The Religious Conditions of Slavery in North Carolina

By J. S. BASSETT, Ph. D.

[A paper read before the Historical Society of the North Carolina Conference at Washington, N. C., December 6, 1899, and submitted for publication at the request of the Society.]

The first slaves that were brought to America were pagans. So far as the records show the inhabitants did not care if they remained such. To speak the truth, there was not, in the seventeenth century, much interest on the part of the whites in North Carolina in religious matters. People who cared so little for religion for themselves would hardly care more for it for their slaves. More than this, there was for a time, a well defined notion among the slave-owners that a slave who was a church-member could not be held in bondage. This notion grew out of a principle which was common to the legal concept of Europe at the time that negroes began to be enslaved; viz: that it was allowable to enslave a man who was a pagan, but that it was not allowable to enslave a man who was a Christian. Now, reasoned the cautious master, if a slave is such because he is not a Christian, does he not perforce become a freeman when he becomes a Christian? To the master there was enough of doubt in the question to induce him to put his veto on missionary work among the slaves. The result was that the missionaries through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign ports brought the matter to the attention of the authorities and secured legislative action that promised that converted slaves should not be freed by reason of their conversion. The Lords Proprietors of Carolina, in view of the same state of feeling, made a decision in their Fundmentl Constitutions to the same effect. This ought to have settled the matter, but it did not do so; for in 1709 Rev. Jas. Adams, one of the few faithful missionaries whom the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent to Carolina, wrote that the masters would "by no means permit their slaves to be baptized, having a false notion that a Christian slave is by law free." A few of the negroes he found instructed in the principles of religion, but they were not baptized. Nine years later the same conditions existed still in Perquimans, and there is good reason to think that they were common throughout that portion of the colony which was at that time settled. To this general statement there is an exception to be made in favor of the Quakers and the Baptists. The former were never pronounced slave-owners, and cannot have come into close relations with a large number of slaves; but it is entirely probable that they were careful to instruct in the Christian religion all the negroes they owned. In fact, William Edmundson and George Fox, both of whom came in the Seventeenth century to the Albemarle section of North Carolina, were notably careful to instruct the slaves, inasmuch that in the Barbadoes they were falsely accused of stirring up the negroes to insurrection. As for the Baptists, I have been able to find no evidence as early as the Seventeenth century. They were certainly in the eastern part of the colony by the end of the century. It is well up to the days of the Revolution that we have any definite information about their religious instruction of slaves. In 1783 it was asked in the Kehuckee Baptist Association what should be the duty of a master toward a slave who refused to attend family worship. The answer was: "It is the duty of every master of a family to give his slaves liberty to attend the worship of God in his family, and likewise it is his duty to exhort them to it, and to endeavor to convince them of their duty, and then to leave them to their own choice." The phraseology of this answer is such that we are led to think that a very humane position had been taken by the Baptists some time before 1783.

In the Seventeenth century there was considerable progress in the attitude of all the churches toward the slaves. It is the established church which has preserved its records best. From the reports to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel it is possible to see the progress with some degree of accuracy. But even here there is a break of about twenty years, i. e. from 1715 to 1735. In the latter year, we come upon a report from a missionary, Mr. Marsden, who had been in the Cape Fear section and who said that he had baptized about 1,300 men, women and children, besides some negro slaves." In 1742, in New Hanover county, where there were said to have been 1,000 whites and 2,000 blacks, another missionary reports that he had baptized 307 white and 9 blacks. Here, it will be observed, the proportion was small, but it gradually grew, till the time of the Revolution, so that I should say that at the latter date it would be safe to expect that about one-sixth of the baptisms reported by an active missionary of the establishment would be slaves. This was, in a sense, an excessive estimate, for the Episcopalians were the largest slave-holders, and they could be expected to have more slaves baptized than the smaller slave-holders. On the other hand, it is worthy of note that the other churches were at this day far in excess of the Episcopalians in numbers and in activity. It is probable, therefore, that they made up in this way as much as they lost in the other.

Although all the churches in the province were more or less interested in the conversion of the blacks, it was thoroughly understood that it should be done by absorbing them into the various organizations of the whites, and not by letting them have churches of their own. I must think that this was a good thing; for although it was done because the masters were afraid that if the negroes had separate organizations they would become conspirators, it is also evident that it was a good thing to have these people, new-comers from the jungles of Africa, in close contact with the whites. Thus the more civilized were of a sure benefit to the uncivilized, and were able to be to them true missionaries in more senses than one. It was the carrying out of the divine purpose which I like to think lies behind the enslavement of the negro race in America: viz: that through his forcible tutelage to the white men he should be made to absorb both Christianity and the ways of civilized life. These considerations are enough to justify the following law, which I find on the statute books in the revision of 1715, but which was undoubtedly enacted as early as the end of the preceding century: "Be it further enacted, That if any master or owner of negroes or slaves, or any other person or persons whatsoever in the government, shall permit or suffer any negro or negroes to build on their, or either of their lands, or any part thereof, any house under pretense of a meeting house upon account of worship or upon any pretense whatever, and shall not suppress or hinder them, he, she, or they so offending shall for every default forfeit or pay $50, one half towards defraying the contingent charges of the government, the other to him that shall sue for the same." Here it is worthy of note, in passing that this law could be appoied to keep the blacks from lapsing into paganism as well as to keep them from having churches of their own. In either case the law was fortunate.

From what I have said it is evident that the small beginning that had been made in reference to the negro's conversion to Christianity, before the Revolution is too bare of facts to make the study of it either interesting or profitable. It is, therefore, with a great deal of pleasure that we turn to the study of the subject in the period from the Revolution till the fall of slavery. If I may believe the evidence that has come down to me, it was about the close of the eighteenth century that Henry Evans arrived in Fayetteville. He found that the negroes in that town, says Bishop Capers, "were wholly given to profanity and lewdness, never hearing preaching of any denomination, and living emphatically without hope and without God in the world." Of conditions in Wilmington the Bishop himself is witness. He says: "A numerous population of this class (the blacks) in that town and vicinity were as destitute of any public instruction (or probably, instruction of any kind as to spiritual things), as if they had not been believed to be men at all; and their morals were as depraved as, with such a destitution of the gospel among them, might have been expected; and yet it seems not to have been considered that such a state of things might furnish motives sufficient to induce pure-minded men to engage, at great inconvenience and even personal hazard, in the work of reforming them. Such a work, on the other hand, seems to have been regarded unnecessary, if not unreasonable. Conscience was not believed to be concerned in it."

Looked at from another standpoint it is not hard to divine why this indifference existed. The Quakers were at that time bending all their efforts toward emancipation. They had no missionary spirit for those slaves whom they did not own, or with whom their own slaves were not connected by family ties. The Baptists of the day were of the old time notions. It must be remembered that was before they had split into two bodies on the question of missions, and that they were consequently not, as a body, so earnest in seeking out the neglected classes as they have become later. The Episcopalians had not recovered themselves since they had lost the support of the State. The Presbyterians were not, in the east, a rural church and so they did not come into close contact with the slaves. More than all, it was before the Methodist church had come actively into the field. The black race lay like an unexplored forest awaiting the sturdy frontiersmen who in the name of the reformer of Oxford and of Epworth was to bring to it the message of hope and faith that could alone bring it under the smiles of civilization.

In the meantime, I must call attention to one fact that was fundamental in the relation of slavery in general throughout the South. It was the determination on the part of the slave-owners to preserve slavery as an institution, whatever the cost, and at the same time a willingness to make it as mild as possible within the limits of this restriction. This idea went through the legal, the social, the industrial, and the religious phases of the subject. It was the logic of slavery in the South. There was no chance for amelioration, if amelioration meant that in the process the slaves were likely to get eventually, their freedom. Now as to the relation of this idea to the religious life of the slave I shall speak more at length.

Undoubtedly the master was willing to have his slave become a Christian. He was even anxious for him to do it. He spent money with more or less bountifulness for this purpose. This was, sometimes, done by men who were not Christians themselves, but who wanted their slaves to be Christians for purposes of discipline. But oftener it was done out of pure benevolence and with a devout purpose to accomplish the spiritual welfare of the negroes. Persons who have formed their opinions of Southern society before the war from the popular works of certain novelists are apt to think of the slave-owner as a fine-bred gentleman, of cavalier instincts and patriarchal feelings. Such an estimate is but a half truth. There was in the South—in North Carolina it was very strong—a large class of slave-owners which approached more nearly to the English farmer type, than to the English gentleman type. They were usually self-made men, of fair intelligence, and of some education. They were generally thrifty and often wealthy. The majority of them were Christians, mostly of the Methodist, Baptists and Presbyterian churches. This class of men has received but little attention from those who have written of Southern society, and yet it was the back-bone of that society. There was little that was ideal about them. They were humdrum, but they were honest, pious and substantial, and they were numerous. I do not mean to say that these were the whole of the South. The planter class, as the term is ordinarily understood, was there, and it was the governing class, the class that touched the outside world. It went to summer resorts, and to Congress, and to political conventions. It got into novels, and sometimes into history, and it was usually benignly patriarchal. But the former class as a class came more closely into touch with the slave, and in a hundred ways softened the harshness of an institution which no one knew how to soften in law.

As the negro got more and more of the savage out of him, the old restriction which forbade him to have separate churches was relaxed somewhat. First of all it grew to be the custom to let the more intelligent of the race become preachers, if they wished it. Thus there grew up a number of negro preachers some of whom had congregations and buildings of their own. The advantage of this system was that it developed the negro in the way of religious self-dependence, but it was always under the close oversight of the white preachers, which was as it should have been. Never before or since was the relation of the negro and his white neighbor so auspicious as in the years from 1800 to 1830.

All this was destined to be changed. Politicians had concluded that slavery was threatened with extinction by the small amount of intelligence that was being sifted through the bars of bondage. It was accordingly declared in 1830, much to the regret of the churches, that no free person or slave should teach a slave to read or write, the use of figures excepted, or give to a slave any book or pamphlet. The purpose of this law was to prevent the slave's reading abolition documents, a danger which was believed to be imminent, but it also cut him off most surely from the reading of the Bible, and it forestalled that mental development which he needed to comprehend the Christian life. Rev. Eli W. Carruthers, of Alamance, was much shocked that Christian people should make such laws. "How dare you," he exclaims, "by your impious enactments doom millions of your fellow-beings to such a gross and perpetual ignorance?" A year later a severer blow fell. The Legislature then forbade any negro, bond or free, to preach, exhort, or give any religious teaching in any place of worship where slaves from more than one family were gathered together. These two laws threw the negro back on the whites as a burden of evangelization, and the churches were forced to give up what hopes they might have had that at some time the African might have become his own missionary.

As to the preaching of the dominant class to the slaves it always had one element of disadvantage: it seemed to the negro to be given with the purpose of upholding slavery. As an illustration of this I shall introduce the evidence of Lunsford Lane. This slave was the property of a prominent and highly esteemed citizen of Raleigh. He hired his own time and with his father manufactured smoking tobacco by a process known only to themselves. His business grew and at length he bought his own freedom. Later he added to his business a wood-yard, a grocery store, and teams for hauling. He bought a home and had bargained to buy his wife and children for $2,500, when the rigors of the law were applied and he was driven from the State. He was a preacher in the Baptist church, and he had the confidence of some of the most reliable people of the State, among others, of Governor Morehead. He is a competent witness for the negro. In speaking of the sermons of the white preachers to the negroes, he said that the favorite texts were: "Servants be obedient to your masters," and "He that knoweth his master's will and doeth it not shall be beaten with many stripes." He said: "The first commandment was to obey our masters, and the second was like unto it: to labor as faithfully when they or the overseers were not watching as when they were. I will not do them," he adds, "the injustice to say that connected with this instruction there was not much that was excellent." Now all this teaching was quite natural. The fundamental fact of the negro's life was slavery. To be a good slave was to obey and to labor. Not to obey and not to labor were sins for the slave. A result of such preaching was that many of the more independent negroes, those who in their hearts never accepted slavery, were repelled from the white man's religion. On the other hand there were, no doubt, a large number of slaves who were reached by the white preachers, through whose teaching they were enabled to bend in meekness under their bondage and to be content with a hopeless lot. There are many persons to whom Christianity is still but a burden-bearing affair. Such quietism has its value. It saves men from discontent and society from chaos. But it is not so valuable for positive purposes. The ideal of social reform, which is associated with the standard of Christian duty, was not for the slave. Those very few, who, like Lunsford Lane, did work themselves to freedom, were acting on principles which were not preached, and could not be preached, from the pulpits.

So important does it seem to me that we should be able to see religion with the eyes of the slave of the day that I shall impose on your patience further by quoting rather extensively from the statements of this same Lunsford Lane. He says:

"I was permitted to attend church, and this I esteem a great privilege. It was there I received much instruction, which I trust was of great benefit to me. I trusted too that I had experienced the renewing influences of divine grace. I looked upon myself as a great sinner before God, and upon the doctrine of the great atonement, through the sufferings and death of the Savior, as a source of continual joy to my heart. After obtaining from my mistress a written permit, a thing always required in such cases, I had been baptized and received into fellowship with the Baptist denomination. Thus in religious matters I had been indulged in the exercise of my own conscience; this was a favor not always granted to slaves. There was one hard doctrine which we as slaves were compelled to listen to, which I found difficult to receive. We were often told by the ministers how much we owed to God for bringing us over from the benighted shores of Africa and permitting us to listen to the sound of the gospel. In ignorance of any special revelation that God had made to master, or to his ancestors, that my ancestors should be stolen and enslaved on the soil of America to accomplish their salvation, I was slow to believe all that my preachers enjoined on this subject. How surprising then, this high moral end being accomplished, that no proclamation of emancipation had before this been made! Many of us were as highly civilized as some of our masters, and, as to piety, in many instances, their superiors. I was rather disposed to believe that God had originally granted me temporal freedom, which wicked men had forcibly taken from me—which now I had been compelled to purchase at great cost...... There was one very kind-hearted clergyman whom I used often to hear. He was very popular with the colored people. But after he had preached a sermon to us in which he urged from the Bible that it was the will of heaven from all eternity that we should be slaves, and our masters be our owners, many of us left him, considering, like the doubting disciple of old, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?"

All the churches of North Carolina, so far as I have been able to learn, had some negro members, but it was the Methodist and Baptist churches that had the largest numbers. Other bodies seem to have confined their care largely to household slaves, or to family slaves. But these went boldly to the great slave-plantations and began work among the blacks. And of the two, I shall not hesitate to say that the most prominent place ought to be given to the Methodists. In fact, so strong was this movement that ours was in those early days in many of the eastern counties known as the "negro church," and in some important places it was founded as a negro church.

It was in the very first days of Methodism in our State—that we began to do work among the negroes. The General Conference of 1787 urged the preachers to labor among the slaves, to receive into full membership those that seemed worthy, and "to exercise the whole Methodist discipline among them." How well the work was done as the years went by may be seen from the following estimate of members:

Year.	White.	Colored.
1787	5,017	492
1790	7,518	1,749
1795	8,414	1,719
1800	6,363	2,108
1805	9,385	2,394
1810	13,535	4,724
1815	14,283	5,165
1820	13,179	5,933
1830	19,228	10,181
1839	26,405	9,302

Here was a rapid proportional gain of the blacks over the whites. In 1787 they were not quite 10 per cent as many, in 1839 they were 35 per cent. as many.

Although there were negro Methodists in all parts of the State they were more numerous in the eastern counties, for the reason that there were more slaves in those counties. At Edenton this is true as witness the minutes; at Wilmington it is more emphatically true. Hither came William Meredith, toward the close of the last century. He was a Methodist preacher, but not connectional. He came from the West Indies. He gathered a flock of free negroes, built a rude meeting-house, acquired some other property which he used for purposes of revenue, and laid the foundations of Methodism in the place. He encountered all sorts of opposition from the people of Wilmington, who did not believe much in preaching to the negroes any way, and who persisted in believing that the Methodists were teaching the slaves to hope for freedom. They jeered at him, they interrupted his meetings, they pulled down his meeting-house, and finally they put him in prison, but he preached so effectively from his prison windows that they were glad to let him go free. Finally, the battle won, the heroic servant died full of years, and left the work he had undertaken to the Methodist connection and with it the property he had accumulated, chiefly from the penny collection of his sable parishoners.

But more interesting, perhaps, is the struggle that Methodism had to get a foothold in Fayetteville. Late in the eighteenth century this town, then a considerable place, and the centre of a large and wealthy community, had but one church organization, the Presbyterian, and that had no house of worship. One day there arrived in the town Henry Evans, a full-blooded free negro from Virginia, who was on his way to Charleston, S. C., where he proposed to follow his trade of shoe-making. He was perhaps free born. He was a Methodist and a licensed local preacher. When he realized the religious condition of his race in Fayetteville, he decided that it was his duty to stop and work among them. He worked at his trade during the week and preached on Sundays. The whites became alarmed and the Town Council ordered him to stop preaching. He then met his flock in the "sand hills," desolate places outside of the jurisdiction of the town council. Fearing violence he made his appointments secrets, and changed the place of meeting from day to day. He was particular to violate no law, and to the whites he was careful to show the respect which public sentiment demanded. Public opinion finally began to change, especially when it was noticed that slaves who had come under his influence were more docile for it. Some prominent whites, most of whom were women, became interested in his cause. They attended his meetings, and public opinion was at length reversed. Then a rude frame building was erected within the town limits. A number of seats were reserved for the whites, some of whom were so well pleased with his preaching that they became regular attendants on his ministry. The preacher's reputation spread. The boards were knocked from the sides of the house and sheds were built on either hand, and to them the negro worshippers were relegated. At first the congregation had been unconnected, but by this time it had been taken into the regular Methodist system, and a white preacher had been sent to it. But the heroic founder was not forgotten. A room for him was built in the rear of the pulpit and there he lived till his death in 1810.

Of Henry Evans, Bishop Capers said: "I have known not many preachers who appeared more conversant with the scriptures than Evans; or whose conversation was more instructive as to the things of God. He seemed always deeply impressed with the responsibility of his position * * * nor would he allow any partiality of friends to induce him to vary in the least degree from the lines of conduct or the bearing which he had prescribed to himself in this respect: never speaking to a white man but with his hat under his arm, never allowing himself to be seated in their houses, and even confining himself to the kind and manner of dress proper for slaves in general, except his plain black coat in the pulpit. 'The whites are kind and come to hear me preach,' he would say, 'but I belong to my own sort, and must not spoil them.'" Rare self-control! How often do those who boast social advantages of far greater weight fail to sacrifice to this extent their own feelings for the good of the cause they represent.

Henry Evans' last speech is noteworthy. Directly after the morning sermon for the whites it was customary to have a sermon for the slaves. On the Sunday before the death of the old man, as the latter service was being held, the door of the little shed-room opened and Evans tottered forward. Leaning on the altar rail he said: "If I have come to say my last word to you. It is this: None but Christ. Three times I have had my life in jeopardy for preaching the gospel to you. Three times I have broken the ice on the edge of the water and swam across the Cape Fear to preach the gospel to you, and if in my last hour I could trust to that or anything else but Christ crucified, for my salvation, all should be lost and my soul perish forever." Of these words Bishop Capers justly says that they are worthy of St. Paul.

The opposition that the Methodists encountered in Fayetteville and Wilmington, and elsewhere, was due to the more active abolition tendencies at that time in the church in the North. In 1785 Dr. Coke had come to America on a visit to the church. He began to preach abolition, and in his wake there appeared a strong feeling against slavery, which manifested itself in memorials and remonstrances to the Legislatures. Before this the slave owners in the South had encouraged the Methodists to preach to the slaves. They now became alarmed for the quietness of the bondsmen and in the South generally Methodist preachers were denied access to the blacks. It took some time to live down this unfavorable impression, and it was only when it was evident that the Southern preachers did not approve of the preaching of abolition that it was removed. It was thus the fate of Meredith at Wilmington and Evans at Fayetteville, to catch the full force of this sentiment. It was to their heroic fortitude that we owe the fact that the people of that section were at last brought to see that the Methodist church was about the work of the Lord.

Sometimes a congregation outgrew the dignity of the humbler persons who first composed it. Such was the case in Raleigh. Here there was at first a large number of colored members, and when the church was being built they contributed their part. They were given seats in the gallery. At length there was an opportunity to buy a church which might be turned over solely to the blacks. Each race worked with its might to get the necessary money. When it was at length secured there was a two-fold rejoicing; by the negroes, because they were to have a church of their own; by the whites, because the negroes were out of the old church. The negro church now became a mission and a white preacher was assigned to it by the Conference. Usually an old preacher of a kind disposition and good judgment was sent to them and tradition says that he never was known to lack for ginger-cakes, warm gloves, socks and such other necessary articles that could be donated through the kindness of the faithful colored women.

Of the relation between the Baptist church and the slaves I have not time to speak with any just amount of fullness. Suffice it to say that it was faithful, earnest and Christian. From the establishment of the Missionary organization in 1830 it is possible to say that this church went hand in hand with our own in the work for the slaves. True it is, that I find no record of their having suffered persecution, as among the Methodists at Wilmington, in that earlier time; but I am not able to doubt that before that time they were, so far as their own slaves were concerned, and in some cases when the missionary spirit was strong in regard to the whole slave population as active as the Methodists.

The best product of their work among these people was, no doubt, Ralph Freeman. He was originally a slave in Anson county. Soon after his conversion he felt an impulse to preach, and early in the century became a Baptist minister, being ordained to the office in the regular manner. He never had, so far as I can learn, specific charges, but he travelled and preached through his own and the adjoining counties. Says Mr. Purefoy: "He became a good reader and was well versed in the Scriptures. He was considered an able preacher and was frequently called upon to preach on funeral occasions, and was appointed to preach on Sabbaths at associations, and frequently administered the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. He was of common size, was perfectly black, with a smiling countenance, especially in the pulpit while preaching. He was very humble in his appearance at all times, and especially when conducting religious services. Great personal respect was also shown him by the brethren whom he visited in his preaching excursions." Rev. Joseph Magee, a white preacher, became much attached to Ralph. They traveled and preached together a great deal, and after the manner of the times, it was agreed between them that the survivor should preach the funeral sermon of the other. This task fell to Ralph. Although his friend had moved to the Southwest the colored preacher was sent for. He responded and preached with great success before a large audience. When the Baptists divided on the question of missions Ralph, with the natural conservatism of his race, sided with the anti-missionary party, and so became unpopular with the others. This he regretted; but a greater blow fell about the same time, viz., the law which forbade negroes to preach. He was greatly mortified, but submitted and with that he passes from our view.

A more prominent negro was John Chavis, who was a Presbyterian. He was well educated. He was born free most likely, in Granville county. In his early life he attracted the attention of some influential white men and was sent to Princeton college, to see if a negro could be educated. While there he was a private pupil of the celebrated Dr. Witherspoon. He learned readily and left Princeton to preach to the negroes in Virginia. Here he staid about four years, and in 1805 he returned to North Carolina. In 1809 he joined the Orange Presbytery. I do not find that he was ever called to be a regular pastor of a congregation, although he preached frequently in Granville and the adjoining counties. One who knew him said: "I have heard him read and explain the Scriptures to my father's family repeatedly. His English was remarkably pure, containing no 'negroisms;' his manner was impressive, his explanations clear and concise, and his views, as I then thought, and still think, entirely orthodox." He was a good Latin and Greek student. He was much disappointed when, in 1831, negroes were forbidden to preach. He died in 1838 and the Presbytery continued to his widow the pension which it had formerly allowed to him.

His most important work was as an educator. He taught classical schools in Granville, Wake and Chatham counties. Among his pupils were Willie P. Mangum, Priestly H. Mangum, his brother, Archibald and John Henderson, sons of Chief Justice Henderson, Charles Manly, afterwards Governor; Dr. James L. Wortham, of Oxford, and many other excellent men. Mr. J. H. Horner, one of the most distinguished educators the State has had, said of him: "My father not only went to school to him, but boarded in his family. * * * The school was the best at that time to be found in the State." Mr. Paul C. Cameron, son of Judge Duncan Cameron, said: "In my boyhood life at my father's home I often saw John Chavis, a venerable old negro man recognized as a freeman and as a preacher * * * of the Presbyterian church. * * * He seemed familiar with the proprieties of social life, yet modest and unassuming, and sober in his language and opinions. He was polite, yes, courtly; but it was from his heart and not affected. I remember him as a man without guile. His conversation indicated that he lived free from all evil or suspicion, seeking the good opinion of the public by the simplicity of his life and the integrity of his conduct. If he had any vanity he most successfully concealed it * * * I write of him as I remember him and as he was appreciated by my superiors, whose respect he enjoyed." From another source, but one equally as reliable, I am informed that Chavis was received as an equal socially, and asked to the table by the most respectable people of the neighborhood. Such a relation indicates how a really superior man of the negro race might be received in the days before sectional and partisan strife and a most unwise course on the part of the government, planted distrust and ill-will in the hearts of the races, and the one for the other.

I cannot close this paper without a mention of a moral that has been constantly borne in on me as I have studied the various phases of the history of the negro in our State. It is this: Are we as a people doing all we ought to do to make the negro the best member of society? We are doing much and I am not blind to it. Educationally we are giving him generous help. But in a general way do we accept this issue of the past and go about the task of making him the best that he can be? I speak not of his citizenship. No good could come of my discussing that here. I speak to you more particularly of his religious life. Do we, as a church, realize the responsibility we owe to God, and to the future, for this brother in our ways? I do not attempt to answer the question. I only venture to say that the life of an Evans, lived as it was in the face of all the obstacles of slavery, is evidence of what rich returns may be had if the Christian intelligence of the white Southerners were directed in a wise way to supervise and aid the inferior black man in his religious progress. The negro is a child of religion. His only hope for the development of his race is religion. Without it he will be at sea. It is the only force that can give him a centre of life. In the name of Wesley, who called the world his parish, in the name of the best interests of our society in the name of the future which will hold us responsible for the progress of today, in the name of my Master who leaves me no choice on account of social caste, I submit to you, my brethren, this, the most vital question of our life: "What shall we do with this brother?" In the words—almost the last words—of Bishop Haygood, I declared to you: "God takes him; Man must."