The Relationship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia with the Negro Slaves 1830 to 1860: Success or Failure?

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VIRGINIA
WITH THE NEGRO SLAVES 1830 TO 1860:
SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

BY
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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VIRGINIA WITH THE NEGRO SLAVES 1830 TO 1860: SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

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May, 1977.
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INTRODUCTION

The role of the various Christian denominations in the acceptance, the development and the defense of slavery in Virginia, as elsewhere in the South, was an important one, especially during the three decades prior to the Civil War when pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions in the United States were engaged in verbal and political warfare. No denomination found in Virginia during those years has escaped comment—whether favorable or critical—on its relationship with the Negro slaves, but the Protestant Episcopal Church has perhaps been the recipient of a greater variety of attention than any other. That Church has been both praised and condemned by blacks and whites, laymen and clerics, contemporaries of slavery and modern scholars.

Where on the broad spectrum of judgments that have been rendered for and against the nineteenth-century Episcopal Church in Virginia does the truth lie? Were that denomination's position and actions such as to justify the school of thought represented by a respected black Episcopal clergyman, George Bragg, who saw only positive results arising from the Church's treatment of the slaves?¹ Were

the Episcopal Church's policies and programs so poor as to deserve the opprobrium of those who agree with the eminent black writer and sociologist, W. E. B. DuBois who accused that body of having done less for blacks than any other Christian organization?²

Some conclusions may be drawn as to the success—or failure—of the Church's relationship with the slaves in nineteenth-century Virginia by constructing a narrative of the general attitudes held by the Episcopal Church (the bishops and other clergy and the laity) and the actions resulting from them. The years from 1830 to 1860 are the most fruitful period of the century in revealing through sermons, letters, newspapers and books the Church's ideas concerning the institution of religious instruction for the slaves and their place in the life of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia.

Because many of the attitudes prevalent among the members of the diocese towards the slaves were rooted in the past, and much of the social influence of the nineteenth-century Episcopal Church resulted from its historic roots in the established church of the Colonial period, it is necessary to look at the seventeenth-and eighteenth-century Anglican Church as it related to the problem of Christianizing the slaves.

During the period from the Revolution to approximately 1830 the Episcopal Church in Virginia was involved in a severe struggle for its own survival, and consequently took little notice of the religious life of the Negroes. There were no positive developments in the denomination's position on pastoral care and church involvement for the slaves. The half-century of neglect did, however, have significance through fostering indifference among the laity to the spiritual needs of their slaves.
II.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS: THE COLONIAL AND TRANSITION PERIODS

Religion, both personal and organized, was an integral part of life for the colonists in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Virginia. That slavery was not condemned and outlawed by any denomination during the colonial period had much to do with its acceptance and its development.

Not only did white society receive the idea of slavery without, as a whole, religious scruples, but sometimes justified it on Biblical and religious grounds. The story of Ham was cited by both ministers and laymen to explain how bondage came into being. Presumably those of the Negro race were to be taken as descendants of Ham, the Canaanites who were punished with slavery. The master-slave relationship was held to be sanctioned in the New Testament also, especially in St. Paul's admonitions to servants in Ephesians.

There were definite religious implications in the widely held idea that while it was unthinkable for one Christian to

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1. Only the Quakers and the Church of the Brethren were to do so later. In "Friends of Humanity: A Quaker Anti-Slavery Influence," Church History (1935) 4:191 Miles Fisher says "the American Revolution was the turning point..." for Virginia's Quakers to turn anti-slavery. In History of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (Dayton, Va., 1921), p. 113-115, A. P. Funkhouser gives 1817 as the year when the General Conference outlawed slavery among Virginia's Brethren.


own another, it was somehow permissible to own a heathen. 4
This theory never really developed beyond a somewhat vague "feeling", and slavery was soon given a racial rather than a religious basis, in a series of laws enacted in Virginia between 1667 and 1682. 5 Slavery was sometimes advanced as a means of Christianizing and civilizing Negroes brought from Africa, and thus not merely to be condoned, but seen as praiseworthy by some Christians.

Once the dominant, white, Christian society had accepted slavery a problem arose concerning spiritual care for the enslaved people. A traditional obligation of Christians had always been the bringing of salvation to the heathen. Indeed the conversion of the Indians had been one of the stated objectives for planting the Virginia Colony. In the Charter granted by James I on April 10, 1606 to Sir Thomas Gates, and others, evangelism among the savages was set forth as a primary concern. The English colonists were commanded to carry the "true knowledge and worship of God" to the heathen. 6 No one


6 Hening's Statutes 1:58.
could have possibly questioned that the Negro slaves were just as pagan as the Indians and so presumably in as great need of Christian teaching. There were, nonetheless, both widespread indifference and outright hostility to providing for the souls of those in bondage.

The burden of responsibility for Christian acceptance of slavery and for developing a place for the Negroes within the Church lay very heavily with the Anglican denomination. Supported by tithes, buttressed by government backing and regulations, indeed existing as an arm of the royal government and boasting a membership that included the great majority of the landed slave owning aristocracy of Virginia the established church was theoretically the possessor of enormous potential influence and power to determine the future status of the Negroes.

Even after the evangelical groups such as the Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists had become respectable with the upper classes numbered among their congregations, and the Established Church of England had been transformed into the Protestant Episcopal Church, the latter still included an exceptionally large percentage of the slaveholders in the Old Dominion, and consequently bore a proportionally heavy responsibility for the amount and quality of religious instruction which the slaves received.
The Negro posed problems for the Anglican Church in Virginia almost from the time of that people's introduction into the colony, certainly from such time as slavery began to harden into a distinct institution, and the slave population began to increase rapidly. Much of the difficulty lay in the gulf that separated the position of the Church's bishops and other clergy from the general attitudes held by the laity of Virginia concerning conversion of the Negro slaves and an adequate provision for them within the Church. Although the Anglican Church took no stand opposing slavery, it did maintain that those in bondage had souls that should be ministered to. From the bishops on through the least of the colonial parish priests there was concern that all those who had a duty in the matter should fulfill it. Unfortunately, the laity were not as zealous as their pastors. Owners, largely Anglican in the early days of slave owning in Virginia, took at best a mixed attitude on the topic of the conversion and baptism of their human property. More often than not masters ignored the


urging of their local clergymen, and the bishops in England, to consider the souls of the slaves.

While on the surface the matter was one of religion, in reality it was compounded of economic, social, and political factors - most of which in some fashion stemmed from one question. Would the sacrament of baptism alter the slaves' status to that of free? If so, the idea would not be welcomed by the slaveholders. While that point was basic to all other objections it was not the sole reason advanced in opposition to the Church's urging masters to permit and provide for religious instruction and baptism.

Many owners feared, or professed to fear, the gathering of Negroes for worship services as the possible occasion for organized slave revolts. Most of the impetus for the work of providing spiritual care for the slaves came from England.9

In any discussion of missionary work among the Negro slaves the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel comes to mind. Founded in 1701 under the auspices of the Church of England to work in the field of teaching and evangelizing the slaves in the colonies, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel did notable work, particularly in New England and South Carolina. The Society was not, however, very active in Virginia, either in general missionary work or specifically among the slaves. Two historiographers of the Diocese of Virginia have been quite definite in seeing little direct activity on the part of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Virginia. Rev. Philip Slaughter in Addresses and Historical Papers Before the Centennial Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese in Virginia, May 20-24, 1885 (New York, 1885), p. 41 wrote that the Church in Virginia did not receive "care and protection" from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel as it was firmly established in that colony.
Therefore some of the opposition was possibly allied to the growing colonial dislike of anything that smacked of English interference with American affairs. It could also quite honestly be advanced as an excuse for negligence in providing regular religious education for the slaves that most were located on isolated plantations and farms, and thus not readily transported in any great numbers to church. The "barbarity and rudeness of their manners, the variety and strangeness of their languages and the weakness and shallowness of their minds ..." were all argued by opponents of

9(cont.)

In *Virginia's Mother Church* (Richmond, 1948) 1: Dr. George M. Brydon concurs in Slaughter's assessment saying the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel missionaries were not sent to Virginia because the Church was "... established by law and well supported by taxation ...." Another historian, Thad Tate, in *The Negro in Eighteenth Century Williamsburg* (Charlottesville, 1965), p. 68, writes of the Society that "... very little of its work occurred in Virginia." The push for religious instruction of the slaves in Virginia came primarily from the Bishops of London, notably Crompton and Gibson, and passed on to the colonials by their parish priests. Another English clergyman, Morgan Godwyn, who had served as a minister in the New World wrote a booklet entitled *The Negro's and Indian's Advocate* in which he strongly urged proper religious instruction of the Negroes and Indians.

conversion. Even a clergyman who favored baptism and instruction agreed that newly enslaved Negroes who lacked any knowledge of their masters' language, religion and customs should not be received into the Church until they had been exposed to the influences of civilization. Some people disapproved of Christianizing Negro slaves because of a belief that conversion made them less docile.

The clergy tried to refute all such arguments—except that concerning the language barrier for "new" Negroes. If the slaves were capable of understanding English and of good disposition the teachings of Christianity should foster a humble spirit and resignation to their lot. As the response of the laity was poor, whether appealed to on purely religious grounds or on practical ones, the interest taken by both English and colonial governments throughout the colonial period in the Christianization of the Negroes was undoubtedly welcomed by the established church.


12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.
As early as 1632 a law was passed in Virginia requiring masters and mistresses to take the responsibility for having their servants who were not Christians go to catechism classes. The parish priest held such classes at regular intervals, and each servant was expected to attend until he had learned the basic beliefs of Christianity. 16

Probably the most effective piece of legislation was the law passed in 1667 which settled the question of baptism freeing the slaves. It was then enacted that the conferring of baptism had no effect upon the legal status of an individual. 17 The assembly admitted that the act was passed so that owners "freed from this doubt" 18 would more readily consent to the evangelizing and baptism of their slaves. 19

Laws of 1670 and 1682 made even clearer the whole idea that servants not already Christian before being purchased and shipped to Virginia would be, and remain, slaves. 20 Royal governors normally received orders to further the Anglican

16 Hening's Statutes 1:157.

17 Ibid. 2:260.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid. 2:491.
Church's missionary work when they received their appointments. Lord Thomas Culpepper for example, was directed to check into the best means of aiding in the slaves' conversion, but was warned not to endanger property rights or the stability of the Colony.  

Francis Nicholson, Lt. Governor of Virginia in 1698, was directed to check the religious status of Virginia slaves, and received information from the Executive Council that those born in Virginia were usually baptized and raised as Christians. The condition of "new" negroes, however, made any progress in their conversion nearly impossible.  

Around 1699 the Commissary in Virginia suggested passage of a law to encourage owners in fulfilling their duty to provide instruction and education for their slaves in the Christian faith. The proposed law provided that if slave children were instructed and baptized by the age of fourteen, the owner would be exempted from paying all taxes on those slaves until they

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22 McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, p. 174.

23 The Commissary was the representative of the Bishop of London. He performed various administrative duties and served as a sort of overseer of the Church in the Colony, and as an intermediary in religious-secular affairs. He did not, however, have the episcopal powers of ordination and confirmation. Rev. James Blair served as the first Commissary in Virginia.
reached eighteen. This proposition was not made a law, but was typical of the ideas considered by the government from time to time.

All the directives of secular and ecclesiastical governments were not enough to cause any real progress. The lack of advancement is obvious from information gathered in 1724 --approximately one century after slavery began in Virginia. In that year Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London and overseer of colonial Episcopal affairs, sent out to all the colonial commissaries and ministers a questionnaire, the answers to which he wished to analyze for a better knowledge of ecclesiastical conditions in the colonies. Among the questions was one pertaining to the conversion of the Negroes. "Are there any Infidels, bond or free, within your Parish; and what means are used for their conversion?"

The answers given by the Virginia parish clergy clearly revealed that while some masters and mistresses were conscious of their obligations towards the souls of "their people", far more were indifferent, negligent, or opposed to any attention being given the Negroes' spiritual welfare.

24 W. S. Perry, Historical Collections Relating To the American Colonial Church (New York, 1970 reprinted from 1870 edition) 1:344.

25 George Maclaren Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church (Richmond, 1948) 1:370.
Among the twenty-eight extant reports some were short, unconcerned statements showing indifferent clergymen and uncaring laymen. In one parish the Negroes' conversion was sought only through regular preaching and catechizing, in another the slaves were put through a course of instruction and routinely baptized. Many potential converts were exposed only to regular Sunday worship, in no way modified for their understanding. One clergyman merely stated that his methods were the same "as in other places."

Very few answers either stated explicitly that owners were concerned and cooperative and the clergy themselves active, or implied that such was the case. The rector of Accomake Parish on the Eastern Shore mentioned a great many Negroes coming to the church, of whom he had baptized "about 200" after instructing them in religion at their Masters' houses. In Bristol some masters instructed their slaves at

26 Ibid.
27 Perry, Historical Collections 1:261.
28 Ibid., p. 274.
29 Ibid., p. 285.
30 Ibid., p. 303.
31 Ibid., p. 301.
32 Ibid.
home, then presented them for baptism, \(^{33}\) while in York Hampton the minister reserved every Saturday afternoon to instruct Negro slaves at his Glebe House. \(^{34}\) Apparently owners in Stratton Manor parish were favorable to religious teaching and conversion for slaves, to all of whom the Church and its sacraments were reported as open. \(^{35}\)

In far too many parishes the ministers were in agreement with their fellow colleague of Wilmington Parish in whose opinion Negro slaves were not often true believers \(^{36}\) because of the near impossibility of getting their owners to instruct them in the principles of Christianity. \(^{37}\) Many owners who held the idea that the Church's teachings would make the slaves less biddable \(^{38}\) prevented their Negroes' being baptized by refusing to stand surety for them in Baptism. \(^{39}\) From one parish the minister reported that any

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 267.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 281.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 276.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 277.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 278.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 315.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., p. 289.
special efforts were discouraged, while in nearly all areas the Masters did little more than let some of their slaves occasionally go to Church.

More than one clergyman included in his report to the bishop a standard excuse of Virginians for the very scant success in missionary work among the Negroes. Newly imported slaves rarely ever became capable of instruction, because of being unable either to speak or understand English adequately.

Real frustration surfaced in the report from Christ Church. The rector complained of "infidels" who could not understand his English, and whose dialects were in turn incomprehensible to him. How could he minister to them? Sorrow and disgust were voiced by one of his colleagues in whose parish many Negroes were not even permitted to receive the basic instruction required for baptism, nor to attend any services.

At least one minister was so deeply distressed over conditions in his parish that he supplemented the questionnaire

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40 Ibid., p. 310.
41 Ibid., p. 304.
42 Ibid., p. 293.
43 Ibid., p. 283.
44 Ibid., p. 269.
with a letter to Bishop Gibson on June 1, 1724, in which he lamented that the Negroes' masters would not "...afford them time from their worldly service to attend that of our Common Master, and Savior Jesus ...".45

Bishop Gibson's interest in the conversion of the Negroes remained keen, and during the whole decade of the 1720's in particular he did much to encourage churchmen in missionary work among the slaves.46 In 1727 he sent pastoral letters to Virginia urging owners to "encourage and promote" the Christianization of their slaves, and bidding ministers to be active in work among the Negroes.47 He admonished the whites to recognize the Negroes as more than mere chattels, to see them as men and women with the "...same frame and faculties ...".48 that they themselves possessed.

Perhaps because Gibson added to his admonition a pronouncement to the effect that Christianity's teachings placed men under a strong obligation to accept their lot in life,49 and a reminder that the Church of England did not raise religious

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46 Mary F. Goodwin, "Christianizing and Educating the Negro in Colonial Virginia," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church (1932) 1:145.

47 Ibid.

48 Southern Churchmen, August 26, 1836.

49 Ibid.
objections to slaveholding, but rather held simply "... that the Freedom which Christianity gives, is a Freedom from Bondage of Sin and Satan ..." there was apparently some affirmative action in Virginia. Commissary Blair wrote in June 1729 that his Lordship's letters had resulted in some masters and mistresses beginning Christian teaching for their slaves.51

From Blair's comments on the Negroes' eagerness to become Christians, and their application to learning the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and Ten Commandments so that they might be baptized and attend church one would have to agree with his assessment that at least some of the Negroes were "sincere Converts." Of those who were receiving the Anglican sacraments simply in hopes that "... they shall meet with so much in more respect ...", or perhaps feeling Christianity might help them win freedom, Blair nonetheless was optimistic. The Negroes


51 "Documents Relating To The Early History of the College of William and Mary, and To the History of the Church in Virginia," William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine (1939) 19:460-61.

52 Ibid., p. 461.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.
coming to church would, he hoped, expose them to enough of Christianity's teachings to influence their lives for the better. 56

Obviously, despite the ruling of 1667 by the secular government, and the assurance of the Bishop of London in 1727 that "... as to their outward condition they remained as before even after baptism," 57 there lingered considerable confusion among the slaves. Many no doubt continued to hope for some improvement in their lot, a misconception which perhaps caused them to satisfy the requirements for baptism more readily than they might otherwise have done. 58

The Commissary assured Bishop Gibson of great care being taken by the ministers in Virginia to disabuse the Negroes of any idea that freedom would result from baptism. 59 Nevertheless, not a few slaves continued to cherish the hope of liberty if they accepted Christianity. Some even believed King James had ordered the freeing of all who accepted Christ. 60

56 Ibid.


58 "Documents". William and Mary Quarterly, p. 469.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.
Such hopes and their lack of fulfillment were in no small part responsible for the disturbances which arose in 1731 when some of the less docile slaves growing angry and rebellious met secretly in considerable numbers to talk of choosing leaders for an uprising. In Princess Anne and Norfolk some two hundred Negro slaves assembled on a Sunday while the white people were at church, and chose leaders for a proposed insurrection which was to take place almost immediately.

Governor Gooch, though he acted promptly and vigorously against the insurrectionists nevertheless expressed a certain pity for the "poor wretches" when he wrote Bishop Gibson on May 26, 1731. Although a stern upholder of law and order against the slaves, he recognized how believing themselves unjustly deprived of freedom after baptism could be a terrible provocation, one sufficient to drive slaves to rebellion.

After the insurrection even less was generally done to accept the Negro slaves into the Church. Few even attended services, but spent Sundays in fishing, gardening, tending their cabins, or just resting. Individual clergymen, such as

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61 Ibid.

62 Brydon, Mother Church 2:49

63 Ibid.

Jonathan Boucher, attempted to awaken the conscience of the white race to the need for improving the slaves' lot—both spiritual and physical, and the government occasionally reminded masters that the Negro slaves should be allowed time enough to receive Christian instruction, at least on Sundays and other religious or secular holidays when they were customarily excused from labor.

As revolutionary fervor grew and the Colonial period drew to a close, the Anglican Church in Virginia was increasingly less able to implement its official policy of encouraging missionary work among the slaves. Several factors entered into that weakness. The ever present problem of an episcopal church cut off from its bishop by physical distance was increased by political distance; parish priests were often loyalists, and thus out of sympathy with their congregations and unable to influence them properly. Political, economic, social and legal questions—including emancipation—though stirred by the general spirit and condition of the time probably worked more against than for immediate gains, even in religious care, for the slaves. Attention was focused on slavery. Its origins, morality and legality were questioned. Where previously bondage had been


accepted without much thought, the questions were asked and the attacks made on it caused those who supported its existence to define and defend the institution. Vague, traditional assumptions about slaves and slavery were "hardened and rationalized." Existing racial prejudices, social biases against the poor, deeply ingrained respect for private property of any sort, political expediency, and certainly the failure of most religious denominations—the Episcopal Church included—to take a firm stand against slavery were among many factors that combined to defeat the impulse towards freedom for the slaves. The immediate result of the revolution-inspired questioning of slavery was to give "authority and respectability" to its existence in the new republic and entrench it more firmly than before.

The life of the Anglican Church in Virginia was one of extreme difficulty following the severance of political ties with the Mother Country. Fraught with problems within itself,

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68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.
and by attacks on its position and property from without, its very survival seemed doubtful for a number of years. One church historian, writing within living memory and knowledge of that period, says, "it was the dark day of the church"\textsuperscript{70} in Virginia.

There was neither an episcopal hierarchy, nor any diocesan organization. The church lacked the self-regulatory powers, operating funds, strong leadership, and -- perhaps worst of all -- any sense of community or denominational solidarity among parishes.

Although a diocesan organization was established and a bishop, James Madison, who was properly ordained in England, was obtained for the diocese, there was no real improvement. The new bishop had prior commitments as President of William and Mary, and Rector of James City Parish. He felt those duties were his principal obligations, and gave only sporadic attention to his episcopal duties.\textsuperscript{71} Consequently, during his episcopate the Church in Virginia gradually declined almost to extinction.\textsuperscript{72} The situation was so desperate that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{70}Francis L. Hawks, \textit{A Narrative of Events Connected With the Rise and Progress of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia} (New York, 1836), p. 206.
  \item \textsuperscript{71}Brydon, \textit{Mother Church}, Chapter 22.
  \item \textsuperscript{72}W. S. Perry, \textit{The Episcopate in America} (New York, 1895), p. 11.
\end{itemize}
many, perhaps, most, Episcopalians abandoned hope of resurrecting the church.\textsuperscript{73} It was "... in a paralysis which seemed to the world at large to be death."\textsuperscript{74}

Under these circumstances the clergy's ministry to the Negro slaves, and the owners' obligation to provide for their spiritual care were apparently overlooked by the Church. Occasional notice of matters pertaining to the worship of the Negro population was taken by other denominations, or by the State legislature which passed increasingly restrictive laws after the turn of the century.

In 1804 a new statute prohibited the requirement that masters of apprenticed Negro and mulatto orphans must provide for their being taught reading, writing and arithmetic.\textsuperscript{75} That action of course reduced the number of potentially literate, and thus more easily converted, Negroes.

So restrictive was another act of that same year forbidding the continuance of "... common practice in many places within this Commonwealth for slaves to assemble in considerable numbers at meeting houses and places of religious worship ..."\textsuperscript{76} that many white people in Virginia felt

\textsuperscript{73} Hawks, Narrative, p. 232.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{75} Samuel Shepherd, The Statutes at Large of Virginia from October Session 1792 to December Session 1806 Inclusive (New York, 1970) 3:124.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p. 108.
religious rights were being infringed upon. The legislature was pressured to amend the law in 1805 to permit owners' taking slaves with them to church, or allowing them to go to church or any service of religious worship. The law required such worship to be conducted by a regularly ordained, or licensed, white minister.

Not until the death of Bishop Madison in 1812, and the election of a new bishop in 1814, did the Episcopal Church begin the return to its former dignity and influence. Two distinguished clergymen provided the spark that relit the dying embers of the church. Richard Channing Moore, second bishop of Virginia, brought new life into the denomination during his episcopate of twenty-seven years. William Meade, assistant bishop from 1829, and bishop of the diocese from 1841 was even more responsible for the revival of the Church in his native Virginia.

Prior to the latter's election as assistant bishop little evidence exists of any official diocesan interest in the

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77 Ibid., p. 124.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Perry, Episcopate, p. 33.
81 Ibid., p. 51
spiritual condition of the Negroes in the nineteenth century. In records of diocesan councils the slaves are recognized only by an occasional "colored baptism" noted in a parish report, or by some reference to the work of the American Colonization Society.

As Bishop Moore was heavily burdened with the work of resurrecting the moribund denomination he was forced to put aside all but those problems which he saw as central to the faith and survival of the Church. It was under the guidance of Meade, who brought a distinctly reforming and evangelical spirit to his ministry, that an interest in the religious care of the slaves again was fostered within the Church in Virginia. His leadership during the crucial years from 1830 to 1860 was invaluable to both his fellow clergymen and to the laymen of the diocese.
III.

THE CRUCIAL YEARS: 1830 TO 1860

By 1830 the Episcopal Church in Virginia had experienced two centuries of contact with the Negro slaves. Members of the clergy had participated, with varying degrees of dedication, in the conversion and religious care of those in bondage. Members of the laity had occasionally hindered, often been indifferent to or merely accepted, but sometimes actively aided the Church's efforts on behalf of their chattels' souls. At no time during those two hundred years, however, had there been any period in which the Church had directed as much interest and attention towards the slaves' spiritual needs as it did from 1830 to 1860.

Two factors were basic to that surge of interest and, on occasion, effort -- pressures caused by economic and social conditions, and the attitudes and influence of Bishop Meade. The development of the English textile industry and the invention of the cotton gin had caused a tremendous growth in the demand for cotton and in its production. The increased demand for slave labor, predominant in cotton farming, caused a corresponding growth in the size of the slave population in the southern states. As slavery became more profitable economically, the southern commitment to the institution as a permanent feature in the economy, and in society as a whole, grew stronger. At the same time the abolitionist movement and humanitarian sentiments which
had previously favored gradual emancipation schemes now advocated immediate abolition of slavery. The owning of slaves was denounced by those opposed as a national evil. Southerners, Virginia's Episcopalians included, rushed to defend their "peculiar institution" in all ways open to them. One such avenue was diligence in providing religious instruction for their slaves, to the end that their souls might be saved.

Beginning in 1829 both the politically and the religiously motivated members of the Church in Virginia found strong leadership in the work of evangelizing among the slaves. In that year William Meade was chosen assistant bishop of the diocese.

By virtue of both his office and the esteem in which he was held by the majority of the clergy and laity of the diocese, Meade's attitude and actions towards the continuing problem of religious instruction for the slaves, and their place in the life of the Church, were of considerable importance.

The bishop's ideas on the institution of slavery took two forms: the secular, in which he heartily disapproved of slavery; and the religious, in which he accepted the practice of one individual owning another. The two facets of his thinking were separate and distinct. They did not contradict one another.

In his views on the purely secular aspects of slavery he did not agree with those who considered it an indispensable and
desirable factor in the economic life of Virginia. Rather he saw such a system of labor as injurious to the development of the state and its citizens. To prove his theory, Meade pointed out untilled fields, "land poor" estate owners and the numerous emigrants from Virginia during the early nineteenth-century. In the bishop's opinion the agriculture of the state had suffered from the use of slave labor. The large estates worked by slaves, particularly those along the rivers, had prevented the establishment of villages, churches and schools to the detriment of progress in the state.

Because of his dislike of slavery in practical matters, the bishop hoped the institution would be terminated, perhaps through gradual emancipation. As a young man he had freed a number of his slaves whom he felt capable of becoming self-sustaining, and arranged for their settlement in free states.


3 Ibid., p. 90.

4 Ibid.

The American Colonization Society interested him as a possible solution for the eventual "... removal of the entire colored population, without violence or wrong."\(^6\) He served as the Society's Commissioner for the release of captured freedmen in Georgia in 1819, and established a number of auxiliaries of the Society.\(^7\) Meade did not want the freed slaves to remain in Virginia, believing that free Negroes did not fit into Virginia's social structure. He did sincerely feel the Lord must have a "goodly and large heritage" for them in Africa, or perhaps in one of the free states.\(^8\)

According to his biographer, Bishop John Johns, Meade's disapproval of bondage was entirely based on secular reasons, for although he disapproved of the economic and social aspects of slavery, he had no scruples as to its legality or morality. He believed bondage had been recognized and legislated by divine authority in the Bible.\(^10\)


\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 117-125.

\(^8\) Meade, *Old Churches* 1:91.


\(^10\) Ibid.
In sermons, addresses, and pastoral letters Meade made reference to general and specific Biblical passages that, according to his interpretation, gave Divine sanction to bondage. He allotted particular emphasis to the Mosaic Law which recognized the existence of slavery. 11 Therein he found many references to the master and slave relationship, and directions as to the correct performance of the duties resulting from it. 12 In the New Testament the bishop found additional justification for the practice of slave holding in St. Paul's addresses and directions 13 to "... those in bondage who had been called to the glorious liberty of the sons of God ...". 14

While Meade obviously was satisfied with such "Divine" approval of slavery, he felt that the institution was also acceptable simply because many people had always been in some form of bondage. 15 The Negroes had, moreover, by "... God


12 Ibid., p. 7.


14 Meade, Pastoral Letter, p. 7.

in His providence ... been sent to this Christian country from Africa for the "... glorious purpose of hearing the gospel of salvation." 

There were some evils involved in the system, for white as well as black people, but Meade claimed for Christians the duty and privilege of taking a broad view of the situation and accepting its difficulties.

In viewing slavery and Christianity in general, and within the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia in particular, the bishop identified three groups of people -- the Negro slaves, the clergy, and the white laity. Each group had a well defined role to play in relation to the others. Meade wished all those in bondage to accept their lot--assigned them by God-- and to "... rejoice in the many spiritual blessings connected with it." He was a constant and earnest advocate of the clergy's providing a responsible ministry to the slaves and of the ministers' duty in encouraging and assisting the owners in their appointed task. Slave holders were, in his opinion, responsible for being faithful guardians of their chattels' spiritual welfare. Indeed, he found in the same passages of

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Meade, Old Churches, p. 90.
the Bible which he used to justify slavery clear direction as to the reciprocal nature of the master and slave relationship. Meade frequently addressed each of the three groups through sermons, pastoral letters, and articles in the diocesan newspaper, the Southern Churchman, reminding them of their obligations and suggesting ways of fulfilling them.

The burden of Bishop Meade's teaching to servants was always two-fold. He preached both love of God and obedience to His will, and humility and obedience to human masters. In the messages he directed to them, usually through their owners, he made clear his attitude to the slaves that before God all were spiritual equals, but that in temporal affairs -- including the ordering of the Church -- they must accept humility and subjection to their masters as their lot. Indeed Meade told the slaves to remember always that "humility is a lovely virtue and shines nowhere more than in a servant." On many occasions Meade preached, or wrote sermons designed to be read to servants instructing them in religious principles and duties. He explained that slaves should love and serve God

20 Meade, Pastoral Letter, p. 7.

21 Southern Churchman, January 9, 1835.
because He was their creator and because He gave them souls to be saved. 22 The bishop urged the Negroes to honor God; love Him, fear Him and pray to Him. 23 To be good Christian servants the Negroes must always keep the Sabbath holy, refraining from unnecessary personal labor and from rowdy games. 24 They must regard their own marriages as sacramentally binding and raise their children with care, and to be good Christians. 25 Truthfulness was extolled as a particularly important virtue, as was honesty. 26

22 William Meade, Sermons, Dialogues and Narratives for Servants: To Be Read To Them In Families (Richmond, 1836), p. 4; Southern Churchman, February 8, 1835. Both the material in the book, and in the newspaper article were taken by Meade almost directly from a mid-eighteenth century work, Sermons, by the Rev. Thomas Bacon. Bacon's work was evidently favored and highly approved by Bishop Meade who edited and revised it for republication and also included portions of it in his own Sermons, Dialogues, etc. and in numerous items he contributed to the Southern Churchman.

23 Meade, Sermons, Dialogues, pp. 7-9; Southern Churchman, February 8, 1835.

24 Meade, Sermons, Dialogues, p. 10.

25 Southern Churchman, January 9, 1835. Both injunctions must have often been extremely difficult to obey as husbands and wives could be, and often were, separated by sales, wills, etc. Children were also separated from parents. The Church urged owners to have Christian marriages performed for their slaves and to respect them as binding, but there was no real pressure brought to bear by the clergy on masters who ignored the Church's admonitions.

26 Meade, Sermons, Dialogues, p. 9; Southern Churchman, January 8, 1835.
The slaves were commanded by the bishop to serve their masters as if they were Christ Himself\textsuperscript{27} and to be kindly towards their fellow servants.\textsuperscript{28} Instruction in the Christian virtues of kindliness, love of God, obedience to masters, and eschewing all evil living was presented by Meade in little stories and dialogues in which fictitious Negroes acted out roles as good Christians and unsaved heathen.\textsuperscript{29}

 Probably the most concise summary of Meade's attitude towards slavery, the duties of slaves to God and to earthly masters, and his estimation of the Negro's mental abilities as generally childlike is revealed in two catechisms for slaves which he submitted to the \textit{Southern Churchman} for publication and subsequent use throughout the Diocese. The questions and answers are very simple and short as the following examples reveal:

 Q. "Who made you?"
 A. "God."\textsuperscript{30}

 Q. "What else did he make?"
 A. "All things in heaven and earth."\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{27}Ephesians 6:5

\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Southern Churchman}, March 13, 1835.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.}, January 9, 1835; January 1, 1836; January 26, 1838.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}, May 22, 1835.

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}
Q. "What is God?"
A. "God is a Spirit, holy, just and good." 32

In both catechisms the slaves' subordinate position was set forth unequivocally, and stamped with the approval of the bishop and the Bible:

Q. "What is the duty of servants?"
A. "To be obedient to their masters in singleness of heart, as unto Christ not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ; doing service as to the Lord and not men." 33

Q. "What directions are given servants?"
A. "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." 34

The bishop never in any way taught that which might have encouraged the slaves to aspire to change their position in society. Rather than seeking physical freedom those in bondage were urged to "... seek that liberty of soul from sin which Christ alone could give. ..." 35

To his fellow clergymen Meade was always outspoken on the subject of their role in relation to the slaves. His strong

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Southern Churchman, May 21, 1841.
35 Johns, A Memoir, p. 474.
sentiments were most fully expressed in a pastoral letter printed and distributed throughout the diocese in 1834. 36 He wrote of the ministers' particular obligation towards the poor and ignorant -- black as well as white, 37 for he firmly believed in the spiritual equality of all men. 38 He professed himself to be greatly surprised by how much was done for the poorer white people by ministers and missionaries in contrast to the serious lack of attention given "... two millions of a neglected race ..." 39, the negro slaves. Every Episcopal clergyman in the diocese should exercise his ministry to the fullest extent on behalf of the Negroes. 40 They should be "... ever ready to preach the word of God to them in season and out, in private and in public." 41

36 See note 11.


38 Ibid., p. 13.


40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., p. 16.
Certain specific, practical points were made by the bishop concerning the most efficacious methods by which the ministers might promote the conversion and subsequent piety of the slaves. They should try to arrange for their presence in the churches, and see that "suitable seats" were provided for them.42 Once the Negroes were present, the clergy ought to make special efforts to draw their interest43 by helping them realize how many of the passages in the Bible applied to their lives and problems.44 If possible ministers should arrange that Sunday afternoons and evenings be devoted to instruction and services for slaves, either in the church or on the plantations.45 If it proved impossible to get the slaves into the churches, especially in the more isolated rural areas, then the bishop suggested that the teaching of the Gospel be taken to them, with classes and services held at slave quarters.46 All masters and mistresses should be

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
urged to participate in teaching religious principles to their slaves, and to aid them in such pious work the clergy should supply all families with catechisms, tracts, sermons and explanations of scriptures adapted to the understanding and needs of servants. Meade believed the diocesan ministers had the power to further the "good cause" both directly through their own labors, and indirectly through encouraging and admonishing their parishioners. They were guilty of a great sin of omission if they did not use their influence well.

While some members of the Virginia clergy may have felt a heavy burden was placed on their shoulders by the Bishop's instructions to consider all the servants connected with the families of the diocese as properly objects of their pastoral care, it was impossible for them to feel themselves asked to do anything more than Meade himself had always been ready and willing to do. Before his elevation to episcopal rank, he had served in several parishes as rector, or assistant, and had always been faithful in fulfilling his priestly obligations to the negroes.

47 Ibid., p. 17.
49 Ibid.
50 Johns, A Memoir, p. 76.
During his years as bishop Meade always considered the
slaves a particular responsibility of the episcopacy and
sought opportunities to address them in person, or through
articles and sermons written especially for their owners to
read to them. On the occasion of confirming several slaves
at Lawrenceville in 1856 he stated: "... I never felt myself
more as the minister of Christ and follower of the Apostles,
than when laying my hands on the heads of this portion of our
fellow beings." To Bishop Meade, the Episcopal faith was
"... a religion suitable to all -- rich and poor, bond and
free."

It was not only the clergy who had a responsibility to
the slave class, but also the owners -- every one of whom
was directly responsible to God for his own actions. In
Meade's mind it was clear that a heavy obligation rested on
the owners of slaves to instruct them, or arrange for them to
be instructed. In his Pastoral Letter the bishop put a number
of questions to the masters and mistresses with the idea of

51 Ibid.

52 Meade, Pastoral Letter, p. 17.

53 Found in the Southern Churchman and in Meade's Sermons,
Dialogues, Etc.

54 Johns, A Memoir, p. 476.

55 Ibid., pp. 473-74.

56 Meade, Pastoral Letter, p. 22.
suggesting to them the best methods of cooperating with the clergy in caring for the salvation of their slaves' souls.

He asked owners if they could invite the slaves to come into the homes each day to pray and listen to the word of God. If that were not possible, then once each week the master might gather them and read something of a religious nature. Perhaps the owners could employ some pious worthy person to read to them, talk to them, pray with them, and especially to teach the children.

Could not the head of each household observe the Sabbath by holding a worship service, acting as minister, especially if no service were held nearby? Sunday schools might be organized for slaves and the children of the masters might "... show their benevolence ... by instructing them in the word of God." Last, but of great importance, could the owners not make it easy for slaves to attend religious meetings and encourage ministers to bring their work to them?

Meade reminded slaveholders that even if they were the most indulgent and humane of masters in temporal matters

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57 Ibid., p. 17.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., pp. 17-8.

60 Ibid., p. 18.

61 Ibid., p. 5.
the Episcopal Church held slaves to be pitifully neglected if the owners did not "... trouble to prepare their never-dying souls for a better country than can be found on this earth."62

Many Episcopalians were shirking their duty for he found very few servants attended worship services or classes for religious education.63 Even when servants "attended" the churches all too often there was no suitable place provided for them within the buildings and consequently they idled about the churchyard during the service. There was little virtue in allowing attendance under such conditions, or when there was no instruction designed to appeal to their understanding and needs.64 Meade wanted all those concerned to make a greater effort, even he himself, who had worked for twenty-four years ministering to the slaves whom he called his "neglected fellow-beings."65

Combined with external secular pressures, Bishop Meade's strong leadership caused a sharp rise of general interest among both clerical and lay members of the Episcopal Church

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
64 Ibid., p. 9.
65 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
in Virginia for the souls of the blacks. Beginning in 1833 records of the Annual meetings of the diocese, articles and letters in the *Southern Churchman*, and sermons preached by the bishops and other clergy all reflected a more positive attitude towards religious care of the slaves. Although indifference persisted, there does not seem to have been any opposition within the diocese towards the provision of religious instruction, and at least some of the Church's sacraments and sacramentals for the slaves. Probably this affirmative attitude owed much to the clergy of the diocese being generally of one accord with the laymen in their feelings about slavery and the Negroes' place in the Church.

No formal policy regulating the relationship of the Church in the Diocese of Virginia with the slaves seems to have existed. Evidence supports the idea that most of the diocese's members accepted slavery as compatible with their conception of Christianity. Certainly no diocesan organization ever sponsored any anti-slavery movement. Bishop Meade's belief in the morality of slaveholding was well known, and other ministers and pious laymen felt they could say that "... in the New Testament we find not a single intimation that the relation of master and servant ought to be broken up ...".

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Even if one had doubts, it was possible to silence them as one clergyman, a professor at the Episcopal theological seminary, did, saying "neither the Savior nor his apostles, and therefore neither do I have much to do with abstract questions. They found the world as it was and not as it should be." Some conditions, such as slavery, might not be ideal, but then "we have many things which are made right and necessary by the circumstances of society." 

The sin lay not, according to the clergy, in the existence of a master-slave relationship, but in the way its obligations were discharged. They felt very strongly about "The Great Sin of the South." "It is not slavery that is our sin. This is sufficiently countenanced by the Bible for us to be easy on this score. It is not attending to the spiritual welfare of the slaves, that is our sin." 

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67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., p. 12.

69 Ibid., p. 11.


71 Ibid.
Even in urging religious education and the extension of the Church's sacraments and sacramentals to the Negro slaves the clergy in no way advocated upsetting the social "status quo". Bishop Meade made clear to the members of the diocese that he was "... well aware of the caution and prudence with which every thing relating to the improvement of their condition should be approached and handled." He felt himself unjustly attacked when on a single occasion in 1856 he was accused in a Petersburg newspaper of having used in a sermon delivered to a group of slaves, phrases that were criticized as "... calculated unduly to elevate ..." them. He protested that he had been addressing the slaves both in the presence and the absence of their owners for forty-six years and that during that time never once had he made any remark to, or about, slaves that was criticized by anyone. The clergy might, and did, protest what could perhaps be termed spiritual discrimination and segregation, but they found no fault through the years with the "obvious propriety" of the time honored physical and social segregation in worship and administration of the sacraments. No disturbing

72 Meade, Pastoral Letter, p. 3.

73 Johns, A Memoir, p. 475.

74 Ibid.
innovations in the "proper" order were ever advocated, for
with members of both white and colored races worshipping in
the same churches the bishops and clergy were sure that
"... no more judicious course could be pursued ..."\textsuperscript{75} than
that which they and their parishioners already found suitable.

The Protestant Episcopal Church in America, of which the
Virginia Diocese was a part, brought no pressure to bear on
dioceses from slave states such as Virginia to take a stand
against slavery, or even more fully to integrate the Negroes
into the life of the Church. By the second quarter of the
nineteenth century, outside the United States, churches of
the Anglican Communion throughout the world were opposing
slavery as a complete denial of the basic concepts of
Christianity. The Protestant Episcopal Church in America
was, however, indicted in 1856 by Samuel Wilberforce, Lord
Bishop of Oxford for having "no canon [which] proclaims it
contrary to the discipline of their Church to hold property
in man and treat him as a chattel."\textsuperscript{76} Indeed, the Church
never took any formal position on the subject of slavery.
Among the various factors that created that situation were
a lack of unanimity of opinion among the bishops of even the

\textsuperscript{75} Diocese of Virginia \textit{65th Annual Convention Journal
1860} (Richmond, 1860), p. 68.

\textsuperscript{76} Samuel Wilberforce, Lord Bishop of Oxford, \textit{A History
of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America} (London, 1856),
p. 433.
northern dioceses as to slavery's being morally wrong, and such a real sense of sympathy, respect and affection among the members of the national House of Bishops as to preclude the introduction of any topic that might breed dissent. The Episcopal clergy were, moreover, generally loathe to become involved in any topic that pertained to political matters. Thus national and diocesan policy -- or lack of policy -- left Virginia's Episcopalians comfortably free of annoying arguments over slavery within the denomination, comfortably free to maintain the pattern of bi-racial relations developed over two centuries for their Church.

Within the framework, there was much missionary work to be done by the Episcopal Church, particularly the Episcopal Church, which represented such a large proportion of the landed and slave interest of the State, thus making it especially her duty to Christianize and minister to the slaves. Bishop Meade found that regrettably few of the Negro slaves attended any religious meetings. Most Sundays were spent in idleness or play, or in tending personal gardens, cleaning cabins, doing laundry or other chores about the quarters.

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77 Bishops Hopkins of Vermont and Seabury of New York were, for example, far more vociferously pro-slavery than any of their Episcopal colleagues from the South.

78 Southern Churchman, November 19, 1858.

79 Meade, Pastoral Letter, pp. 8-9.
As it was plainly the duty of the clergy and members of the diocese to remedy such conditions the Committee on the State of the Church began by urging upon themselves in 1834 "... the religious instruction of young and old among that portion of 'the degraded race of man' with which it has pleased an inscrutable Providence to bless our country." Bishop Meade acknowledged the difficulty of the task before them, but warned the ministers and people against exaggerating the problems involved. In 1834 also, Meade's Pastoral Letter on religious training of the slaves was printed and distributed throughout the diocese.

The response of the diocese to the bishop's enthusiastic espousal of the cause of better religious teaching for the slaves was certainly not as whole-hearted or vigorous as he no doubt wished. It was, however, an improvement over the past.

Parish priests began to make note of Negro baptisms and burials, and occasionally mentioned instruction and services provided for the slaves. Frederick County was one of the first parishes publicly to recognize the slaves as having any part in the religious life of the Church. The annual

80 Francis Hawks, Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of the United States (New York, 1836) 1:302.
81 Ibid.
82 Meade, Pastoral Letter, See Note 11.
Frederick County parish report to the Convention of 1834 stated that the ministers of the parish were making a special effort towards improving the religious instruction of the servants. In that parish it was the habit of the clergymen to arrange for special Sunday afternoon services in various churches for the slaves who were said to attend in considerable numbers, and to "... appear thankful for the notice shown them." That Frederick County Parish should be one of the first areas to make any provisions particularly for the slaves is understandable. It was William Meade's home parish.

The newly established diocesan paper, the Southern Churchman often served as a forum for both clergy and laymen who shared the bishop's concern with the spiritual welfare of the slaves. In the first issue of the newspaper, on January 3, 1835, the editor established a department called the "Domestic Assistant" in which he proposed to print material relating to the instruction of servants. Many clergymen, laymen, and laywomen sent in letters, articles and sermons. Bishop Meade was the first contributor, and a frequent one thereafter.

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83 Hawks, Contributions, p. 288.

84 Ibid.

85 Southern Churchman, January 3, 1835.
By August, 1835, combining suggestions of Bishop Meade's with those of other ministers, tentative plans for Christianizing all the slaves held by Episcopalians were drawn up and printed in the *Southern Churchman*. The editor obviously hoped that the plans would be adopted voluntarily and put in effect throughout the diocese. The program for Negro infants born in families owned by Episcopalians included five points: (1) Infant baptism, (2) Compulsory attendance at instruction and services, (3) Compulsory attendance at family prayers, (4) Training in the catechism, (5) Encouragement to prepare for confirmation. Adults were to be advised to prepare for baptism, which was to be administered when they were deemed to understand its significance. Thereafter, masters would pressure the baptized slaves to attend catechism classes and plantation worship assemblies. Mention was made of explaining the nature of confirmation, but subsequent confirmation and full church membership were not suggested for the newly Christianized adult Negro slaves.\(^8\)

While evidence of increased interest and some modest advances in ministering to the slaves showed up in Virginia during the latter years of the 1830's no diocese-wide plan was ever adopted. The annual council meeting in 1840 "... believed

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\(^8\) *ibid.*, August 7, 1835.
this subject has not hitherto received that full attention and interest ..." which it deserved. To aid in planning the ministry to the slaves a committee of seven -- including the bishops, two other clergymen, and three laymen -- was appointed to consider the most efficient way of providing oral instruction in religion. The members were also to determine which of the Negroes were to be considered as candidates for baptism. Although continued in 1841 by the Annual Diocesan Convention the group produced no general plan for providing uniform, continuous instruction for the Negroes.

Bishop Meade submitted a synopsis of the committee's findings to the Southern Churchman for publication. The report stressed the difficulty any regular parish minister had in performing all the duties that his position entailed. Few rectors were able to give adequate time to the slaves' needs. The committee suggested hiring missionary priests as a partial solution, and cited several successful cases throughout the South where such ministers were already serving.


88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., p. 153.
The importance of lay participation in any program was pointed out, with specific hints as to what the masters and mistresses should do. Family worship services including servants, plantation Sunday Schools and induced attendance at church services were among the ways in which owners might help.91

The Committee for Promoting Religious Instruction for the Colored Population, which was formed in 1840, also reported to the annual convention with "much pleasure" that an effort had been made in a number of parishes to provide regular religious instruction to a "portion" of the Negroes.92 The clergy felt they might congratulate themselves on the "pleasing prospect" which they foresaw of gradually improving the spiritual condition of at least some of the slaves.93 Usually the "portion" referred to included the house servants and some other favored few of any given master's chattels. Those were the ones who were called in for family prayers and permitted to occupy "suitable" seats -- perhaps in the rear, or in galleries of the churches.

91 Southern Churchman, July 2, 1841.
92 Dashiell, A Digest, p. 155.
93 Ibid.
Although apparently pleased with what had been done following Meade's committee report, the Church encouraged a sustained effort on the part of the clergy and pious laymen, to stress the owners' responsibility to see that the slaves were "... provided amply with the means of grace and not be cut off from the hope of salvation." The clergy were ready to do their part, but the importance of the aid of the laity could not be over-emphasized. Without their cooperation little could be accomplished.

The duty of evangelizing servants was one which could not be ignored. As one owner writing to the Southern Churchman said, "They are our servants, lawfully ours. They are ours to cultivate our fields, to keep our houses, to attend upon our persons. But they are not ours to be kept in almost heathenish darkness. They are not ours to shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven." A thoughtful layman wrote to other owners through the pages of the diocesan newspaper to ask "What has been done? What is our duty?" He, and others like him, felt too little had been done, felt that the parental character of the masters' relationship with his

94 Southern Churchman, December 31, 1858.


96 "Thoughts on the Religious Care of Slaves in the State of Virginia By a Layman and Slaveholder", Southern Churchman, April 30, 1841.
chattels must be developed so that each child born in bondage was looked on by his owner as given by God, as a special charge to be raised a good Christian. Masters and mistresses were admonished to consider all their slaves as part of their households, as an extension of the family. The sin of being an "ungodly master", of not taking the responsibility of providing for religious instruction of the slaves, was compared to that of an uncaring father who neglected the souls of his own children. In fact, the owner was even more responsible for slaves than for his children because the slave retained his "childlike" qualities throughout life. Just as a parent might pray for a child, so should owners include servants in their prayers -- both in private, and in public worship services. The Church considered daily family prayers and Bible reading an integral part of the religious life in any home. If faithfully carried out such a program could be invaluable in teaching religion to the slaves. Every owner should invite, indeed insist, upon the regular

97 Ibid.

98 "Religious Education of Servants". *Southern Churchman*, March 15, 1844.

99 "Duties to Servants". *Southern Churchman*, December 31, 1858.

100 *Southern Churchman*, January 30, 1837.

101 Ibid., August 26, 1859.
appearance at daily family worship of all his servants.102

Although the Episcopal Church in nineteenth-century Virginia never advocated any sort of coercion being exercised to force the slaves to submit to religious teaching or to join the Church, individuals did on occasion favor the idea of "insisting" on their joining in services held at home, and at plantation quarters. If owners commanded slaves in all other aspects of life, was it not almost hypocrisy to fail in directing their spiritual lives as well? Parents certainly did not leave religious training and church attendance to the discretion of children. Why should owners do so with slaves, who were certainly considered even more dependent?103 Those who favored forcing the Negro slaves to attend any sort of religious meetings were certainly in the minority. Most owners who were concerned simply allowed them to attend whatever services were available, perhaps sitting in the gallery of a Sunday School room at the white church, or going to Sunday afternoon services held especially for them.

In the most pious among the slaveholding families, the women often were active in teaching the basic tenets of Christianity to the slaves. Older children of the masters'  


103 "Africa in America," Southern Churchman, August 12, 1859.
families sometimes instructed the slave children, or called on elderly and ill slaves to pray with them.

The Church made available many tracts, sermons, prayers, catechisms and stories for the white owners to use in teaching their Negro slaves. Bishop Meade's offerings were probably the most numerous and best known in the Virginia diocese. He seems to have particularly favored the volume entitled *Sermons, Dialogues and Narratives for Servants: To Be Read To Them In Families* and published in 1836. That work edited by Meade, and with some material of his included, was chiefly a new edition of the eighteenth-century minister, Thomas Bacon's *Sermons* for servants. So useful did the bishop consider its contents that he submitted several excerpts from it to the *Southern Churchman* for use by the paper's readers. 104 The *Southern Churchman* printed other stories and sermons of Meade's designed for being read to the slaves by their masters. 105 The bishop's two catechisms for servants 106 were also carried by the diocesan paper to many members of the Church.

104 *Southern Churchman*, January 2, 1835; January 9, 1835; February 13, 1835; February 20, 1835; March 13, 1835.


106 *Southern Churchman*, May 22, 1835 and May 21, 1841.
Other less prominent clergy and lay people had suggestions and aide to offer owners in effecting proper religious instruction of the blacks. The importance of making the lessons interesting and scaling them down to suit the Negroes' supposed mental capacity appeared frequently. Ministers were cautioned to make their talks to the Negroes applicable to the condition of the slaves and such as to draw their attention. A simple service, opening with a hymn and a prayer followed by a short and carefully explained Bible story, readings from Old and New Testaments and a closing hymn and prayer was considered a good plan to be followed by a master conducting a service for "his people." Owners who directed classes were reminded that repetition was boring and should be avoided. The use of colorful picture cards illustrating Bible stories or religious themes was encouraged as appealing to the Negro children, and the "child-like" adults.

While many, perhaps most of Virginia's Episcopalians shared their neighbors' belief that the mental level of the Negro was generally inferior, or childish, the Church did not

107 Ibid., March 13, 1835.


109 Ibid.
consider that any excuse for withholding religious instruction. The Negroes' capacity for learning was held to be quite adequate for understanding Christian principles and Bible stories. References were frequently made by the clergy indicating their position. The Negroes were said to "... learn with great facility ..." if suitable materials and methods were used, and "... extraordinary attention and desire to learn ..." were noted, especially among the children.

Because of the general feeling among the white people that the blacks were intellectually inferior and socially unacceptable many parishes held separate services for the Negroes. At such meetings, held on Sunday afternoons or evenings, the sermons, prayers, and litanies could be carefully chosen to fit the "character and condition" of servants. Sunday schools were starting to be a popular vehicle for religious instruction of the Negroes also.

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110 Journal of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia Held in St. George's Church, Fredericksburg, Virginia on 21st of May 1845 (Richmond, 1845), p. 35.

111 Journal of the 57'th Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia (Washington, D.C., 1852), p. 64.

Another factor involved in having "... stated services for them exclusively"\textsuperscript{113} was probably the legal requirement put into effect in 1831, that all instruction be carried out orally,\textsuperscript{114} which would necessitate rather different methods from those used with the white church members.

In spite of Sunday schools, special services, and private instruction by devout masters and mistresses the church never felt that the laity were fulfilling their obligations properly. That simple Christian charity, piety, and responsiveness to appeals from the diocesan clergy on religious grounds did not move Virginia's Episcopalian masters to make adequate response to the slaves' eagerness to learn is evident as various arguments of a practical nature were also used to encourage owners in making religious instruction available to the slaves.

Self-interest was appealed to for spurring the efforts of the laity in the work of evangelizing. The editor of the \textit{Southern Churchman} hoped religious education would instill in the slaves beliefs leading to "good order and good principles"\textsuperscript{115} thus causing him to believe that he and his peers would increase

\textit{\textsuperscript{113}Ibid.}, p. 112.

\textit{\textsuperscript{114}Journal of the Convention of 1845}, p. 35; "Duties", \textit{Southern Churchman}, December 31, 1858.

\textit{\textsuperscript{115}Southern Churchman}, January 2, 1835.
their own security and comfort in ministering to the blacks. One prominent minister of the period, the Rev. Adam Empie of Bruton Parish, reminded the Episcopalian sin Virginia that it was in their own practical best interests as well as their duty to provide ample religious training, for it made the Negroes more biddable, more faithful and honest, better men -- better servants. The public spirit of those who loved Virginia was called on also. Mr. Empie assured members of the diocese that making "better Christians" of the slaves worked "... for the benefit of the commonwealth as well as of masters and of families". A really devout Negro slave was obviously less likely to commit crimes of violence -- particularly insurrection. The Church rated fear and terror inspired by masters a poor second to a well-developed Christian conscience.

None of the avenues of approach to the slave owners proved wholly successful, for the diocesan newspaper felt

116 Ibid.
117 Journal of the Convention of 1845, p. 35.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 Southern Churchman, August 26, 1836.
justified in quoting from a previously published article saying of the masters and mistresses that there were "... few that teach any of their servants systematically, and much fewer that teach all of them." Many of the clergy may well have agreed with one observer of the situation who claimed that no appeals would work unless, and until, the white people were "... impressed with a just and abiding sense of the value of the black man's soul."  

By the middle of the nineteenth century the Episcopal church was becoming aware of a trend among the slaves of its members, even those of owners who provided for religious instruction by Episcopal ministers, to ally themselves with other protestant denominations. The Presbyterian, Methodist, and most particularly the Baptist churches were apparently preferred by those Negroes who chose their own religious affiliation. This preference had first manifest itself during the Great Awakening in Virginia when a feature of the revivals was the strong appeal made to the blacks by the Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists. Indeed, so many attended or joined the Baptist Church that it was referred to by a lady of Bishop

121 Southern Churchman, March 8, 1859.  

122 Religious Instruction, Southern Churchman, May 29, 1846.  

Meade's acquaintance as "... the communion they all belong to in Virginia." 124

In 1847 there was published a small volume entitled *Sketches of Old Virginia Family Servants* for which Meade wrote a short preface in which he drew the readers' attention to the Negroes' choice of denomination, as illustrated in the stories of such slaves as African Bella who had "... united herself to the Baptist Communion", 125 Old Milly who "... was considered a member of the Baptist Communion", 126 and Blind Lucy, an elderly and much respected slave woman "... who was also a Baptist". 127 In his remarks the bishop "sorrowfully acknowledged" that it would "... be perceived that in the following Sketches, the servants, though belonging to Episcopal families, became connected with another denomination of Christians." 128 He expressed the earnest hope that both owners and ministers would redouble their efforts towards converting the slaves, and so instructing them that the "...
numbers of pious servants in full communion with ourselves129 might greatly increase.

That hope was obviously not fulfilled, for such large numbers were drawn to the Baptists as to cause comment in the Southern Churchman. One letter to the editor put responsibility on the owners' not making adequate provision for religious training, the writer maintaining that the Negroes "... if properly instructed"130 were seldom converted away by the dogma of the Baptists. Evidence indicated otherwise, for in May of 1860 the report of the Annual diocesan Convention admitted that Negro converts were made, but once instructed in the Christian faith did not remain in the Episcopal Church.131 If permitted to do so, they invariably joined other denominations of Christians.132 The problem was especially perplexing as defections occurred not only among the slaves of those who ignored their chattels' spiritual welfare, but also among the servants of those who faithfully abided by Bishop Meade's injunctions to remember St. Paul's

129 Ibid.

130 Southern Churchman, July 23, 1858.

131 Annual Convention: 1860, p. 66.

132 Ibid.
command: "Masters render unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye, also, have a master in heaven." 133

The Church in the Diocese of Virginia could not accept the possibility that the difficulty might lie in the style, or form, of worship used 134 for it had often been asserted on reliable authority that in other dioceses in the South, Negroes were faithful communicants. So why was it that in Virginia other denominations were so much more attractive to the Negroes than was the Episcopal Church? 135

Hoping to find an answer to that question, and a means of keeping the slaves belonging to Episcopalians in the Church, the Convention of 1858 appointed a committee "to ascertain whether any and if any, what provision is made for the instruction of the colored population within their limits; and also to inquire as to the best means of securing the permanent attachment of the colored people to our church." 136 One year later the committee still had no report to make and presented a request to be continued for

133 Meade, Pastoral Letter, p. 7.
134 Annual Convention, 1860, p. 66.
135 Ibid.
136 Dashiell, A Digest, p. 262.
another year. The enlargement of the group by the addition of Assistant Bishop John Johns and three others, was also petitioned. The Convention granted both requests, and decided also to explore the possibility of establishing a home missions arm of the church for the slaves throughout Virginia.\textsuperscript{137} Having observed the remarkable success of the Negro churches of other protestant denominations, the establishment of such congregations within the Episcopal communion was to be taken under consideration. To provide for the buildings needed for such a project the parish rectors throughout the diocese were to take up special collections.\textsuperscript{138} Control by the whites of the projected Negro churches was to be established and maintained through white vestries drawn from the members of the vestries of the already established parish churches. White ministers -- the only ones legally permissible -- and police regulation of Negro worshippers, "... so as to secure good order and propriety,"\textsuperscript{139} were also set forth as requirements for the projected congregations.

\textsuperscript{137}Journal of the Diocese of Virginia 64'\textsuperscript{th} Annual Convention 1859, (Richmond, 1859), p. 36.

\textsuperscript{138}Ibid., p. 37.

\textsuperscript{139}Ibid.
By 1860 the committees examining religious instruction for the Negroes, their attachment to the Church, and the establishment of colored churches were ready to make reports and offer suggestions to the delegates at the Annual Convention. The Negro question was indeed the principal topic at the Richmond meeting that May.

In answering the question posed two years earlier concerning what provisions were made for religious instruction and worship services for the Negroes the committee members felt that they could honestly say that physical accommodations were invariably adequate, indeed, "... more room being appropriated than is generally needed." 140 Suitable seats in galleries or at the rear of churches were set aside for the Negroes, chapels had been built in rural areas for their use, or they were allowed to use the lecture or Sunday School rooms 141 for their services.

In addition to welcoming the presence of the Negroes at many of the regular services the clergy provided other opportunities for their instruction. Many ministers preached to them at special Sunday afternoon meetings, some as often as

140 Annual Journal 1860, p. 64.

141 Ibid.
every week, others once or twice each month.  

Funerals were often made the occasion for preaching. In rural areas ministers frequently visited the scattered plantations and larger farms to hold prayer services at the slave quarters.

In summary the committee found there was "... no neglect of accommodation ...", quite the contrary as there was "... always room enough and to spare", nor was there any "... want of plain and faithful preaching" on the part of the clergy.

In spite of such seemingly favorable conditions the members were distressed to find that "... of the colored population in Virginia not more than eight or nine thousand are brought under the influence of our Church, though far the largest part of them are under the control of those who profess and call themselves Episcopalians." Based on the parish

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142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid., p. 65.

146 Ibid.

147 Census of 1850 showed 54,333 free Negroes and 472,861 slaves in Virginia.

statistics available, the committeemen reckoned the number of Negroes in full communion (i.e., baptized and confirmed) with the Church in Virginia at only 272.\textsuperscript{149}

On examining the shockingly poor results of the Church's efforts, and observing the growing alliance of the Negroes with other denominations, the committee could not report the Church's "... existing provisions as adequate for the proper instruction of the colored population."\textsuperscript{150} Rather they deemed it to be a failure and felt it was "... high time to inquire the cause and apply the remedy."\textsuperscript{151}

Their report went on to do the former and suggest means of doing the latter. Lack of accommodation had already been discarded as a possible deterrent to Negro worship, as had inadequate clerical performance. Could it be the Episcopal Church's "mode of worship" which was unsuited in some ways to the Negro race?\textsuperscript{152} The committee rejected that conclusion, most feeling with their bishop that it was a religion suitable to all races, all conditions of men.\textsuperscript{153} Moreover, the results

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., p. 66.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Johns, A Memoir, pp. 473-4.
of Episcopal missionary work among Negroes in other dioceses, notably South Carolina, seemed to refute accusations of unsuitability. Few in the church really believed, or had believed for many years, that American-born Negroes were in any way incapable of understanding the teachings of the Episcopal Church. It had been stated plainly in earlier years at meetings of this same diocesan convention that they learned easily enough. There was no obvious inherent incompatibility between the Church's doctrines and service, and the "colored population."

With perhaps surprising insight, the committee focused on what they considered the basic reason for the lack of permanent attachment on the Negroes' part towards the Episcopal Church in Virginia. The members of that race were denied "... the blessed privilege of Christian fellowship." Therein lay the denomination's failure. Nothing was done to cause the Negroes to feel themselves to be a vital part of the congregations. They were allowed no part in the services beyond that of "hearers," could not readily "... give expression to their faith, zeal and love." The situation


156 Ibid., p. 69.
was shown in stark clarity in the committee's reference to the sacrament of communion. "After the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper has been administered to other communicants, some indication is given to them as they wait in some part of the gallery, that they may approach to receive the consecrated symbol of salvation and Christian union."157

The number able to leave their segregated seats and go forward in response to the ministers' indication that they might do so would have been very small. Only full communicants -- those who were both baptized and confirmed -- would be permitted to participate in the sacrament of the Eucharist, and only a small percentage of the Negro slaves who were baptized ever received the rite of confirmation. Parish statistics compiled in 1860 showed only two hundred and seventy-two Negroes to be in full communion with the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia.158 Few blacks were privileged to go forward to the altar, afterwards to "... retire unknowing and unknown."159

How was the Church to remedy a situation that was already a matter of "remark and lamentation", and likely to become even worse? "Certainly not by any innovation of the

157 Ibid., p. 67.
158 Annual Journal 1860, p. 65.
159 Ibid., p. 67.
existing usages of our congregational worship and administration of the sacraments." The committee reaffirmed the belief of the Church in Virginia in the "obvious propriety" of a segregation of races that extended within the walls of the Church. They admitted and regretted that the Negroes did not feel themselves to have "... any relation to the Christian people where they worship ...", but were equally sure that "when white and colored persons worship in the same house no more judicious course could be pursued ..." than that already followed in the Diocese of Virginia. The solution would have to be found in some other way to halt the Negroes' joining with other denominations. The Church was aware that public opinion would not tolerate coercion being exercised by owners to cause the attendance and alliance of their chattels with the Episcopal Church, nor indeed could the Church itself sanction such interference with the religious freedom of even the enslaved race. The method the committee advised the diocese to adopt was that of consulting the "reasonable

160 Ibid., p. 68.
161 Ibid., p. 67.
162 Ibid., p. 68.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid., p. 69.
preferences" of the Negroes themselves. For most, that preference seemed to be for separate congregations and services. Consequently, a plan based on segregated congregations was proposed. It consisted of four major points. There were to be separate and distinct congregations. For them suitable places of worship would be provided. The ministers would of course always be members of the clergy of the Diocese of Virginia and the vestries white. Committees from the congregation members would be appointed by the ministers to aid in maintaining discipline.

The reception given the proposal was undoubtedly a generally favorable one as the suggestion for Negro Churches had already been initiated at the previous convention, and placed in the hands of a "Committee on Colored Churches". Assistant Bishop Johns in an address made to the convention spoke of having preached to large groups at Baptist and Methodist African Churches in Richmond, and expressed regret that the Episcopalians had no such congregations in the Diocese. There was not, in his opinion, any "satisfactory

165 Ibid., p. 68.
166 Ibid., p. 69
167 Journal of the 64'th Convention, p. 37.
"excuse" for such a lack. He hope that a colored congregation might be established in Richmond to serve as a model for others throughout the diocese. More-or-less in reply to Bishop Johns' remarks, the Executive Committee made a report to the Convention in which they advanced the excuse of various unspecified causes having prevented establishment of a congregation for the African Church in Richmond. The chairman reaffirmed the Church's belief that such work among the Negroes was essential, and "truly missionary", and promised the establishment of the first Negro Church for the diocese.

The Church recognized the question of spiritual care of the Negroes as an important one, vital to the health of the denomination in the Diocese of Virginia. The plans presented at the annual conventions of 1858, 1859, and 1860 were no doubt made in good faith, but the rapidly mounting pressures and problems associated with the advent of the Civil War prevented any possibility of their implementation. Thus, the Annual Convention of 1860, and the plans there proposed, culminated the long, troubled role of the Episcopal Church in Virginia in relation to the Negro slaves.

169 Ibid.

170 Ibid., "Appendix A," p. 56.
IV.
SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

Was the Episcopal Church a positive or a negative force in its relationship with the Negro slaves in pre-Civil War nineteenth-century Virginia? Examining an accumulation of material on that topic one becomes aware that neither the question, nor any possible answer, can be a simple one. At the very least, three basic themes must be considered: The Church's attitudes and general policy towards slavery and the slaves, the Negroes' choice of church affiliation, and the ultimate attitude of the Negroes towards Christianity itself.

The general framework of the Episcopal Church's view of slavery had its roots in the seventeenth-century when the first slaves were brought into the Virginia colony. The Church of England maintained that the Negroes had souls worthy of salvation and proposed and encouraged their conversion. It did not, however, formulate any effective, consistent policy either for such conversion, or for making the slaves an integral part of the Anglican Communion. In all fairness it should be recognized that even had such plans been made, their implementation would
probably have been impossible given the conditions under which the Church operated during the Colonial period. The Church was badly organized and administered within itself in Virginia and also suffered from the lack of a bishop to give cohesion and direction to its affairs. Without central authority it was left to the individual parish priests to urge upon their slave-owning parishioners the Church's general attitudes favoring religious education, baptism, and possible church membership for the Negro slaves. Unfortunately, such influence as the clergy might bring to bear on a local level was severely curtailed by the secular control of the Virginia parishes by vestries composed of men from among the landed and slave-owning class. Thus the ultimate fate of the Anglican Church's role in the conversion of the slaves rested with the laity of the denomination, and they were all too often indifferent or hostile. Although the reorganization and regeneration of the Episcopal Church in Virginia after the "dark day" that occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries led to a more centralized, and vigorous approach as to church policy and clerical participation concerning the Negro slaves, the pattern had been set. The individual owner still controlled the implementation of church policy -- a fact of which the
Bishops and clergy were keenly aware. They ever stressed the masters' role as vital to the accomplishment of any good work among the slaves.

By 1860 the leaders of the Episcopal Church in Virginia clearly felt their denomination to be a failure, if not in its attempts to teach Christian principles to the slaves, at least in its ability to "secure their permanent attachment" to the Church. One cannot but agree with them on the latter point, for when given the opportunity, the slaves overwhelmingly allied themselves with other protestant denominations. Why did they do so?

To a great degree the members of the Annual Diocesan Convention of 1860 answered that question for themselves and for later generations. The Negroes were not ever -- not even those few who were confirmed -- full members of the Anglican Communion in Virginia. They were spiritually as well as physically segregated; set apart from the white members of the congregation they were perhaps with them, but never of them. Their role was confined to passive observance. While each white member of the congregation was expected to be a participant in the order of worship the Negro was to be "a hearer of the word" only. Enthusiasm, spontaneity, and individual expressions of faith and zeal which seemed
natural to the Negro slaves in worshipping were totally out of place in the ordered services of the Episcopal Church. The slaves fitted into the less formal worship of the more evangelical denominations whose white members shared to a considerable extent such outward manifestations of faith. The extreme exclusiveness of the Episcopal Church toward administering to the slaves the sacraments and sacramentals of the Church, aside from baptism and burial, made a mockery of much that it taught, and was in sharp contrast to the more welcoming attitude of other protestant denominations. Methodists and Baptists in particular welcomed the Negroes who were church members to communion and also had a more positive attitude towards performing Christian marriage ceremonies for slaves. The Negro slave was not a full member of the Episcopal Church, and no suggestion was made that he could ever be on a plane of even spiritual equality with its white communicants. Moreover, though narrowly circumscribed by law and social custom as to what they might and might not do, Negro congregations were formed under the auspices of the Baptist and Methodist Churches in Virginia from the second quarter of the nineteenth century, whereas the Civil War was over before the Episcopalians finally began such a development.
Another factor that reduced the effectiveness of the worship service for the slaves, and further separated them from the whites, was a form of worship which presupposed a certain degree of education among members of the congregation that few Negroes possessed.

It is in the attitude of the Negro race towards Christianity itself that the positive aspect of the Episcopal Church's role can be seen. Even while rejecting the Episcopal denomination the Negroes did not reject Christianity, but rather embraced it with love and zeal, and for that the Church can take considerable credit. It was the Episcopal Church that, in the Colonial period, had begun the work of conversion and ever encouraged it. It was also the church that most often provided the Negroes' initial religious instruction. In that at least it must have done well.

As is so often the case in rendering judgement, one cannot give a clear verdict for or against the Episcopal Church in Virginia concerning its relationship with the Negro slaves. What it proposed to do for them and what it did achieve were good. Its sins were not those of commission. They were rather those of omission. The clergy did not insist upon full membership for the Negroes; did not insist more strongly upon Christian marriages for
slaves and respect by the white people of the marriages. Although the bishops and other clergy never failed to maintain that all souls were equal in the eyes of God\(^1\), who "... doesn't despise color ..."\(^2\) they were never able to develop in their parishioners acceptance of the Negro slaves as spiritual equals, much less as men and women like themselves. Indeed the clergy, as a group, neither believed nor taught the latter. Most serious of all, the Church's leaders did not utterly reject the institution of slavery itself. No canon of the Protestant Episcopal Church ever stigmatized the act of one person's owning another as un-Christian or immoral. In 1860 the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia had not "... done those things which (it) ought not to have done ..."\(^3\) but it had "... left undone those things which (it) ought to have done."\(^4\)

1. *Southern Churchman*, June 12, 1840.
2. Thomas Bacon, *Sermons Addressed To Masters and Servants and Published in the Year 1743: Republished With Tracts and Dialogues on the Same Subject*, ed. William Meade (Winchester, Virginia, 1813), p. 169.
4. Ibid.
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