *Our Brother in Black*, Haygood stressed the need for racial toleration, acceptance of black land ownership, and support for African-American schools. A native of Georgia and president of Emory University, Haygood served as the first general agent of the John F. Slater Fund, which emphasized manual education for blacks. See John E. Fisher, *The John F. Slater Fund: A Nineteenth Century Affirmative Action for Negro Education* (Lanham,

teristic of his friend remains uncertain.

Holsey, in line with the guiding principles of Paine Institute, proposed that southern white teachers be employed to train the black students. Many African Americans ridiculed the concept as an extension of the "Southern sentiment" expressed during slavery. Some black people referred to Holsey and the black supporters of what was called the Paine Idea as "'Democrats,' 'bootlicks,' and 'white folks' niggers,' whose only aim was ultimately to remand the freedmen back to abject bondage." Holsey responded to his critics in a statement that reflected his personal views of Reconstruction: "It ought to be said, however, that after emancipation the Negroes held themselves aloof from the Southern people to such extent that no proposition made by the latter could reach the former. Consequently, the margin for evangelistic labors among Negroes by Southern white people was narrow." In other words, the struggle for black independence from whites during Reconstruction hindered the Christianization of freedmen. Holsey's defense of the Paine Idea exhibits his trust in white men: "From the time of the emancipation of the slaves by the fortunes of war, I have not seen any reason why the Southern people should not be the real and true friends of the Negro race. The very religion that they taught, and practiced, and preached to the Negroes, directed them to be the friends of the ex-slaves. Consequently, I can see no reasons why they should not teach Negroes in the school room."<sup>30</sup>

The Paine Idea demonstrated an unusual feature that set Paine Institute apart from the other institutions founded for black education

---

Md., New York, and London, 1986); Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 90-99; quotations on Pierce cited in Harold W. Mann, *Atticus Greene Haygood: Methodist Bishop, Editor, and Educator* (Athens, Ga., 1965), 190; Elam Franklin Dempsey [ed.], *Atticus Green Haygood* (Nashville, Tenn., 1940), 182-97. In *Crucible of Race*, 88-93, Joel Williamson presents Haygood as the quintessential racially liberal clergyman who personified the continuity of paternalism. This view is evident in Haygood's January 17, 1888, letter to Rutherford B. Hayes, then a board member of the Slater Fund: "Our people will come to *their* duty slowly—but the debate is over as to the general question." The MEC,S had decided to support black education; and Haygood, Pierce, Holsey, and others had requested \$250,000 from the Slater Fund for Paine's initial endowment. Pierce and Haygood's protege, Bishop Warren A. Candler, did not support higher education for African Americans, and the school did not receive the grant from the Slater Fund. Haygood criticized Pierce in a letter to Hayes, see Louis D. Rubin, Jr., ed., *Teach the Freeman: The Correspondence of Rutherford B. Hayes and the Slater Fund for Negro Education, 1888-1893* (Baton Rouge, 1959), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 25, (first two quotations), 24 (third quotation), 23 (last quotation); in his *Autobiography*, 21, CME Bishop Lane described the African-American opposition to the denomination: "We were severely criticized and maligned because we did not rebel and secede. Other independent Negro Methodist Churches had rebelled and seceded, and because we chose to be regular and orderly we were charged with being sympathizers with slavery. In many places we were called Democrats and the like." Bishop W. H. Miles recalled an altercation with some black Methodists in East Texas: "One very old lady, bending over a long staff, said: 'My God, brethren; I am a radical all over! Go away from here, you conservatives!'" See *Christian Index*, June 12, 1873, quoted in Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*, 72-73.

during the period. In essence an extension of the plantation mission ideology of paternalism, the school represented a biracial attempt by indigenous white southerners to educate the black man. Holsey advocated white assistance, and he sought a mutual relationship between southern blacks and whites working together to improve the situation of African Americans and by extension the South. The *Augusta Chronicle* welcomed the school, noting that "it will be greatly to the negro's advantage that those who best know him and his wants should teach him; and it is much better for the white people that the negro should find his teacher in the superior race in whose midst he lives."<sup>31</sup>

Not everyone shared Holsey's vision. Many of the white elite in Augusta opposed the education of African Americans, and blacks disliked the Paine Idea so much that in order to get students Holsey had to pay them to attend class. Nevertheless, the bishop persisted. He sent his own children to school there, and his daughter, Katie M. Holsey, graduated in the first class in 1886. Ultimately he placed the institution on firmer financial footing with the help of patrons and a successful fund-raising campaign. The school was renamed Paine College in 1903, and the MEC,S continued to support it financially. Until 1971 the president was always a white southern Methodist.<sup>32</sup>

From the beginning Paine Institute offered a classical curriculum in keeping with Holsey's original concept of a liberal arts college that crowned an education system of elementary, secondary, and industrial schools—a concept similar to Thomas Jefferson's model for the University of Virginia. Like W. E. B. Du Bois, Holsey did not disparage industrial education; but, unlike Booker T. Washington, Holsey rejected exclusive reliance upon manual training. By the end of his life Holsey had established several industrial schools across Georgia, in particular in 1892 the Holsey Normal and Industrial Academy at Cordele, and the Helena B. Cobb School at Barnesville; yet the Paine Idea remained focused on the training of black ministers and teachers by southern whites.<sup>33</sup>

As corresponding secretary, Holsey wielded extensive power in the CME Church, yet infighting among its members suggested his weak-

<sup>31</sup> Clary, "Founding of Paine College," 143-51; and *Augusta Chronicle*, March 6, 1883, p. 4, col. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Holsey, *Autobiography*, 23-27; Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 78-102, 148; and Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 442-49. In 1885 the Rev. Moses U. Payne of Missouri donated \$25,000 to the school, which was named after Bishop Robert Paine of the MEC,S, who had presided over the organization of the CME Church. See Clary, "Founding of Paine College," 7-12, 42, 69-74.

<sup>33</sup> Curriculum of Paine College for 1887 outlined as Appendix 6 in Clary, "Founding of Paine College," 161-62 and 107-10; Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 79-80; and Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 394. Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, remains the seminal work on the conflicting ideologies of Washington and Du Bois.

ened control over the denomination. At the General Conference of 1894, Holsey's candidate to succeed Bishop William Henry Miles was selected in a heated contest. Despite Holsey's opposition a resolution to create a "Committee on the State of the Country" passed by a slim margin. These spirited political races contradicted the CME Church's "disposition to separate herself from every question that was political in tendency." Suffering from tuberculosis, Holsey asked the conference for a break from his episcopal duties so that he could recuperate in New Mexico—a trip he was financially unable to take. His health had declined throughout the 1880s; an earlier request for a respite had been denied in 1890 by the College of Bishops, but it had reduced his workload. During his convalescence, Holsey focused on writing. He returned to his episcopal burden in the fall of 1896, about the time he launched a new church newspaper, the *Gospel Trumpet*, to counter Charles Henry Phillips's editorials in the *Colored Methodist Episcopal Christian Index*. A future bishop in the CME Church, Phillips used his position as editor to campaign for higher office, consequently placing himself at odds with Holsey.<sup>34</sup>

Soliciting funds for the construction of a major building on the Paine campus to be named after the late Bishop Haygood, Holsey addressed the MEC,S General Conference of 1898. He envisioned that Paine would prepare black missionaries to go to Africa and redeem the "fatherland"; but he dismissed the idea of emigration to Africa, which had been proposed by Bishop H. M. Turner of the AME Church as a solution to the failure of Reconstruction. Holsey acknowledged that "the Negro is here and *en masse* he is here to stay. He is an important part of the body politic. . . . As such he is a factor in the growth and development of this great civilization." During his speech, Holsey summarized his philosophy and subsequent teachings: "The Negro did not march out of slavery empty-handed, but . . . came out with deep touches of your Christianity and flashes of your civilization, and received an upward propulsion that he could not have obtained in his native land." Referring to master-slave reciprocity, Holsey argued that "emancipation did not abrogate moral obligation." Despite the changed relations between the races, southern whites were obligated to assist African Americans in the "dawn" of their "Christian civilization." Reemphasizing the goal of racial cooperation with the ultimate hope of assimilation, Holsey concluded: "You need our brawn and muscle; we need your brain and culture. You need our sinews of brass and bones of

<sup>34</sup> Phillips, *History of the CME Church*, 164–71 (first two quotations are on p. 171), 176, 191; and Phillips, *From the Farm to the Bishopric*, 128–31. Phillips also supported self-segregation in response to white discrimination but opposed legal Jim Crow. See Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 49, 56; Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 317–36. A bimonthly that ran for six years, the *Gospel Trumpet* first published on September 2, 1896. Apparently there are no extant copies.



iron. We need your steady hand to prosecute the noble ends of life, and the triumphs of a Christian civilization. You have the mental force, we have the physical power, and I come to plead for a combination of both . . . ."<sup>35</sup> Although appealing to white ministers and laymen to contribute to the construction of Haygood Memorial Hall, Holsey's articulation of the plantation mission ideology of paternalism stemmed from his own personal belief rather than from a cynical desire to raise monies.

Holsey's *Autobiography, Sermons, Addresses, and Essays*—first published in 1898, reprinted in 1899, and used as a text for MEC,S seminary students—advocated Christianizing and civilizing African Americans. Written during the 1880s and 1890s, the essays reflect what Dr. George Williams Walker, the white president of Paine Institute, called a "faithful product of the missionary zeal of this church [MEC,S] that was awakened by Bishop Capers in founding the missions to the slaves." From the beginning Holsey adhered to the paternalistic ethos that pervaded the doctrine and practice of the CME Church. That ethos lay behind his support of the Paine Idea in education. As secretary of the College of Bishops for forty years, Holsey controlled church policy. He selected MEC,S literature, doctrine, and even ministers as teachers in the CME Church. In 1894 he published *A Manual of the Discipline of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America*, which was a revision of the 1874 MEC,S *Manual of Discipline*, and several hymnals including the popular *Songs of Love and Mercy*. As Lakey noted, Holsey gave the CME Church "its definition and provided the rationale for its being."<sup>36</sup>

Holsey's leadership in the church made him a prominent member of the mulatto elite in Augusta, a thriving black community. Spared by Gen. William T. Sherman's march to the sea during the Civil War, postbellum Augusta quickly returned to business and experienced financial success that was shared by some blacks in the city—espe-

<sup>35</sup> See "Speech Delivered Before Several Conferences of the M. E. Church, South," in Holsey, *Autobiography*, 239–48 ("fatherland" on p. 243, first quotation p. 242, second, third, fourth and fifth quotations p. 243, last quotation p. 246). Holsey raised about eight thousand dollars in support of the building; see Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*, 217.

<sup>36</sup> Walker wrote the introduction to Holsey, *Autobiography*, 5–7 (quotation p. 5), and he concluded that Holsey discerned in slavery a "providential blessing to both white and black—a harsh measure to bring the ignorant Negro in contact with the educated Caucasian [sic]" (p. 5). Cade claims that the MEC,S used Holsey's *Autobiography* as a seminary text; see Holsey—*The Incomparable*, 42; and L. H. Holsey, *A Manual of the Discipline of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (Jackson, Tenn., 1894). Holsey added a preface and a revised ritual to the MEC,S hymnbook and published it as the *CME Hymn Book* in 1891. In collaboration with Fayette Montgomery Hamilton, Holsey wrote the hymn "O Rapturous Scenes," which is the unofficial anthem of the CME Church. See *The Hymnal of the CME Church* (Memphis, Tenn., 1987); and F. M. Hamilton and L. H. Holsey, *Songs of Love and Mercy* (Memphis, Tenn., 1968). Holsey also published a collection of inspirational poems and prose, *Little Gems* (Atlanta, 1905). Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 392 (second quotation), 116, 246–47; Lakey referred to Holsey as the "driving force of the CME Church" (*ibid.*, 33).

cially the few free persons of color who had owned property before the war. These light-skinned, upper-class Negroes were the pillars of black society in Augusta, and they controlled the few influential African-American institutions in the city—such as Trinity CME Church, Paine Institute, and Ware High School.<sup>37</sup> Race relations in Augusta—for the time and place—were considered mutually satisfactory for blacks and whites. The black principal of Ware, H. L. Walker, noted in 1894 that “in Augusta you will find two races of people living together in such accord and sympathy as are nowhere else to be found in all this Southland.” Indeed, many African Americans found Augusta “the garden spot of the country” in regards to race relations. Despite separate schools and hotels, public transportation remained unsegregated. A few blacks owned businesses that catered to an integrated clientele. Several black newspapers were published in the city, and the Republican party continued to operate until displaced by the People’s party.<sup>38</sup>

African Americans exercised a decisive balance of political power in Richmond County and even supported a reform element in the Democratic party opposed to the corruption of the ruling Bourbon Democrats. But both reform and regular Democrats opposed Thomas E. (“Tom”) Watson and the Populist movement. With heavy-handed corruption the Democrats crushed the Populists in 1896. The Democratic “reform element” then sought to maintain “honest, local reform government” by disfranchising the black and poor white Populists.<sup>39</sup> Black political allegiances shifted in the 1890s as the race politics of the Democrats turned harsher.

In the Tenth Congressional District, the Republican party had supported Watson in the elections of 1892 and 1894. Many ministers

<sup>37</sup> On the mulatto elite in Augusta see Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 90–91, 158; Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865–1890* (Urbana, Ill., 1980), 189, 248–49; Richard Henry Lee German, “The Queen City of the Savannah: Augusta, Georgia, During the Urban Progressive Era, 1890–1917” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1971), 37; Leslie, “Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege,” 245; and Horace Calvin Wingo, “Race Relations in Georgia, 1872–1908” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1969). The noted educator John Hope grew up among Augusta’s aristocracy of color; see Ridgely Torrence, *The Story of John Hope* (New York, 1948).

<sup>38</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, October 10, 1880, p. 7; J. Morgan Kousser, “Separate but not Equal: The Supreme Court’s First Decision on Racial Discrimination in Schools,” *Journal of Southern History*, XLVI (February 1980), 17–44; also see Kousser’s unpublished California Institute of Technology Working Paper No. 204 (March 1978), 4–7, 15–19 (quotations on p. 15). This paper is a similarly titled, unedited version of the *JSH* essay. Torrence quotes Augusta native Dr. Channing Tobias as saying “it was possible for a Negro in the Augusta of John Hope’s boyhood to aspire to the heights and to receive encouragement from white people in so doing.” See *Story of John Hope*, 59. The leading black newspaper in Augusta, the Reverend William Jefferson White’s *the Georgia Baptist*, was published from 1881 to 1909, but apparently there are no extant copies.

<sup>39</sup> German, “Queen City of the Savannah,” 45, 65–66, 130–36; C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York, 1938), 241–42, 265–69, 286–87; and Wingo, “Race Relations in Georgia,” 85–93.

endorsed the People's party in 1896 because its platform opposed convict lease and advocated temperance. As economic conditions worsened during the decade, black workers lost ground to new white wage earners. Some Negro monopolies failed as competition with white tradesmen and a decline in white customers undermined black artisans. Hard pressed, the mulatto elite in Augusta condemned the corruption of the Democratic party and urged African Americans to support the Populists.<sup>40</sup>

It appears that in 1896 Holsey abandoned his apolitical stance: He endorsed the People's party because he was disenchanted with Bourbon Democracy, opposed to convict lease, and in favor of prohibition. The actions of Augusta's aristocracy of color, which joined the revolt against the Democratic party, influenced Holsey as well. For whatever reasons, this atypical Populist became directly involved in politics. In 1896 his new publication, the *Gospel Trumpet*, began to express—however inconsistently—disenchantment with planter hegemony.

The People's party, Holsey wrote, "allows free speech to the black man as well as to the white man." It was the "political emancipator from the bondage of slavery and ostracism of the Negro vote and all other votes in the state of Georgia." On racial exploitation, Holsey explained that the black man's "wages, when he has any, are so low, and the discrimination against him is so great, universal and unyielding, that often he is baffled, confused, and dispirited. There is but little to encourage and inspire him as a man and a citizen in this land of oppression and where he is made the dumping ground for every moral evil, and the scavenger for the rot and virus of society." Out of desperation, some blacks turned to crime, but unlike white men who "steal fifty and a hundred thousand dollars, and are hardly ever hurt by it" because of a legal system that protects them, the "poor Negro, half starved, half naked, and half paid for his labor, steals a hog, a cow, or a sheep, or perhaps, a few melons or a handful of fruit, goes to the 'gang' or the penitentiary for months and years."<sup>41</sup>

Condemning the Bourbon Democrats for the "shameful, degrading, and disgusting" convict lease system that allowed "plutocrats, nabobs, millionaires, and gold magnates" to exploit a disproportionate number of black convicts for "blood money," Holsey acknowledged the Populist party as "anxious to correct the evil, and remove the shame and

<sup>40</sup> John Michael Matthews, "Studies in Race Relations in Georgia, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1970), 55-74; on blacks and prohibition see Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era*, 112-13; and Edward Aaron Gaston, "A History of the Negro Wage Earner in Georgia, 1890-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1957), 232-35, 278-88.

<sup>41</sup> Two editorials by Holsey from the *Gospel Trumpet*—"The Negro and Democracy in Georgia" and "The Convict Lease System"—are excerpted by Cade in *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 126-37 (quotations are on pages 129, 136, and 137).

disgrace from the great state of Georgia." Holsey accused the Bourbon Democrats of making a mockery of the "awful splendors of statesmanship" previously exhibited by the "angelic Stephens, the archangel Ben Hill, and the mighty Cobbs, whose undimmed radiance in the galaxy of shining stars is always brilliant . . ." <sup>42</sup> Referring to former Confederate vice president Alexander Hamilton Stephens, former Confederate senator Benjamin Harvey Hill, former Confederate generals Howell Cobb and Thomas R. R. Cobb, Holsey defended the Old South's planter aristocracy and thus revealed the long-term effects of paternalism while expressing his growing disaffection with the ruling Bourbon Democrats. He approved of the election of Republican William McKinley in 1896 because he supported the gold standard and disliked the Democrats' sectional politics. Holsey's shifting political opinion reflected the unraveling of his worldview. The political turmoil created by the Populist movement, and the concomitant change in race relations, apparently encouraged him to question his basic assumptions.

Discrimination, segregation, and ostracism increased in the late 1890s as white "reformers" implemented a new racial code. In 1897 the Richmond County School Board voted to close the all-black Ware High School. The closing of this symbol of interracial cooperation shocked African Americans in Augusta, whose leaders filed a lawsuit to secure implementation of "separate but equal" treatment under the law as pertaining to education. Holsey's old friends among the black elite—Joseph W. Cumming, James S. Harper, and John C. Ladeveze—financed the legal challenge, which reached the U. S. Supreme Court in 1899. In *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* the court ruled that the closure of Ware High School did not constitute state-supported racial discrimination in education; nevertheless, the decision ushered in an age of unequal funding. After 1897 a new era in race relations began in Augusta. While a boycott by blacks prevented the segregation of streetcars in 1898, the city enforced separate seating following a murder, a lynching, and a riot in 1900. The year before, the creation of an all-white Democratic primary effectively removed African Americans from local politics. By the turn of the century, there was a new racial code that viewed the black community as monolithic, and class differences among blacks were no longer recognized by whites. Holsey, who—by virtue of his elite status and paternalistic relationship with whites—had been spared some of the indignities suffered by average African Americans, was suddenly placed on an equal footing with common black folk, and his new status proved quite unsettling. Two of the three light-skinned friends of Holsey's who had fought and

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-31; on the Bourbon Democrats, see Kenneth Coleman, ed., *A History of Georgia* (Athens, Ga., 1977), 207-308.

lost the *Cumming* case left Augusta and passed for white. Unable, and perhaps unwilling, to deny his race, Holsey recanted his earlier belief in assimilation. From his new home on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, where he had moved in 1896, Holsey struggled with the so-called race problem.<sup>43</sup>

The change in the racial attitudes of the white South forced the mulatto Holsey to identify with full-blooded African Americans. Denouncing what he recognized as a "vast legalized scheme throughout the South to set the iron heel more permanently and desperately upon the head of the black man as a race, and as individual characters," Holsey confessed that "there would be hope to the rejected and aspiring Afro-American if good character and becoming behavior would or could count for anything in the civic arena. But we are now confronted by conditions where merit in the black man does not weigh one iota in human rights, and very little in human life, if that life and character is under a black or brown skin."<sup>44</sup> Drawing on personal experience, Holsey lamented: "Learning, personal accomplishments, the achievement of wealth, the reign of morality, and skilled handicraft amount to nothing whatever in the black man. Merit and fitness for citizenship and advanced qualifications for the high and holy functions of civil life cannot win for him the rights and safety that is the natural and God-given inheritance of all. Nowhere in the South is the black man as safe in his person and property as is the white man." Holsey continued: "Black men and black women, though cultured and refined, are treated as serfs and subjected to every imaginable insult and degradation that can be invented or discovered by an ill-plighted and perverse ingenuity."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Kousser, "Separate but *not* Equal," 27-28, 42-44; Kousser, Working Paper No. 204, pp. 13-15, 45-46; the *Georgia Baptist* reprinted an article concerning a murder and lynching that had occurred in Augusta. The black newspaper's reprinting the article so outraged elements of the white community that a mob formed and attacked the editorial offices. Two days later the Augusta City Council segregated the streetcars. See *Augusta Chronicle*, June 3, 1900, p. 1, and June 5, 1900, pp. 3, 5; and August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "The Boycott Movement Against Jim Crow Streetcars in the South, 1900-1906," *Journal of American History*, LV (March 1969), 756-75. See also *Cumming v. Richmond County Bd. of Educ.* 175 U. S. 528 (1899). The reasons for Holsey's move to Atlanta are unclear but could be church related. According to *Howard's Directory of Augusta . . . 1892/3* (Augusta, Ga., 1892), 273, Holsey lived at 1633 15th Street, which was near the campus at Paine Institute. The house, which later served as the parsonage for Williams Memorial CME Church, no longer stands. The *Atlanta City Directory* (Atlanta, Ga., 1899), XXIII, 801, lists Holsey's Atlanta address as 335 Auburn Avenue. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change now occupies the site of Holsey's house. For information concerning the elite African-American community on Auburn Avenue see August Meier and David Lewis, "History of the Negro Upper Class in Atlanta, Georgia, 1890-1958," *Journal of Negro Education*, XXVIII (Spring 1959), 128-39.

<sup>44</sup> L. H. Holsey, "Race Segregation," in *The Possibilities of the Negro in Symposium . . .* ([Atlanta, Ga.], 1904), 99-119 (quotation on p. 102); see also Clarence A. Bacote, "Negro Proscriptions, Protests, and Proposed Solutions in Georgia, 1880-1908," *Journal of Southern History*, XXV (November 1959), 471-98.

<sup>45</sup> Holsey, "Race Segregation," in *Possibilities of the Negro*, 102-3.

Revealing his earlier belief that through the plantation mission ideology blacks would achieve assimilation, Holsey admitted that he had supposed that "whenever the negro is prepared for the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, by culture, wealth and moral standing, and that whenever he becomes a skilled artisan and scientific farmer, then as a race the white people of the South will bestow upon him equal political privileges with themselves." As race relations achieved a new low by the turn of the century, Holsey realized the sham of his convictions. "How, then," he demanded, "can the Afro-American rise to the dignity of good citizenship and aspire to its possibilities, when political rights, privileges and agencies are taken from him?"<sup>46</sup>

Finding little solace in the paternalistic relations he had long maintained with whites, Holsey despaired, "no man of color, no matter how cultured and worthy, or however accomplished, refined and fitted, has ever been allowed to occupy the same civic plane with the white man of the South for a single hour." Where once he had advocated assimilation, now Holsey saw racial prejudice as making it "impossible for the two separate and distinct races to live together in the same territory in harmonious relations, each demanding equal political rights and equal citizenship." Holsey dismissed his favored status as a mulatto, which had reinforced his faith in paternalism, instead claiming that "the ruling race" rejected mixed bloods "to the same extent as the typical negro." With a finality that belies his earlier belief in assimilation, Holsey resolved: "The white people of the South have not been willing in the past; they are less willing now, and reason and experience teach us that they will not be willing at any time in the endless future for the race of black men to become their political equals, or occupy the same plane of freedom and citizenship, with themselves, no matter how well qualified they may be for it." Holsey concluded that there would never be peace between the races in the United States until "black Ham and white Japheth dwell together in separate tents."<sup>47</sup>

The grisly lynching of Sam Hose on Sunday, April 23, 1899, in Newnan, Georgia, typified the decade's dehumanization of black folk and demonstrated the barbarity that many white southerners accepted. One account of the atrocity reported that some "2,000 people surrounded the small sapling to which he [Hose] was fastened and watched the flames eat away his flesh, saw his body mutilated by knives and witnessed the contortions of his body in his extreme agony."<sup>48</sup> A week later in the *Atlanta Constitution*, columnist John Temple Graves called for the separation of the races: "These two opposite and inherently

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 105

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 106, 100, 107, 110, 119.

<sup>48</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, April 24, 1899, p. 1. Hose was one of twenty-seven people lynched in Georgia in 1899; see Coleman, ed., *History of Georgia*, 286.

antagonistic races cannot grow up side by side on equal terms of law and possession in the same territory."<sup>49</sup> Through a letter to the editor of the *Constitution*, published August 30, 1899, Holsey publicly responded to Graves and the lynching of Hose with his call for a separate black state within the United States.<sup>50</sup>

In a speech of August 18, 1899, Holsey announced his support for "separation and segregation" of the races with the goal of establishing a black state where, as "governor, legislator and judge," the African American "could be a man among men." Holsey justified his demand by explaining that "each year the racial differences are rendering it more and more impossible for the whites and the blacks to occupy the same territory, and there is nothing for the black man to do but to move or remain here as an oppressed and degraded race." For Holsey, "segregation" meant the separation of the races, which would end the perceived Negro "menace" to white civilization while preventing the "complete serfdom" of the African American. Holsey identified the Oklahoma and New Mexico territories as possible locations for the proposed black state. He believed that only the United States had the authority to solve the "race problem" and that blacks "should remain in their own country." According to his plan, the federal government would establish the segregated territory and protect blacks from whites, who were to be denied citizenship unless married to African Americans. The separate black state would then function like other states in the Union.<sup>51</sup> Retaining his elitist perspective, Holsey desired that the voluntary citizenry meet certain requirements, such as having "a reputable character, some degree of education, and perhaps a competency for one year's support."<sup>52</sup>

The likelihood of Holsey's plan ever being implemented was remote. Some twenty years earlier, Atticus Haygood had dismissed such an idea from a racist perspective that captured the white sentiment of the time: "The preposterous scheme of colonizing the whole six millions of our negro fellow-citizens in some part of the United States, as Arizona, for example, has been mentioned a few times. Such a scheme could never originate in the serious thinking of any representative Southern man. For the Southern people, with all that has been said and

<sup>49</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, April 30, 1899, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, August 30, 1899; W. E. B. Du Bois responded similarly; see *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York, 1971).

<sup>51</sup> "Bishop Holsey on the Race Problem" and "Bishop Holsey's Plan," both on p. 4 of the *Atlanta Constitution*, August 30, 1899; and L. H. Holsey, *The Racial Problem* (Atlanta, Ga., 1899). This pamphlet includes reprints of Holsey's letters (August 30 and September 29, 1899) to the *Constitution*, that newspaper's editorial response, the opinion of the *Augusta Chronicle*, and the *Chicago Times-Herald* coverage of the August 18, 1899, speech—apparently the first public expression of his views on racial separation—that Holsey delivered before a meeting of the Afro-American Council. Quotations are from Holsey, *Racial Problem*, 14, 15, 17, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Holsey, "Race Segregation," in *Possibilities of the Negro*, 116.

thought about them, know the negro too thoroughly and love him too well to wish him such a fate. What utter nonsense! what inhuman folly! A negro State! A little Africa in America!" Newspaper editor George L. Knox presented one black view when he described Moses Madden's 1920 plan to create a black state near the Rio Grande as "an unmistakable attempt at Jim Crowing our people." Yet for Holsey such segregation of the qualified, educated, and financially secure—the Negro upper class—would allow at least some African Americans to experience first-class citizenship.<sup>53</sup>

Holsey's dramatic response to the nadir of race relations was no more drastic than the actions taken by other members of the mulatto elite during this twilight of the aristocracy of color. The antebellum three-tiered system persisted in the postbellum period. Despite political cooperation during Reconstruction, the mulatto elite had distanced itself socially from the black masses in part because of the continuity of paternalism, which reinforced segregation within the black community. As Willard B. Gatewood has demonstrated, the aristocracy of color had self-consciously created a complex class structure that was almost impenetrable from below. Jim Crow removed this third class. By redefining southerners as either black or white, segregation destroyed the paternalism that had allowed upper-class blacks to maintain a separate world sanctioned by whites. After the turn of the century, class divisions survived in the black community, but the aristocracy of color passed away.<sup>54</sup>

Gatewood notes that the mulatto elite responded in several different ways to the nadir, and it appears that the degree to which whites "capitulated to racism" influenced the reactions of the black aristocrats. In border state cities such as Louisville and Baltimore a milder form of segregation developed. In both, streetcars remained integrated and black men voted, thanks in part to the efforts of the mulatto elite who organized protests against Jim Crow. In New Orleans and Charleston, where the three-tiered system had flourished, the mulattoes' response to segregation was more severe. New Orleans Creoles at first

<sup>53</sup> Haygood, *Our Brother in Black*, 20; and Gatewood, ed., *Slave and Freeman*, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, eds., *No Chariot Let Down: Charleston's Free People of Color on the Eve of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill and London, 1984) and Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York and London, 1984) describe the three-tiered system in South Carolina. While in *New People*, 3, 82, 108–9, Williamson argues that most mulattoes permanently merged with freedmen during Reconstruction, Thomas Holt convincingly demonstrates that class differences prevented racial bonding in his study *Black over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1977). Holsey fits Gatewood's analysis: "The rising tide of racism and the fading of hopes for an integrated society, as well as the decline in the economic base of the old upper class, eroded the prestige and influence of a group that had nurtured ties with whites and advocated assimilation into the larger society" (Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 335); on class structure see pp. 23–29; and on decline see "Into the 1920s," 332–40.



fought discriminatory laws, taking the case of Homer A. Plessy to the U. S. Supreme Court; but following the Court's "separate but equal" ruling, they withdrew into their private world and refused to associate with the larger African-American community. The non-Creole black Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, a former governor of Louisiana, sold his elegant mansion on Bienville Street near the New Orleans Customhouse and abandoned the South for the relative security of Washington, D. C. Like others of the mulatto elite, he escaped through migration. Nevertheless, despite the openness of the U. S. capital during Reconstruction, the atmosphere there chilled as the century ended. In Charleston, the drawing of the color line forced many elite light-skinned African Americans to move North and pass for white. Whole families escaped this way, but those who chose to remain espoused collective activism. Black sociologist Horace Mann Bond concluded that between 1880 and 1925 those mulattoes who wanted to and could pass for white and those who remained in the black community organized for "racial survival."<sup>55</sup>

Booker T. Washington advocated the easiest, and probably safest, way to survive—accommodation. Some of the aristocracy of color, especially in the Deep South, chose this route and became Bookerites. They merged with a rising black middle class represented by the National Negro Business League. Yet others found Washington's compromise on equality intolerable, and when the Niagara Movement evolved into the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, the black elite had an alternative to Washington's accommodationist Tuskegee Idea. Indeed, a list of early members who formed local NAACP chapters reads like a Who's Who of aristocrats of color. With the death of Washington in 1915, the NAACP moved quickly to become the dominant civil rights organiza-

<sup>55</sup> George C. Wright, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930* (Baton Rouge and London, 1985), Chap. 2; William George Paul, "The Shadow of Equality: The Negro in Baltimore, 1864-1911" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972), 3-4, 287-92; Arthé Agnes Anthony, "The Negro Creole Community in New Orleans, 1880-1920: An Oral History" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 1978), 39-58; and James Haskins, *Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback* (New York, 1973), 249-58. Pinchback's friend, former Mississippi congressman John Roy Lynch, sold his plantations in Natchez, moved to Washington, and found refuge as paymaster in the United States Army. See John Hope Franklin, ed., *Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch* (Chicago and London, 1970), xxvi-xxix; Constance McLaughlin Green, *The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital* (Princeton, N. J., 1967), 119-54; and Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (rpt., New York, 1980). As Washington resident Mary Church Terrell learned, no matter how aristocratic they appeared, mulattoes could not escape proscriptions based on race, which supports Woodward's point that "Jim Crow laws applied to all Negroes." See Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 107; Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 301-2; and Edmund L. Drago, *Initiative, Paternalism, and Race Relations: Charleston's Avery Normal Institute* (Athens, Ga., 1990), 2-5, 81-82, 137-40. In an interesting twist Drago analyzes the "Yankee paternalism" of the American Missionary Association. Bond quoted in Williamson, *New People*, 103.

tion in the South. By the 1920s, the old mulatto elite had either faded into a larger white world or been forced into a union with the black masses. The remnants of the aristocracy of color made common cause with the new black bourgeoisie to lead the twentieth-century fight for assimilation.<sup>56</sup>

Holsey had rejected assimilation, yet his demand for a separate black state was not as unusual as it may seem. While his plan differed from Turner's call for an African emigration movement, the two had similarities. Both Holsey and Turner sought to escape from an oppressive white society into a black world where African Americans could exert their rights as citizens. Both believed that God had used slavery to Christianize and civilize African Americans but that white America had failed to give blacks the opportunity to exercise self-government and control. Both accepted white assistance in black efforts at separatism, both rejected assimilation, and both admitted that their programs would meet opposition from the Negro elite.<sup>57</sup> Yet Turner had formulated his separatist ideas more than twenty-five years before Holsey reluctantly converted to black nationalism.

August Meier has suggested that racial separatism such as Holsey proposed was an extreme variant of the ideas of racial solidarity, self-help, and group economy that many blacks in the 1890s adopted as a defense against worsening race relations. While a gradualist on matters of race, Holsey, like others of the mulatto elite, until the mid-1890s held assimilation as an uncompromisable goal and thus looked somewhat askance on Booker T. Washington's accommodation. Only when

<sup>56</sup> Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 161-255; and Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 311-21, 332-40.

<sup>57</sup> On Turner see Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*, 119-22, 134-38, 173-75, 262-65; Redkey, *Black Exodus*, 35-40, 99-107; Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*; and E. Merton Coulter, "Henry M. Turner: Georgia Negro Preacher-Politician During the Reconstruction Era," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XLVIII (December 1964), 371-410. On western settlement and the idea of a separate black state see Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction* (New York, 1977). According to Sterling Stuckey, *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston, 1972), 11, receiving assistance from whites was one of the tenets of nineteenth-century black nationalism. Turner said that the black "so-called leading men worshipped white" (Redkey, *Black Exodus*, 39) and thus favored integration, and Holsey likewise identified the potential source of opposition to his plan: "It will come from that class of Negroes who live in the cities and condensed centers of population where they have police protection, and are doing fairly well. They have but little cause for complaints. They care but little for the down trodden and debased millions of their race who are dying by peace meal [*sic*] in the rural districts where the great mass of the Negro race lives, or rather where they merely breathe in poverty and ignorance [*sic*], and die in despair, ignominy and shame. Strange to say some of these objectors are editors of papers, teachers, preachers, and political office holders. They do not go in the rural districts of the black belts, and are ignorant of the true state of affairs. They know nothing of the real condition of the oppressed and suffering millions of their race, and since they do not feel the sorrow, the unrest, nor see the distress, ignorance and squalidness of the millions, they object to every thing that may be proposed to settle the race problem." (Holsey, *Racial Problem*, 17).

Holsey's dream appeared too elusive in the face of stark white racism did he turn to separatism. Holsey fits the description of nineteenth-century black nationalists presented by Sterling Stuckey in *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*. According to Stuckey, the components of a black nationalist ideology included "a consciousness of a shared experience of oppression at the hands of white people, an awareness and approval of the persistence of group traits and preferences in spite of a violently anti-African larger society, a recognition of bonds and obligations between Africans everywhere, [and] an irreducible conviction that Africans in America must take responsibility for liberating themselves." As Edwin S. Redkey notes in *Black Exodus*, whether practical or not, the importance behind the Back-to-Africa movement and other efforts at black nationalism lies in their reflection of a "widespread dream of economic and political power, of independence and manhood."<sup>58</sup> Through the creation of a separate black state, Holsey sought these rights.

In 1903 Holsey and Turner contributed to a symposium on "The Possibilities of the Negro" organized to show the African American as " 'not a beast,' but a man." Holsey eloquently stated his program for a separate black state, and Turner did likewise for emigration to Africa.<sup>59</sup> According to John Brother Cade, after 1903 Holsey made "no other serious attempt . . . to advance the 'segregation' theory as the best method of settling the Negro problem in America." Following the Atlanta race riot of September 1906, which occurred on Decatur Street, a few blocks from Holsey's house, and in which some thirty-five blacks were killed by white mobs, Holsey joined a group of leading black and white citizens at a mass meeting where they urged their fellow Atlantans to obey the law. Frustrated with his failed efforts at black nationalism, Holsey grew increasingly pessimistic. Personal problems, ranging from his declining health to his weakened control of the CME Church, contributed to his bitterness. After he advocated separation, Holsey began to distance himself from Paine College, becoming hostile toward the institution by 1910.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 65-68, 146-49. Meier recognizes the subtle distinction between black paternalism advocating assimilation and Washington's accommodation (see p. 234). No record of any correspondence between Holsey and Washington exists in Louis R. Harlan et al., eds., *The Booker T. Washington Papers* (14 vols.; Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1972-1989); nor did Holsey correspond with Du Bois according to Herbert Aptheker, ed., *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois, Volume One* (Amherst, Mass., 1973); on territorial separation and a sense of black distinctiveness see John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliott Rudwick, eds., *Black Nationalism in America* (Indianapolis and New York, 1970), especially 156-210; Stuckey, *Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*, 1-2, 6 (first quotation); and Redkey, *Black Exodus*, x (second quotation), 288.

<sup>59</sup> The proceedings and other papers were published in *Possibilities of the Negro* (quotation on p. 1); Holsey's paper is "Race Segregation," 99-119; and Turner's is "Races Must Separate," 90-98.

<sup>60</sup> Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 116; see also L. H. Holsey, "Will It Be Possible for the

In 1919 and 1920, Holsey rewrote his autobiography, but the revised version was never published and now appears to have been lost. Having gained access to the unpublished manuscript from Holsey's daughter, Katie Holsey Dickson, Cade cited several long excerpts from it in his biography of Holsey.<sup>61</sup> The selections reveal a man attempting to rationalize his life.

Thinking back in 1919, Holsey explained that the CME Church needed the sanction of the planter class, so he designed it "to be so organized, constructed, and directed that it would be means of propaganda to make and maintain, as far as possible, the reign of peace and harmony . . ." Whether or not Holsey intended to admit that he had assisted white southerners in using the CME Church to control part of the black community is open to debate. The CME Church certainly functioned in that capacity by defending planter hegemony. With an uncharacteristic cynicism, Holsey reflected on his past actions: "I have always been impressed and so understood from boyhood, that no matter what might take place in the rise or fall of American civilization; and no matter what social or political changes or upheavals might appear, the white man of the South would be on the top. I think I had a prophetic vision and rather an unclouded view of those things to come that would affect the religious and political condition of the people of color, and it was folly, if not madness, to ignore and set at nought such a conclusion."<sup>62</sup> Thus he explained his support for interracial cooperation that buttressed the plantation mission ideology of paternalism.

Here is the remarkable story of a self-educated slave, Lucius Henry Holsey, who became bishop of a church and founded several schools. Yet today he seems unattractive for his opposition to Reconstruction and his defense of planter hegemony. The Methodist plantation mission to the slaves could not have produced a more perfect product than

---

Negro to Attain in this Country unto the American Type of Civilization?" in Culp, ed., *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 46-48; in this essay, written in 1901, he appears to pull back from his demand of separatism. *Atlanta Independent*, October 6, 1906, refers to a meeting at the Wheat Street Baptist Church, where "Bishop L. H. Holsey made some fitting remarks, which meant much to the interested audience"; see also Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy* (1904; rpt., Williamstown, Mass., 1973), 3-25, especially 20; Charles Crowe, "Racial Violence and Social Reform—Origins of the Atlanta Riot of 1906," *Journal of Negro History*, LIII (July 1968), 234-57; and Crowe, "Racial Massacre in Atlanta, September 22, 1906," *ibid.*, LIV (April 1969), 150-73. For a hair-raising account of the Atlanta race riot see Walter White, *A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White* (Bloomington and London, 1948); on Holsey's activities within the CME Church see *Atlanta Independent*, November 18, 1905, April 28, 1906, and November 22, 1913.

<sup>61</sup>Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*. The quotations from the unpublished revised autobiography are identified as such by Cade in the text or in the footnotes. In the bibliography to "Founding of Paine College" Clary refers to the missing manuscript as being in the possession of Cade, who is now deceased. In his history, Lakey also quotes Cade's *Holsey—The Incomparable* for references to the manuscript. Apparently the unpublished revised autobiography no longer exists.

<sup>62</sup>Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 60-61 (quoted from the unpublished revised autobiography).

Holsey. His personal relationships with elite whites shaped his perception of self and epitomized the debilitating effects of paternalism. Although he never experienced equality with whites, he remained loyal to a concept of mutual obligations that elevated himself and other aristocrats of color while relegating common blacks to a subservient position—loyal, that is, until the late 1890s when white society adopted a new racial code that dumped him into a monolithic black mass. Forced to rethink his perception of race, Holsey in 1899 advocated a separate black state as the solution to the race problem. When the private privilege of the mulatto elite no longer existed, Holsey advocated removal from the South rather than acceptance of second-class citizenship. The dramatic shift in Holsey's philosophy from assimilation to separation underscores the crisis faced by the aristocracy of color as the final vestiges of the antebellum three-tiered system of race relations disappeared. Despite the rationalizations of a dying Holsey in 1919, his fundamental belief in the equality of the races never wavered; only his view on how to achieve equal rights changed.

While Holsey's plan for an African-American state expressed a desire for black nationalism, it demonstrated that Holsey still believed in the benevolence of the United States government. Despite his condemnation of Bourbon Democracy, he never quite brought himself to repudiate planter hegemony or paternalism. Holsey seemed to characterize the white elite as the African American's best friend. Yet the actions of those very whites demonstrated the failure of postbellum paternalism. While some members of the white elite, such as Pierce, Haygood, and other MEC,S bishops, attempted, through the founding of the CME Church and other proposals, to recreate the master-slave relationship of reciprocal duties that had existed before the Civil War, the effort received little support. No longer was religion perceived as the proper method of social control. Instead, the white community used violence instituted through the state with its penal system and through the vigilance committee with its lynch law. In large measure for the white South, the religious imperative behind the mutual obligations of the plantation mission ideology of paternalism ended with emancipation.<sup>63</sup>

To his five-year-old granddaughter, Kate Dickson McCoy-Lee, the graying bishop appeared the sun-baked color of an Egyptian. From his "wonderful garden" on Auburn Avenue (the current site of the sar-

<sup>63</sup> Clary compares the MEC,S financial support for plantation missions with its postbellum financial support for black education, and his findings demonstrate the failure of paternalism:

Plantation Missions	1844-1864	\$1,706,207.70
Paine and Lane Institutes	1882-1903	\$160,000.00

Clary concludes that the MEC,S "had committed itself to support Negro education, and when every extenuating circumstance is taken into consideration, its support of this work was indeed 'painful and pitiful.'" See Clary, "Founding of Paine College," 95-96.

cophagus of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) she remembers eating "beautiful strawberries." Since childhood Holsey had worked out-of-doors as a cure for his tuberculosis, which was aggravated by his earlier, difficult years as a circuit rider. Hemorrhages left him helpless, and as he grew older, the hemorrhages increased. By his death at age seventy-eight on August 3, 1920, other African Americans had taken over the debate on the race problem. Holsey's obituaries remembered his church work and not his call for a separate black state.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps the disparity between his early and late teachings prevented a full assessment of his contributions. Holsey's hopes for assimilation achieved through Christianity and education foundered on the reality of white racism in the late nineteenth century. Although he lived until 1920, Holsey's earlier dream remained shattered. Nearly forty years passed before another preacher from Georgia articulated the struggle that others had continued to wage and brought the dream closer to reality.

<sup>64</sup> Leslie, "Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege," 139-43; Cade, *Holsey—The Incomparable*, 44; and *Atlanta Independent*, August 7, 1920, p. 1, editorial on p. 4. The *Atlanta Journal* obituary of August 4, 1920, is almost completely inaccurate. The funeral occurred on August 6, 1920, in the West Mitchell Street CME Church, with burial in Atlanta.