

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

TRAILBLAZER: THE LEGACY OF BISHOP HENRY M. TURNER DURING THE CIVIL  
WAR, RECONSTRUCTION, AND JIM CROWISM

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## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Better Days Are Comin'.....	11
Chapter 2: "Forty Acres and a Mule".....	38
Chapter 3: Under His Own Vine and Fig Tree.....	69
Conclusion.....	91
Bibliography.....	97

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## Introduction

Henry McNeal Turner (1834–1915), a black wartime chaplain, an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) pastor, and occasional Republican politician, was a beacon of hope for thousands of freedmen following the American Civil War. The late nineteenth century marked a watershed in civil rights in the United States. The Civil War (1861–1865) ushered in emancipation for black slaves, while Reconstruction (1865–1877) provided tremendous opportunities for freedmen, including black male suffrage, equal protection under the law, and election to public office. Of course, African–Americans faced serious challenges. Many white southerners resisted Reconstruction, and the Ku Klux Klan (and other hate groups) soon emerged and challenged – through intimidation, violence, and fear – federal authority in the South. By the 1880s, most Southern states had been “redeemed” by white, southern Democrats and former Confederates who imposed poll taxes, literacy tests, and other devices aimed at preventing blacks from voting. Meanwhile, a harsh segregation regime emerged, leaving many blacks frustrated. “We are tyerd of Race problem[s] and Mob Rules,” one black Arkansas resident observed in the early 1890s, “and we believe that there are peace and happiness and prosperity in a nother section of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

As a pastor and politician, Turner represented these discouraged, oppressed, and largely rural southern blacks who struggled to define their place in American society while dealing with Jim Crowism’s harshness and humiliation on a daily basis. His ecclesiastical region, the Eighth District, which included Mississippi, Arkansas, and Oklahoma in the 1890s and early 1900s,

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<sup>1</sup> I.W. Penn to ACS Secretary William Coppinger, “Race Problem and Mob rules,” letter, April 10, 1891, ACS reel 137, quoted in Kenneth C. Barnes, *Journey of Hope: The Back to Africa Movement in Arkansas in the Late 1800s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), eBook, 59 (accessed April 23, 2016).

enabled him to inspire hundreds of freedmen with the dream of emigration to Africa.<sup>2</sup> He strongly supported Christian-based, mixed (liberal arts combined with industrialism) education to empower the working class, southern black community with the knowledge and strategies to resist legalized segregation.<sup>3</sup> Turner also rebuked the national Republican Party for its betrayal of African-Americans during Reconstruction and prophesied the party's defeat in national, state, and local elections as blacks, in turn, abandoned Republican politicians.<sup>4</sup> In the early twentieth century, as Turner became older, he spoke bitterly against blacks who did not emigrate to Africa, and became disillusioned with the state of race relations in Georgia, as well as the United States; consequently, his disillusionment led him to harshly criticize many African-Americans, causing him to lose a majority of his rural, southern, working class black supporters.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Turner's work as a pastor, legislator, and civil rights leader not only garnered national and local attention but also earned him a place in the assembly of famous black civil rights activists.

Turner was born free in South Carolina in the 1830s. Educated as a youth, he entered the ministry at the age of nineteen. In 1862, he became the pastor of Israel Bethel AME Church in Washington, D.C., and in November 1863, he became an Army chaplain. During the early years

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 157.

<sup>3</sup> J. Minton Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," *Church History* 7:3 (Sep. 1938): 236–237; E. Merlton Coulter, "Henry M. Turner: Georgia Negro Preacher–Politician during the Reconstruction Years," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 48:4 (Dec. 1964): 381–382; Jane Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream: A Re-Evaluation," *Mississippi Quarterly* 22:4 (Fall 1969): "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 329.

<sup>4</sup> Brooks D. Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 133; Henry McNeal Turner, "The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court," (1883), 60–69; "The Democratic Victory," (1884), 70–72; "The 'Force Bill,'" in *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner*, ed. Edwin S. Redkey (New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1971), 81–82.

<sup>5</sup> Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 333–335; Edwin S. Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," *The Journal of American History* 54:2 (Sep. 1967): 286–287, 289–290; Anthony B. Pinn, "'Double Consciousness' in Nineteenth Century Black Nationalism: Reflections on the Teachings of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," *Journal of Religious Thought* 52:1 (Summer/Fall 1995), 21.

of Reconstruction, Turner worked with the Freedmen’s Bureau, and in 1868, was elected to the Georgia State House of Representatives. While serving only briefly, Turner witnessed the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that prevented working class, southern blacks from fully gaining civil and political rights. In the 1870s, Reconstruction came to an abrupt halt as southern Democrats and hate groups “redeemed” the South, rescuing the region from “Negro rule” and forcing blacks to accept second–class citizenship in an increasingly hostile Jim Crow society.<sup>6</sup> Turner’s response to this retreat from Reconstruction placed him in direct opposition to the leading black Republican and civil rights spokesman of the day, Booker T. Washington.

While generally cordial to one another in both public and private, Turner and Washington disagreed over the best policies for regaining civil rights and implementing educational empowerment in the southern, working class, black community. Turner advocated a Christian–based, mixed education, and encouraged blacks to oppose Jim Crow society through hard work, demonstrations, and protests.<sup>7</sup> Washington, on the other hand, advanced the idea of industrial education and economic independence as the primary solution for blacks’ struggles to regain civil and political rights. His “model of appeasement” sent a clear message that black Americans did not believe in pressing for civil and political rights or demanding respect from whites.<sup>8</sup> Washington, then, unwittingly, created the impression that “good” blacks submitted to the humiliation of Jim Crowism and showed deference to southern whites while “bad” blacks opposed the unjust legal and social systems, and only encouraged violence and white reaction

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<sup>6</sup> W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South: Its Origins and Development in the Old South* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1969), 14–29.

<sup>7</sup> Edward L. Ayers, preface, vii–x, and epilogue to *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 348–349.

<sup>8</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, introduction to *Up From Slavery by Booker T. Washington with Related Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 2002), 3–32.

(via lynchings and race riots).<sup>9</sup> However, at the time of Washington's death in November 1915, black Americans – despite the prevalence of his “appeasement” or accommodationist approach – dealt with increasing hostility and hardship.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, according to a report published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1919, over 2,500 blacks were lynched in the thirty year period between 1889 and 1919.<sup>11</sup>

It was the more obscure Turner who actually articulated and advocated the aspirations of those who were persecuted, especially working class blacks.<sup>12</sup> Overall, Turner is worthy of scholarly consideration for at least three reasons. First, he – in his prominent role as a Union Army chaplain and an AME pastor – vehemently denounced injustice, racism, and prejudice through his sermons and writings. While he was not the only black leader to oppose Jim Crow discrimination, Turner was one of the most vocally defiant, and he cast a long shadow over the civil rights movement of the twentieth century. W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the leading civil rights activists of the early twentieth century, described him as “a man of tremendous force and indomitable courage ... the last of his clan: mighty men, physically and mentally, men who started at the bottom and hammered their way to the top by sheer brute strength....”<sup>13</sup> Second,

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<sup>9</sup> Brundage, introduction to *Up From Slavery by Booker T. Washington with Related Documents*, 3–32. As political and economic disfranchisement, combined with stringently limited opportunities for blacks, increased throughout the South, Washington briefly saw the effects of his gradualist, appeasement policy, but harsher violence from radical southern whites, and lackadaisical attitudes from northern white conservatives (as well as liberals) prevented him from recanting his position during the early 1900s.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> NAACP, “Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889–1919” (1919; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 29, <http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000070/000000/000056/restricted/html/naacp-0031.html> (accessed April 22, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Barnes, *Journey of Hope*, 127–134.

<sup>13</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Crisis* 10:3 (July 1915): 129, 132, Google books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=UFoEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA107&pg=PA132#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed April 25, 2016).

Turner's brief involvement in Reconstruction politics in the late 1860s coincided with the larger struggle by both northerners and southerners (white and black) to define the meaning of the Civil War, "to understand the tangled relationship between two profound ideas – healing and justice."<sup>14</sup> And third, Turner was a vocal advocate of black emigration to Liberia, in the late nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Bitter and disappointed in the failure of Reconstruction, he believed emigration to be a way to escape the humiliation of Jim Crowism. He traveled to Africa four times in the 1890s, supported AME organizational efforts there, and established three newspapers, *The Southern Recorder* (1886–1888), *The Voice of Missions* (1893–1900), and *The Voice of the People* (1901–1907) that promoted "back to Africa" programs.<sup>16</sup>

While Booker T. Washington occupies a more central role in early civil rights historiography, Turner was nevertheless a critical voice for equality in the late nineteenth century and is worthy of scholarly consideration. Unfortunately, few scholars have explored Turner's commitment to civil rights. Many books, journal articles, and newspaper accounts that do exist focus on his legislative and ministerial work, but downplay his work in social justice and his role as a civil rights advocate.<sup>17</sup> In addition, these accounts focus more on his rhetoric and less on his

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<sup>14</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>15</sup> P.J. Staudenraus, a year-by-year listing of the number of emigrants settled in Liberia by the ACS, and the society's annual receipts, *The African Colonization Movement: 1816–1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 251. From 1883 to 1899, 809 black Americans moved to Liberia.

<sup>16</sup> Edwin S. Redkey, foreword to *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1971), ix.

<sup>17</sup> Melbourne S. Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," *Journal of Black Studies* 12:4 (Jun. 1982): 457–467; Pinn, "'Double Consciousness' in Nineteenth Century Black Nationalism: Reflections on the Teachings of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," *Journal of Religious Thought* 52:1 (Summer/Fall 1995), 15–26; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 231–246; Richard W. Leeman, "Speaking as Jeremiah: Henry McNeal Turner's 'I Claim the Rights of a Man,'" *The Howard Journal of Communications* 17:3 (2006): 223–243; Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 371–410.



actual actions to advance the cause of civil rights. A gap, then, remains in the historical literature as it relates to Turner's full legacy.

Unfortunately, Turner never wrote a memoir or any other full-length monograph. His papers, located at Howard University, are sparse. He was a very prolific writer, however. From 1862 to 1890, he was a correspondent for the *Christian Recorder*. His many sermons have never been edited and bound into a single volume or series, but his Civil War correspondence has. In 2013, West Virginia University Press released *Freedom's Witness: The Civil War Correspondence of Henry McNeal Turner*, edited by Jean Lee Cole.<sup>18</sup> Important contemporary accounts also exist, including M.M. Ponton's work *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner* (1917), a character sketch of Turner's life, political aspirations, and ministry.<sup>19</sup> The biography included reactions to his death and tributes from contemporaries such as Washington, Du Bois, John R. Lynch, a retired Army officer and former congressional representative from Mississippi, and Dr. Kelly Miller, mathematician, professor, and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Howard University.<sup>20</sup> In July 1915, shortly after Turner's death at age eighty-one, *Crisis*, the journal of the NAACP, eulogized the trailblazing bishop in its summer issue.

Although Turner appears frequently, if briefly, in many scholarly studies on race in the United States in the late nineteenth century, he is the subject of only two modern book-length

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<sup>18</sup> Henry M. Turner, *Freedom's Witness: The Civil War Correspondence of Henry McNeal Turner*, ed. Jean Lee Cole (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> M.M. Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner: Turner: The Antecedent and Preliminary History of the Life and Times of Bishop H.M. Turner; His Boyhood, Education and Public Career, and His Relation to His Associates, Colleagues and Contemporaries* (Atlanta, GA: A.B. Caldwell Publishing Co., 1917).

<sup>20</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, "John Roy Lynch," History, Art, and Archives: United States House of Representatives, <http://history.house.gov/People/Detail/17259> (accessed April 23, 2016); Angela McMillian, "Dr. Kelly Miller: Online Resources," Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/miller/> (accessed April 23, 2016).

works, Stephen Ward Angell's *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South* (1992) and Andre Johnson's *The Forgotten Prophet: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the African–American Prophetic Tradition* (2012).<sup>21</sup> Angell's work downplays Turner's role as a civil rights activist, and, as his title suggests, emphasized instead Bishop Turner's work in building up the all–black denomination in the South.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Angell placed his life and ministry in the context of the pre and post–Civil War South while demonstrating how the black church served as a refuge for blacks during their years of oppression. Furthermore, Angell documented Turner's efforts to generate support for emigration throughout the South during the 1880s and 1890s as Jim Crowism became firmly entrenched in American society, and blacks' hard–won civil rights victories ended disastrously.

Johnson, meanwhile, was the first scholar to assess Turner's gift of prophecy within the context of his ministry as a pastor, and later bishop, of the AME Church in the South. Prophecy, as seen in the Old Testament books of the Bible, occurred when God sent Jewish messengers to pronounce judgment on the Jews' sins while reminding the people of God's promises and plans for their lives, as well as the nation of Israel. Johnson understood the importance of context and examined Turner's life and work within the backdrop of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crowism. According to Johnson, Turner employed various methods in his prophetic role to announce God's blessings on the United States in the early years of Reconstruction, as the nation seemed committed to protecting black Americans' civil rights.<sup>23</sup> However, when Democrats "redeemed" Southern states in the 1870s, Turner used his rhetoric to pronounce God's judgment

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Andre E. Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the African American Prophetic Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 1–5.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 36–37.

on a seemingly unrepentant America. Similarly, he viewed himself as a representative for the entire black community. After becoming disillusioned with northern blacks' attitudes regarding the steady denial of their rights, condescension of southern blacks, and scoffing of his emigration views, Turner, Johnson concluded, became the spokesperson for the frustrations and concerns of southern blacks.

In most general works on Reconstruction, Turner is usually portrayed in a favorable light. One important monograph is *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* by David Blight. Overall, Blight explored how Americans remembered the Civil War in the fifty years following the tragic conflict. Ultimately, it was a story of how “cultural romanticism triumphed over reality, and sentimental remembrance won over ideological memory.”<sup>24</sup> While southerners exploited northern reunionist sentiment and nostalgia for a preindustrial past, and constructed a “lost cause” myth, black leaders such as Turner and Frederick Douglass boldly denounced white southerners' recreations of the war, as well as antebellum slavery, through their sermons, speeches, and writings.

Another key work is *Journey of Hope: The Back to Africa Movement in Arkansas in the Late 1800s*, by Kenneth C. Barnes, which detailed racial oppression and violence – along with the Democrats' manipulative tactics and intimidation methods – that led poor black Arkansans to consider emigrating to Africa.<sup>25</sup> According to Barnes, Turner's descriptions of Africa, specifically Liberia, created an unquenchable thirst in blacks to escape the persecution, reclaim their racial pride, and create a better life for their families, especially their children and future

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<sup>24</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, “Chapter One: The Liberia Exodus Arkansas Colony, 1877–1880,” in *Journey of Hope: The Back to Africa Movement in Arkansas in the Late 1800s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), eBook, 13–23 (accessed April 23, 2016).

generations.<sup>26</sup> The generation of formerly enslaved blacks, which became increasingly tired of oppression, abuse, and segregation, vainly searched for other means to defend their families, freedoms, and livelihoods. The only option left to blacks was emigration because industrial education, while promising and ensuring some level of success, did not fully open most doors for black Americans.<sup>27</sup> Hostile whites controlled labor unions and the legally established system of segregation effectively deterred many blacks from climbing the socioeconomic ladders of labor and wealth. Thus, emigration provided blacks with opportunities for a fresh start, where they could rest “under their own vine and fig tree.”<sup>28</sup>

Henry McNeal Turner was unlike any other leader for his times. His oratorical abilities, simple preaching style, sense of humor, and masterful vocabulary were an impressive display of power and intellect that earned the respect of his friends, admirers, and enemies. Furthermore, Turner’s desire to elevate the black community through Christianity and educational empowerment formed the core of his messages. Although slavery had robbed many blacks of their dignity, they had not lost their work ethic. He sought to help blacks rediscover their worth by advocating emigration to Africa, a combination of the industrial and liberal arts curriculums, and a deeper commitment to Christianity. For Turner, these methods not only anchored blacks to each other, and their families, as they persevered through Jim Crowism but also inspired their children to reach their full potentials. Bishop Henry M. Turner is a pivotal figure in American

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 127–134.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 33–48.

<sup>28</sup> Mic. 4.4.

history, not just African–American history, because he was “the greatest Negro champion for human rights and the freedom of his race.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ponton, dedication in *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, n. pag.

## Chapter 1

### Better Days Are Comin': Turner's Early Life, Work as a Union Army Chaplain, and Pastoral Career

Henry McNeal Turner waged a lifelong struggle against discrimination and inequality in the post-Civil War American South. Through essays, speeches, and sermons, Turner denounced racism and injustice, and advanced a program for blacks' postwar preservation, dignity, and respect.<sup>1</sup> Turner's work as a pastor and chaplain throughout the Civil War and post-war eras enabled him to encourage the African-American community while leaving a rich legacy for future generations. As a clergyman in the AME Church, Turner responded to internal challenges, such as the hierarchical male leadership's views regarding the ordination of female pastors and deacons, emigration to Africa, and Booker T. Washington's criticisms of black churches, as well as external challenges, such as racism, hatred, and disfranchisement, with boldness, conviction, and humility; likewise, he relied on his rhetoric, masterful vocabulary, and extensive knowledge of the Bible to not only admonish his enemies but also serve as a spokesman for enslaved blacks, and later poor, working class black southerners. Growing up poor and exposed to slavery's abuses in South Carolina gave Turner a firsthand view of blacks' hopeless situation in the larger American society.<sup>2</sup> Employing a jeremiad preaching style and bitter rhetoric, he was determined to help blacks destroy the grip of slavery's shackles on their mentalities and souls by educating them as either a teacher or pastor. Turner realized that an education, when combined with

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Lee Cole, introduction to *Freedom's Witness: The Civil War Correspondence of Henry McNeal Turner* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2013), 1-3, 14-18; Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 128-132.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Christianity, was the key to instilling a sense of dignity and pride in his race because of his experiences working as an army chaplain and pastor.

While born into freedom in the 1830s, Turner's youth was not without difficulty. When he was very young, his father died, making him eligible to work in a plantation owner's cotton fields under the Guardianship Ordinance.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, state laws in South Carolina required free blacks to have a white guardian, or patron, to advocate for their honorable behavior. Furthermore, free blacks were required to keep documentation with their guardian's testimony and signature if slave patrollers, bounty hunters, or police stopped them during travel. While Turner's guardian during his boyhood years is unknown, Turner himself later described the work as humiliating.<sup>4</sup> On multiple occasions, he was threatened with whippings and even once ran away from his guardian.<sup>5</sup> Turner, then, witnessed firsthand the injustices and abuses facing slaves, as well as free blacks.<sup>6</sup>

At an early age, Turner demonstrated an interest in and passion for ministry. As a youth, he played the role of a preacher, pretending to give sermons and baptizing imaginary crowds. A contemporary of Turner noted that this role-playing was the youth's "best game of all."<sup>7</sup> He even

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<sup>3</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 14–15; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 328; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 457.

<sup>4</sup> Time-Life Books, "A Voice for African Pride," *Leadership*, vol. 2 of *African Americans: Voices of Triumph* (Alexandria: Time-Life Custom Publishing, 1993), 150. Henry M. Turner's mother and grandmother not only taught him about African-American history but also instilled in him an affinity for his race.

<sup>5</sup> Cole, introduction to *Freedom's Witness*, 2; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 8. As a young man, Turner had an indomitable spirit, which enabled him to resist the overseers' attempts to whip him on multiple occasions. He initially worked for a blacksmith named Nick White, and later, Thomas Jackson, a carriage maker, employed Turner. Despising the work, the young man ran away from either White or Jackson around the age of thirteen but may have returned to complete his tasks.

<sup>6</sup> Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 327–328; Jordan Alexander, "Henry M. Turner," in *African-American Chaplains Who Served in the Civil War*, research booklet, (2014), 19; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 457–461; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 232–234.

<sup>7</sup> Benny Dillard, "black contemporary," quoted in George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, vol. 12, i, 290.

ministered to his family's milking cow, and once preached a funeral for a dead cat. Aside from his childhood games, Turner envisioned himself teaching to immense crowds. Benjamin Tanner, a future colleague in the larger AME Church, commented that Turner's childhood passion for teaching and pastoring was the "guiding star" for his work and ministry.<sup>8</sup>

In 1851, at age seventeen, Turner received salvation under the preaching of a Methodist Episcopal Church missionary named Samuel Leard. Reflecting on his conversion experience in a letter to Leard in 1861, Turner wrote, "you ... so stunned me by your powerful preaching that I fell upon the ground, rolled in the dirt and agonized under conviction until Christ relieved me by his atoning blood."<sup>9</sup> He was soon licensed in the Methodist Episcopal Church as an itinerant preacher, but after experiencing racism and prejudice in the church, left the denomination by the end of the decade, and joined the AME Church.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Turner pursued a modest education from two white lawyers in a law firm located in Abbeville, South Carolina, by working as a "room sweeper."<sup>11</sup> Daniel Payne, the head bishop of the general AME Church, also mentored the youth and encouraged him to study Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and theology in Baltimore, Maryland, at Trinity College. There, the faculty recognized the young man's potential

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<sup>8</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Henry M. Turner, "conversion experience," quoted in William P. Harrison, *The Gospel among the Slaves: A Short Account of the Missionary Operations among the African Slaves of the Southern States*, 379–380.

<sup>10</sup> Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 327–328; Alexander, *African-American Chaplains Who Served in the Civil War*, 19; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 457–461; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 232–235; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 14–15, 26. Before embarking on his journey as a Methodist circuit preacher in 1854, the Court of Common Pleas assigned John McLauren as Turner's guardian. These scholarly sources, especially Angell's work, provide great context for examining not only the AME Church's roots but also how Turner came to join the denomination in either 1857 or 1858. Chapter one of Angell's monograph is a good foundation for the rest of Turner's story.

<sup>11</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 10. The two white lawyers taught Turner geography, history, law, mathematics, and theology.



for success, impressed by his humility, hard work ethic, intelligence, and potent extemporaneous preaching style.<sup>12</sup>

In 1862, Turner, aged twenty–eight, became the pastor of Israel Bethel AME Church in Washington, D.C. Since its founding in 1838, the church served as a nucleus for black culture, intellect, and spiritual life, as well as abolitionism.<sup>13</sup> Under Bishop Daniel Payne’s leadership, the church established a literary society. Furthermore, prominent blacks, such as Frederick Douglass, spoke at the church.<sup>14</sup> This pastorate was significant in enabling Turner to establish friendships with Republicans in Congress, including Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts.<sup>15</sup> A fervent believer in blacks’ civil and political rights, Sumner advocated for their equality in Congress, which led him to develop a lifelong friendship with Turner.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, Turner’s emerging political influence and relationships in the city brought many politicians, along with army officers, to the church to hear him preach.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Herndon, “Henry McNeal Turner’s African Dream,” 328; Edwin S. Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner: Black Chaplain in the Union Army,” in *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*, edited by John David Smith, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 337; Cummings, “The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner,” 458; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 10–11, 23–24. Turner preached extemporaneously instead of using notes and relied on his memory of the Bible as the basis for the Holy Spirit to speak through him.

<sup>13</sup> “About Us,” Metropolitan AME Church, <http://www.metropolitanamec.org/aboutus.asp> (accessed May 8, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Frederick Douglass’s funeral was held at Israel Bethel AME Church in 1895.

<sup>15</sup> Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 372; Batten, “Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary,” 236; Herndon, “Henry McNeal Turner’s African Dream,” 328; Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner,” 336–360; Stephen W. Angell, “A Black Minister Befriends the ‘Unquestioned Father of Civil Rights’: Henry McNeal Turner, Charles Sumner, and the African–American Quest for Freedom,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 85:1 (Spring 2001): 29–31, 33, 36. Turner and Senator Sumner had a friendship for twelve years that ended with Sumner’s death in 1874. Sumner may have been one of the Republican senators who supported the idea of allowing free and enslaved blacks to serve in the Union Army.

<sup>16</sup> Angell, “A Black Minister Befriends the ‘Unquestioned Father of Civil Rights,’” 29–33.

<sup>17</sup> Herndon, “Henry McNeal Turner’s African Dream,” 328; Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner,” 337; Cummings, “The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner,” 458.

Turner was an early advocate of allowing ex-slaves to serve in the military, believing – as he argued in an 1862 letter – that “every victory the Southerners gain tend to loosen the chains of slavery, and every one the Northerners gain tends only to tighten them, and it will be so till the North is brought to her senses.”<sup>18</sup> Turner recognized the advantages of allowing blacks to fight in the Union Army. Black soldiers could not only demonstrate their manhood and worthiness of citizenship but also reinforce the Union war effort. In his perspective, the government’s delay in allowing them the opportunity to fight and stirring slaves’ hopes of freedom with hints of emancipation was frustrating because, as Turner wrote in the *Christian Recorder* in 1862,

The Ethiopian, ... laying hold of the Message [Lincoln’s preliminary emancipation proclamation] ... grapples with Herculean strength in untwisting its most technical terminologies, hoping to congratulate in the person of the President a Moses waving a mace of independence, ... hoping it (the Message) to be the Jesus of liberty coming to dethrone the Herod of tyranny, – hoping to hear the Jubilee trumpet, *Arise, ye slaves, and come to freedom!* but alas, alas, *not yet*, is the echo.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, President Abraham Lincoln and the War Department needed to renounce their racism and prejudice in order to develop a serious commitment to free all black slaves and adequately train black soldiers because “nature’s God calls from heaven, echoed to by five millions of mystic Israelites (abject slaves), in peals of vivid vengeance, *let my people go.*”<sup>20</sup> Despite black slaves’ pleas for liberation, Lincoln only slowly responded to the worsening crisis. Turner was disappointed in the president’s refusal to move quickly, but took solace in possible intervention from Europe. “[If] England and France ever interfere with this nation,” he wrote in the summer of 1862, “it will be because God in his providence will compel them for the purpose of

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<sup>18</sup> Henry M. Turner, “For the Christian Recorder,” *Christian Recorder*, July 19, 1862, in *Freedom’s Witness*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–41.

<sup>20</sup> Turner, “The Plagues of This Country,” *Christian Recorder*, July 12, 1862, in *Freedom’s Witness*, 47.

exterminating slavery.”<sup>21</sup> However, Congress acted to free the slaves and supported Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.<sup>22</sup>

In 1863, President Lincoln selected Turner as a chaplain for the First Infantry Regiment, making him the first presidentially appointed African–American chaplain to serve in the Union Army.<sup>23</sup> The War Department vaguely defined the roles and duties of Union chaplains, both black and white.<sup>24</sup> The chaplains were expected to fulfill their roles based on their abilities, the officers’ needs, the soldiers’ concerns, and the regiments’ interests.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Turner dealt with stress from the constant marching, disease, skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces, and rigors of army life. Despite the challenges, Turner persevered because the soldiers in his regiment depended on his ministry, as a correspondent for the *Christian Recorder* observed, “The chaplain lives in the hearts of countrymen, here. Someone is asking about him everyday.”<sup>26</sup>

As chaplain, Turner converted Israel Bethel AME Church into a recruiting station for the Union Army.<sup>27</sup> There were challenges, however. First, many blacks in Washington, D.C., especially in Turner’s church, spurned the idea of joining the Union Army because they seemed comfortable with their lives and possibly viewed the conflict as a “white man’s war.” Second, many Northern whites viewed blacks as inferior and doubted their fighting abilities, as well as

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 92–94.

<sup>23</sup> Batten, “Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary,” 236; Cummings, “The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner,” 458.

<sup>24</sup> Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner,” 338.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hinton, *Freedom’s Witness*, 119.

<sup>27</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 51–52.

mental capacities.<sup>28</sup> Third, blacks living in D.C. possibly internalized these negative stereotypes about themselves and did not even see a need to fight for their freedom.<sup>29</sup> As Turner observed, “that man [white northerner] who refuses to respect an individual because his skin is black, when God himself made him black, is as big a rebel as the devil or any of his subalterns were.”<sup>30</sup> Turner, however, viewed the situation differently. While northern whites did not view blacks as their equals, he insisted that black Americans had to take responsibility for their actions, set aside their apathetic attitudes, join the Union Army, and demonstrate their worthiness to attain citizenship.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the hardships of army life, Turner excelled in his chaplaincy position.<sup>32</sup> He oversaw church services and prayer vigils, visited the sick and wounded in the makeshift battlefield hospitals, counseled the soldiers, conducted funerals, and taught the illiterate soldiers how to read and write. Turner also served as a war correspondent.<sup>33</sup> He wrote letters for the emerging black newspapers, the *Christian Recorder* and the *Weekly Anglo-African*, to ensure that literate blacks, especially the families of his regimental soldiers, remained well informed of the Union Army’s war efforts.<sup>34</sup> Turner’s wartime work had a twofold purpose. He served as a

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Turner, “Affairs in Washington,” *Christian Recorder*, September 27, 1862, in *Freedom’s Witness*, 68; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 51–52.

<sup>31</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 51–52.

<sup>32</sup> Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner,” 338–339.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 339–343.

<sup>34</sup> Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner,” 339–343. Turner also utilized the black newspapers as tools to enhance his soldiers’ reading skills.

link between the black home front and the First Infantry Regiment while encouraging other blacks and the AME Church, as a whole, to persevere in the midst of adversity in dealing with the Union and Confederacy during the Civil War. “[It] is dangerous to trifle with the means that God has put in our hands to elevate unborn generations,” Turner wrote during the fall of 1862, “for a man that will oppose literature is no more than any other sinner. ... And the man that will neglect it, commits a sin second only to neglecting his prayers....”<sup>35</sup> Turner hoped that black Americans’ actions on, as well as off, the battlefield, demonstrated they were capable of autonomy and deserved citizenship even though their perseverance and commitment would not be immediately rewarded.<sup>36</sup>

As a pastor, Turner not only ministered to blacks’ spiritual needs but also concerned himself with their social progress. Indeed, he used his oratorical abilities and preaching style to inspire his soldiers to – despite great obstacles – continue fighting for liberty because “[T]he destiny of their race,” he insisted, “depended on their loyalty and courage.”<sup>37</sup> Many soldiers, he observed, lived “unbridled lives” [that] “hurled them headlong into the vortex of irrevocable profanity, vulgarity, and impoliteness.”<sup>38</sup> Turner also utilized the *Christian Recorder* and the *Weekly Anglo–African*, to admonish his soldiers to live godly, moral lives.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Turner, “Affairs in Washington,” *Christian Recorder*, September 27, 1862, in *Freedom’s Witness*, 69.

<sup>36</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 45–52, 53–56, 58–62.

<sup>37</sup> Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner,” 338.

<sup>38</sup> Henry M. Turner to Editor, May 15, 1865, in *Christian Recorder*, June 3, 1865, quoted in Edwin S. Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner: Black Chaplain in the Union Army,” in *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*, ed. John David Smith (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 343.

<sup>39</sup> Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner,” 339–343.

Throughout much of his pastoral career, Turner used a jeremiad preaching style to encourage his congregation to reflect on their sins, repent, and reform their lives.<sup>40</sup> He most likely preached this type of sermon to hold the soldiers accountable for their sins while encouraging them to surrender or re-dedicate their lives to God. Stephen Angell, an expert on Turner, observes that the pastor might have used the horror and danger of battles as the inspiration for his messages because death was a constant reminder of life's brevity.<sup>41</sup> Frederick Douglass, the stalwart abolitionist leader in the black community, observed, "The chance is now given you to end in a day the bondage of centuries, and to rise in one bound from social degradation to the plane of common equality with all other varieties of men. Let us ... forever wipe out the dark reproaches unsparingly hurled against us by our enemies."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, in Turner's view, the soldiers needed to be mindful of their actions because their character and integrity made an indelible impact in the struggle for black equality on the battlefield as well as American society.<sup>43</sup>

The post-Civil War era was marked not only by racial strife and political tension but also denominational change. This was especially true as the AME Church, from an organizational perspective, struggled against the well-known Methodist Episcopal Church to establish a viable presence in the South. Some blacks, including AME leaders, hoped that both groups would overcome their differences and cooperate in Christian endeavors; nevertheless, Turner

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<sup>40</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 15–23; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 457–462; Leeman, "Speaking as Jeremiah, 228–229.

<sup>41</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 15–23.

<sup>42</sup> Frederick Douglass, "Men of Color to Arms!" Frederick Douglass Heritage: The Official Website, <http://www.frederick-douglass-heritage.org/men-of-color-to-arms/> (accessed April 20, 2016).

<sup>43</sup> Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 465–467; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 49–52, 58–59.

understood that friendships between these groups might not endure. Racial tension was at the center of this growing rift.<sup>44</sup> His sermons empowered blacks to take charge of their educational and worship experiences. Thus, as white Methodists dealt with these challenges to their authority, they struggled to comprehend the poor and working class blacks' newfound dignity, and self-worth.<sup>45</sup> For blacks, their deep rooted Christian faith, as well as the overarching AME Church, served as a unifying force and place of refuge from the simmering racial tensions, especially on the political scene.

During the early years of Reconstruction, most southern and northern whites had paternalistic, prejudicial feelings of superiority and entitlement. These misconceptions negatively influenced their views of society. Furthermore, the relationship between black and white Methodists grew increasingly strained throughout Reconstruction. The black Methodists separated from the whites completely, and joined the AME denomination because they would not acquiesce to whites' demands, stereotypes, or unjust laws.<sup>46</sup> The transition to the AME sect in the late nineteenth century enabled black Methodists to join an organization that could meet their spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. Not surprisingly, the white Methodists felt bitter and angry because they lost their control over blacks' lives.<sup>47</sup>

In this context of political chaos and turbulent social change, Turner sought to encourage his black church members through his sermons.<sup>48</sup> Following the tradition of prophets who

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<sup>44</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 69–70.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>47</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 77–78.

<sup>48</sup> Andre E. Johnson, introduction to *The Forgotten Prophet*, 7–8; David L. Chappell, introduction to *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press,

preached apocalyptic (end-times) or jeremiad (mournful complaint) messages, Turner infused his sermons with Jewish prophetic rhetoric – language that condemned “a nation,” as he saw it, “in moral decline.”<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Turner encouraged his congregations to renew their commitment to Christianity.<sup>50</sup> From his perspective, their deeply rooted faith strengthened them to persevere against overwhelming odds. In spite of the adversity, Turner reminded his congregations to continue hoping, praying, and working toward deliverance.<sup>51</sup>

Turner operated in the role of a prophet by dually serving as God’s messenger and as a spokesperson for the voiceless black community. Turner was a master of oration and rhetoric. He was also flexible in his prophecies, using the various occasions as an opportunity to speak a word from the Lord.<sup>52</sup> Turner encouraged, challenged, rebuked, taught, uplifted, and reminded his mostly black audiences of God’s love and plan for their race.<sup>53</sup> Subsequently, he reminded them to remain faithful to God and persevere through overwhelming circumstances. He ultimately challenged his black, and sometimes integrated, audiences to reach their full potential in reference to race relations and hold the federal government accountable for its actions.<sup>54</sup> Turner’s rhetoric, mission, and oratorical abilities made him a powerful voice for change.<sup>55</sup>

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2004), 3–5, 44–48, 50–52, 72–73, 83–86. Historian David Chappell observes that black prophetic rhetoric adopted much of the same format as Jewish prophetic discourses.

<sup>49</sup> Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 46.

<sup>50</sup> Andre E. Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 7–8; Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 3–5, 44–48, 50–52, 72–73, 83–86.

<sup>51</sup> Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 3–5, 44–48, 50–52, 56–57, 62–63, 65–66, 72–73, 83–86, 179–187.

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, introduction to *The Forgotten Prophet*, 7–8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 10–15, 24.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



Four distinct categories define Turner's prophetic rhetoric. First, Turner used celebratory prophecy in the early stages of Reconstruction. This type of rhetoric enabled him to applaud the nation's commitment to social justice and civil rights while reminding blacks, as well as whites, of the immense task of racial reconciliation; thus, black and white Americans needed to display biblical principles of love, equality, and fairness in order for true racial and national reconciliation to occur.<sup>56</sup> For example, Turner delivered a speech in Georgia in 1866, entitled "Let By-Gones be By-Gones," as part of the nation's festivities that reminisced on the meaning of the Union's victory and the Emancipation Proclamation while celebrating the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1866. In his speech, Turner seemed to take a conciliatory approach on the issue of slavery, but he really held white Americans accountable for their actions.<sup>57</sup> He noted that,

The early settlers of this country had run from outrage themselves, and had manifested a desire to civilize the heathen ... So God winked, or lidded his eyeballs, at the institution of slavery as a test of the white man's obedience, and elevation of the negro.... But that the white man should bar all the avenues of improvement and hold the Black as he would a horse or cow; deface the image of God by ignorance, which the black man was the representative of, was the crime which offended Heaven.<sup>58</sup>

In holding whites accountable for slavery's sinfulness, Turner defended the ex-slaves, and served as their voice in a world of entitlement, hostility, and prejudice.<sup>59</sup>

The heart of Turner's address to his integrated audience was that black and white Americans needed to set aside their differences. He urged his black listeners to "love the whites,

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., "Chapter One: Let By-Gones be By-Gones; Emancipation and Turner's Celebratory Prophecy" (1866), in *The Forgotten Prophet*, 36.

<sup>58</sup> Henry McNeal Turner, "On the Anniversary of Emancipation," (1866), in *Respect Black*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 37.

and let by-gones be by-gones, neither taunt nor insult them for past grievances; respect them; honor them; work for them; but still let us be men. Let us show them we can be a people, respectable, virtuous, honest and industrious, and soon their prejudice will melt away, and with God for our father, we will all be brothers.”<sup>60</sup> Blacks who listened to Turner’s speech that day may have begun the difficult process of reconciliation<sup>61</sup> Similarly, northern and southern whites, especially, wanted to exclude blacks’ participation from their (whites’) recollections of the war. Southerners were angry, embarrassed, and felt humiliated because their sense of entitlement was dealt a huge blow.<sup>62</sup> Most white southerners despised the idea that blacks, many of their former slaves, were now their equals.<sup>63</sup> In time, some white southerners formed supremacy groups to avenge their lost honor and desire to restore the South to its antebellum days, with slavery firmly entrenched in American society.<sup>64</sup>

Second, Turner employed disputation prophecy, which enabled him to listen to his opponents’ arguments, analyze their fallacies, and incorporate the false claims in his strong rebuttal, as evidenced by his speech “I Claim the Rights of a Man.”<sup>65</sup> For example, prejudiced Democratic and Republican state politicians in Georgia argued that blacks deserved neither civil rights nor had the intelligence to serve in politics. However, Turner eloquently defended blacks

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<sup>60</sup> Turner, “On the Anniversary of Emancipation,” (1866), in *Respect Black*, 10–11.

<sup>61</sup> Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1990), 35–47.

<sup>62</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 52–54; Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 39–49; Eric Foner, “Reconstruction Revisited,” *Reviews in American History* 10:4 (Dec. 1982): 82–85, 90–95.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 52–54; Foner, *Nothing But Freedom*, 39–49.

<sup>65</sup> Cummings, “The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner,” 459; Leeman, “Speaking as Jeremiah,” 223–227, 229–237, 240–241; Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 12–13.

as more than capable of serving in politics because they had “pioneered civilization here; ... built up your country; ... worked in your fields, and garnered your harvests, for two hundred and fifty years!”<sup>66</sup> He incorporated his racist opponents’ arguments into his speech and brilliantly refuted their views with dignity and honesty. As a prophet, Turner was not responsible for how the state legislators responded to his message. He simply represented the poor, working class freedmen who struggled to achieve civil rights victories and waited for God “to vindicate the cause of Justice and the sanctity of His own handiwork.”<sup>67</sup>

Third, Turner used mission-oriented prophecy to encourage blacks as they struggled to retake control over their lives after Reconstruction ended, and the Ku Klux Klan implemented a reign of terror throughout the South for almost two decades.<sup>68</sup> For example, Turner delivered a speech entitled “To Seek Other Quarters” at an emigration convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1893. As he detailed the challenges, lack of government protection for civil rights, abandonment by the national Republican Party, and increasing violence from white southerners, Turner sought to inspire his skeptical, mainly northern black audience to stand alongside their fellow southern blacks and resist the injustices. Consequently, he advocated emigration to Africa as the plan for black self-preservation, dignity, and pride. In order for emigration to work, Turner suggested that “this nation justly, righteously and divinely owes us for work and services rendered, billions of dollars, and if we cannot be treated as American people, we should ask for five hundred million dollars, at least, to begin an emigration somewhere, for it will cost, sooner or later, *far*

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<sup>66</sup> Henry M. Turner, “Henry M. Turner’s Speech to the Georgia Legislature,” (1868) in *Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing*, ed. Deirdre Mullane (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1993), 315.

<sup>67</sup> Turner, “Turner’s Speech to the Georgia Legislature,” (1868) in *Crossing the Danger Water*, 314–316.

<sup>68</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 13–14.

*more than* that amount to keep the Negro down unless they re-establish slavery itself.”<sup>69</sup>

Although Turner’s ideas may have sounded good to some in theory, northern blacks remained skeptical of his views, and ultimately dismissed him, as well as southern blacks, as lazy, poor, disloyal Americans.<sup>70</sup> In response to northern blacks’ disdain for emigration and indifference to African (as well as African-American) history, Turner dismissed them as insensitive to black southerners’ concerns, arrogant, and willing to accommodate the Jim Crow system instead of standing up for their civil rights; similarly, he lambasted northern and later, southern middle class blacks as “human dogs, scullions, and lick-spittles.”<sup>71</sup>

Fourth, he used pessimistic prophecy, or the prophetic lament, to help white Americans fully understand southern blacks’ pain, fear, and anger with the unbearable situation created by the federal government’s apathy, stifling Jim Crow legislation, and brutal social customs, most notably lynchings and race riots.<sup>72</sup> For example, in his speech “The American Negro and His Fatherland,” delivered at a missionary conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1895, Turner commented,

*There is no manhood future in the United States for the Negro. He may eke out an existence for generations to come, but he can never be a man – full, symmetrical, and undwarfed.... The colored man who will stand up and in one breath say that the Negroid race does not want social equality and in the next predict a great future in the face of all the proscription of which the colored man is the victim, is either an ignoramus, or is an advocate of the perpetual servility and degradation of his race variety.*<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Turner, “An Emigration Convention,” (1893), in *Respect Black*, 157.

<sup>70</sup> Cole, introduction to *Freedom’s Witness*, 24.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 14–16.

<sup>73</sup> Turner, “The American Negro and His Fatherland,” (1895), in *Respect Black*, 168.

Turner reminded his audience of the harsh reality – they lacked civil and political rights, as well as respect from white southerners and many northerners. The federal government’s slow, apathetic response to the lynchings and mob riots occurring throughout the South was even more disturbing.<sup>74</sup> Turner alluded to Booker T. Washington’s “Atlanta Compromise” speech when he mentioned “the colored man who will ... say that the Negroid does not want social equality ... is either an ignoramus or ... an advocate of the perpetual servility and degradation of his race.”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, young black children, the next generation of leaders, learned to praise whiteness and develop contempt for blackness in their Sunday schools because “the terms used in our religious experience, and the hymns we sing in many instances, are degrading, and will be as long as the black man is surrounded by the idea that *white* represents God and black represents the devil.”<sup>76</sup> In contrast to Washington’s example of surrendering civil and political rights for the respect of white southerners, Turner strongly advocated that, “two or three millions of us should return to the land of our ancestors, and establish our own nation, civilization, laws, customs, styles of manufacture, and not only give the world ... the benefit of our individuality, but build up social conditions peculiarly our own, and cease to be grumblers, chronic complainers and a menace to the white man’s country....”<sup>77</sup>

The poor blacks and common people seemed to identify with Turner even though he aspired to be a part of the black middle class. Turner sympathized with the poor blacks and commoners because of his background and growing disdain for the northern AME leadership.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 189–196; Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 117–148.

<sup>75</sup> Turner, “The American Negro and His Fatherland,” (1895), in *Respect Black*, 168.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

Furthermore, his role as a pastor impacted his view of race and justice in the post–Civil War era. AME bishops in the North may have viewed the southern AME churches and congregations as backwards, ignorant, a waste of time, and only concerned with social and political injustices, instead of spiritual matters. At the heart of the matter, northern AME bishops were afraid of changing tradition and losing their power.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, northern blacks did not appear to understand southern blacks’ hardships because they seemed content with their comfortable lifestyles whereas southern blacks wanted their struggles to end.<sup>80</sup> For example, an AME clergyman observed that the election of southern bishops “would embarrass our treasure ... because we don’t need them.”<sup>81</sup>

In regards to the issue of emigration, many pastors and bishops in the larger AME sect were divided. Many of the clergy, led by Bishop Daniel Payne, who was also a good friend of Turner’s, opposed the idea, and a handful of church leaders supported emigration.<sup>82</sup> Turner noted that the freedmen had been “turned out to die, for all the General Government cared.... No provision whatever made for our subsistence, and no facilities allowed for subsisting ourselves, except, what was scorned by the heathen world, to be perpetual servants.”<sup>83</sup> First, the failure of

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<sup>78</sup> Henry M. Turner to the *Christian Recorder*, Philadelphia, PA, Aug. 1, 1878, quoted in Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 134.

<sup>79</sup> Wesley J. Gaines, *African Methodism in the South* (Chicago: Afro–American Publishing, 1969), 131–132; “Vote for No More Bishops,” Philadelphia, PA, June 1, 1876; “Lack of southern AME Bishops,” *Christian Recorder*, Philadelphia, PA, July 5, 1877.

<sup>80</sup> Gaines, *African Methodism in the South*, 68–69; “Vote for No More Bishops,” Philadelphia, PA, July 1, 1876; “Lack of southern AME Bishops,” *Christian Recorder*, Philadelphia, PA, July 5, 1877.

<sup>81</sup> Jacklin Strange, “Our Third Report to the Valley of Virginia,” *Christian Recorder*, Philadelphia, PA, March 21, 1878.

<sup>82</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 137.

<sup>83</sup> Henry M. Turner, *Emigration of the Colored People of the United States: Is It Expedient? If So, Where To? Prepared by Request for the Colored National Conference to Meet in Nashville, Tennessee, May 6, 1879* (Philadelphia, PA: 1879), 4–5, 12.

Reconstruction changed Turner's perspective as he talked with poor black farmers. Second, their families could not escape peonage and experienced the harshness of black codes, prompting Turner to comment, "African emigration is the surest, quickest, most peaceable, most dignified, and most religious way out of our troubles."<sup>84</sup>

Third, white southerners charged poor black farmers extremely high interest rates and many poor blacks felt abandoned. For example, as Turner traveled through North Carolina in 1878, he recalled how "One man, with a wife and five children, has not had a dollar this year. What little compensation he received, was paid in an order to a store, where he had to pay two prices for anything he got."<sup>85</sup> As the black farmers recounted their experiences with Turner, he seemingly humbled himself and regained his empathy as he noted, "I had a contempt for a class of men before I left home, but O! heavens, what have I now – contempt is no longer a word."<sup>86</sup> Thus, Turner became the voice for the community of southern freedmen.<sup>87</sup> Fourth, Turner remained vocal about the federal government's inaction to vigilantly protect blacks' civil rights in the midst of his pastoral duties. Conveying blacks' sense of desperation and hopelessness in 1874, Turner published his thoughts in poetic verse, "Hear the voice of the people uniting in one cry, and the shouts of the Freedman ringing out on high. Freedom! Freedom! They're struggling for their rights, the people are in tears from the saddening sights; Without their rights, their

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>85</sup> Henry M. Turner to the *Christian Recorder*, Philadelphia, PA, Aug. 1, 1878, quoted in Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 134.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 134.

freedom's but a name, Naught but pariahs, branded with ill fame. With tardy steps Celestial Justice comes..."<sup>88</sup>

Senator Charles Sumner, who died in 1874, did not live to see his Civil Rights Act of 1875 passed in both houses of Congress; however, the bill was a diluted version of his original proposal. Turner did not believe that the Grant Administration would carry out the law effectively even though the president signed the legislation. Turner lambasted northerners and southerners, not just the national leadership, for taunting the helpless black Americans with a lax civil rights bill but not living up to the spirit and letter of the law.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, Turner's emigration views began to take shape because of the federal government's lackluster enforcement of and southern whites' resistance to the new law. Turner advocated that blacks emigrate from the South to a new destination where they had freedom to form an autonomous government and discover pride in their race. The rise of AME Church missions to Africa in the early to mid-1870s made the continent appealing to Turner as a possible destination for emigration.<sup>90</sup>

Black codes throughout the South made life miserable for blacks.<sup>91</sup> To combat the depressing situation, Turner also encouraged the southern freedmen with his actions. As a clergyman of the AME Church, he not only had influence within the denomination but also served the local community in whichever church he was assigned to pastor. The Church's General Conference met in May 1876 and elected Turner as manager of the Church's publishing division. The publishing company was in serious debt and efforts to repay the balances stressed

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<sup>88</sup> Henry M. Turner, "The Conflict for Civil Rights," in *Respect Black*, 39.

<sup>89</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 118-122.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Foner, "Reconstruction Revisited," 93-95.



Turner, leading to his early resignation as the AME Church's publisher. Yet, his actions inspired blacks to take control of their lives in the face of mounting pressures as southern whites trampled civil rights.<sup>92</sup>

At the 1880 General Conference, a delegation of young ministers supported Turner's nomination for the office of bishop. However, some of the bishops had concerns with his candidacy. For example, Turner used snuff and committed adultery in the past, old charges that did not seriously impact his candidacy for the office of bishop.<sup>93</sup> Even though Turner was a man of God and a pastor, he still sinned like everyone else. Daniel Payne should not have judged Turner's past sins. If Turner repented, sat down from his position, and allowed God to restore him as well as his marriage, then his candidacy for the bishopric should have been unopposed. Based on Payne's assessment, Turner did not deserve the office because he flamboyantly displayed his ego, committed adultery, talked condescendingly to others, and wanted to incorporate grandiose methods of worship in the smaller, southern AME churches.

Some of the older AME bishops, especially Turner's friends and colleagues, were displeased with the decision and opposed his nomination by bringing up the old charges of adultery. The AME Church had a Compromise of 1880 during its General Conference. Several of the senior bishops and elders formed a committee to resolve the issue. An influential bishop had the pastor who initially brought the charges against Turner to appear before the committee in a private meeting where the pastor restated his case. After reviewing the evidence, the committee

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<sup>92</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 123–127, 159. Turner had remarkable administrative abilities in spite of his flaws. Furthermore, his organizational skills enabled him to efficiently print and distribute the Church's periodicals. He seemed burnt out by the work, but in naming his successor, Turner was pragmatic because he appointed someone who could handle the tasks of managing the publishing company.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 146–147.

decided that the allegations of adultery lacked credible proof to hinder Turner from obtaining the office; ironically, Payne presided over the ordination service and ordained Turner by laying hands on him.<sup>94</sup>

After being assigned to a specific district in Georgia, Turner began implementing changes in his church and suggesting that the larger AME ministry reform itself in order to reach people on all levels. For example, his administrative abilities, leadership, and wisdom on denominational order helped to quell conflicts in a couple of churches in his district, as well as his own church. One major issue was that of ordaining female pastors and deacons. Turner's views on female preachers were progressive for his time. He saw women's potential to be preachers, even though his colleagues could not. Turner petitioned the Church's leadership to demonstrate a new policy in its treatment of women. He believed that women deserved to be treated as equals with men, not always as submissive helpmeets.<sup>95</sup>

Between 1884 and 1885, the male-dominated administration forced Sarah Ann Hughes and Margaret Wilson to relinquish their pastorates in their respective states of North Carolina and New Jersey. The General Conference adhered to a strict interpretation of the Apostle Paul's teaching that women should be silent in churches. In 1885, Turner ordained Hughes as a deacon in the general AME Church. He believed that the denomination's neglect of women hindered its impact in the world and the black community. Most of the bishops and ministers made up their minds regarding the issue of female pastors. Consequently, the general Church's leadership

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 156. In time, the northern denominational churches came to realize that the South was equally important in the life of the AME Church as a whole, not just a region, with the ordination of Turner and two other southern pastors to the office of bishop.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 181.

decreed that women could not teach in pulpits, except as special evangelists. In 1887, the AME General Conference removed Hughes's name from the deacon directory.<sup>96</sup>

The following year, 1888, the General Conference rejected her ordination. Even though Turner and some of his supporters, mainly women, appealed the decision, the Church's leadership upheld its verdict. Later, the Conference outlawed its pastors and bishops from ordaining females to serve as elders and deacons.<sup>97</sup> Although the AME General Conference rebuked Turner with its decision, he did not surrender his views. Furthermore, he did not believe in the scriptural argument that women should be prohibited from preaching. God chose whomever He willed to preach the gospel; therefore, ministry was not limited to men. Turner's fight for justice and equality expanded to women, especially suffrage.

Turner also had an instrumental role in dealing with the AME Church's critics. For example, Booker T. Washington negatively reviewed the southern black pastors and bishops in an article in 1892. Although the article does not survive, Washington commented that the black Baptist and Methodist ministers had corrupt morals, convoluted religious beliefs, and a lack of intelligence, which coincided with their lack of education. This, in turn, created disaster when the ministers encouraged their congregations through sermons and advocated higher education.<sup>98</sup> Bishop Payne agreed with Washington's views and wrote a letter agreeing with Washington's pessimism. Subsequently, Washington published Payne's letter in the *Indianapolis Freedmen* and included a cover letter further explaining their shared views.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>98</sup> Booker T. Washington, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 1, ed. Louis Harlan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 203.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

While Payne criticized most black southern clergy for not having the moral uprightness or intellectual abilities to lead their congregations, his comments embarrassed the churches, especially the larger AME Church, and brought a constant flow of internal, and external, criticism. Furthermore, many AME clergy viewed Washington a traitor to his ethnicity who sought to appease whites' fears.<sup>100</sup> Bishop Payne had good ideas to reform the AME Church overall, but he was old, frail, and set in his ways. One unintended consequence was that local AME churches in South Carolina prepared to leave the denomination, but Turner served as the arbitrator in the situation.<sup>101</sup> The clergy eventually triumphed over the controversy and seemed to develop a stronger relationship while bringing a greater sense of unity and purpose to the AME Church's mission.<sup>102</sup>

The unity among the AME bishops soon shattered because of the issue of emigration. Led by Bishops Wesley J. Gaines and Abram Grant, many of the northern clergy opposed emigration. As ex-slaves, both men encouraged fellow blacks to remain patriotic and loyal to the United States in spite of the nation's injustices against black Americans.<sup>103</sup> However, many of the southern bishops, led by Turner, favored emigration. Responding to heavy criticisms from a northern AME bishop, Turner commented, "...But, O Jumbo! there are a host of us who see our condition from another standpoint, and our future equally as differently, and that host believes Africa somehow is to give the relief for which our people sigh ... there is a general unrest and a

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<sup>100</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 196–197.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. To mediate the conflict, Turner drafted a statement denouncing Payne's comments. Turner and eleven other AME regional bishops, including Bishop Payne, signed the document, and began attempting to repair the damage done.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 197.

wholesale dissatisfaction among our people ... and they sigh for conveniences to and from the continent of Africa ...” in an 1883 article. He continued, “... Now, all I contend for is this, that we must raise a symbol somewhere. We are bitten, we are poisoned, we are sick and we are dying. We need a remedy. Oh for some Moses to lift up a brazen serpent, some goal for our ambition, some object to induce us to look up. Have we that object here? ... I do not see it. Therefore, I maintain that African colonization should be encouraged.”<sup>104</sup> Turner and his critics civilly disagreed over emigration; nevertheless, they remained committed to meeting blacks’ spiritual, physical, and educational needs. In spite of the challenges among the northern and southern AME bishops, the denomination overall emerged stronger and more unified because of the external and internal attacks. The various AME churches learned to set aside their differences and unite against threats to their sole purpose of uplifting blacks in all aspects of life – spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and educationally.<sup>105</sup>

The general AME Church served as a bastion of hope and place of refuge for downtrodden members who confronted Jim Crowism’s humiliation on a daily basis and felt robbed of their dignity.<sup>106</sup> This environment allowed Turner to encourage his congregations and offer his thoughts on the changing political, social, and economic dynamics. Furthermore, his views on racial equality and inclusion, as well as harmony, changed over the years. If whites, both Christian and non-Christian, did not take the first step in breaking down racial barriers, and overcoming their feelings of entitlement, in addition to privilege, then black Americans, especially the AME sect, needed to separate and build themselves (i.e. families, confidence, and

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<sup>104</sup> Turner, “Emigration to Africa,” (1883), in *Respect Black*, 52–53.

<sup>105</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 197; Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 40–42, 52–53.

<sup>106</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 40–42, 52–53.

various financial, social, and political institutions) up.<sup>107</sup> Bishop Turner believed that poor blacks who helped finance and build, or rebuild, local churches not only supported the denomination but also the black race as a whole. Indeed, if blacks failed to “present more houses, better furnished and less debt upon them we will give it up.”<sup>108</sup> In his mind, bishops who were overwhelmed with their pastoral duties needed to develop perseverance because blacks’ survival – which depended on the organization’s diligence, persistence, and commitment – was at stake as southern whites reasserted their power through terrorism, brutality, and intimidation.<sup>109</sup>

Southern whites slowly developed three different political mindsets, liberal, conservative, and radical, as lynchings gradually replaced law and order in the late 1880s, 1890s, and into the 1900s. The two less hostile mentalities, liberal and conservative, briefly flourished while advocates of the radical persuasion dominated local and state politics in the partially Reconstructed governments.<sup>110</sup> The mostly liberal Republican politicians, pastors, judges, and philanthropists, albeit somewhat racist and prejudiced, supported freedmen’s efforts to obtain educational, political, social, and economic equality with their white American counterparts. Furthermore, liberals believed that blacks were capable of progressing rapidly as long as they did not outperform whites. Conservative-minded pastors and politicians, primarily southern Democrats, believed that blacks were eternally destined to an inferior status in all aspects of American society.<sup>111</sup> Thus, conservative whites sought to help blacks superficially by relegating

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<sup>107</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 197

<sup>108</sup> Turner, *Voice of Missions*, 1897.

<sup>109</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 205; Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 52–53.

<sup>110</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 70–86.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

the disenfranchised group to their “places” as cooks, butlers, domestic workers, and janitors. On a deeper level, conservatives limited freedmen to subservient, passive roles as observers just as theatrical productions have supporting casts; therefore, conservatives’ viewpoints on the issues of race and equality always centered on the notion of blacks’ inferiority, especially spiritual.<sup>112</sup>

The right-wing view of the three doctrines was radicalism, or extreme racism. White radicals strongly believed that blacks were content and docile in slavery because they were like helpless children who needed guidance, protection, and chastisement.<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately, the Underground Railroad, Civil War, emancipation, and Reconstruction opened the door for blacks to regress into sexually depraved, immoral, animalistic brutes who would go on murderous, violent rampages throughout the South because they were uncertain of how to use their newfound freedom.<sup>114</sup> Because whites held political, economic, and military advantages, they could easily defeat blacks in a war of extinction and preserve the nation. While many politicians, pastors, and masses of Americans identified with all three camps, the radicals attracted much of the masses because of their violent solutions to dealing with black Americans’ seemingly criminal behavior and propensity to rape – terrorism, white supremacy groups, such as the Knights of the White Camellia, later the Ku Klux Klan, and lynchings.<sup>115</sup>

Turner wanted to be the leader of missions to Africa in the AME Church, but his sometimes cantankerous behavior created problems.<sup>116</sup> His strange views for the times,

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 86–98.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 221–223.

combined with his flamboyant, outspoken behavior, borderline extremism in some ways, led blacks within as well as outside the AME Church to skeptically believe Turner's views on emigration.<sup>117</sup> In November 1893, Turner became bishop of the AME Church's missionary department when Bishop Daniel Payne died. While he was a logical choice to fill the position, Turner did not live up to Payne's legacy, and Turner's insecurities led him to poorly manage the missionary department, creating enemies in the AME General Conference.<sup>118</sup> Although he lived in Georgia, Turner's heart and soul were in Africa, where he, along with other blacks, could be free from Jim Crowism and white Americans' stereotypes.<sup>119</sup> Even though many blacks within and outside the AME Church, such as Benjamin Tanner, a northern AME bishop and Booker T. Washington, viewed him as an extremist, Turner championed emigration in response to the deterioration of racial justice and harmony in the United States.<sup>120</sup> He had good reasons for encouraging blacks to emigrate to Africa, but northern and southern middle class blacks, who were comfortable with their livelihoods, scorned his message because the plan, in Booker T. Washington's assessment, did "a great deal of harm among the most ignorant of our people"; subsequently, Turner criticized middle class blacks with harsh language, which further alienated him from their circles.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 78, 221. In spite of his hard work and early gains in the area of civil rights, Turner was vain, arrogant at times, condescending, and stubborn.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 209, 221–223.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>120</sup> Washington, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, 149; Turner, "Emigration to Africa," in *Respect Black*, 52–55. Turner analyzed and refuted Dr. Benjamin Tanner's arguments against emigration.

<sup>121</sup> Booker T. Washington, "emigration is folly," quoted in Louis P. Harlan et. al., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 3, 377–378, in Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 221; Cole, introduction to *Freedom's Witness*, 24.



## Chapter 2

### “Forty Acres and a Mule”: Turner as a Politician

The era of Reconstruction witnessed Turner transition from the chaplaincy to Republican politics. In general, Reconstruction was an effort by Congress to reform the South politically, socially, and economically. A key part of the effort was establishing equal opportunities for the freedmen. In 1866, Radical Republicans – the majority in Congress who distrusted the postwar South’s protection of civil rights for blacks – secured black citizenship with the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>1</sup> The next year, 1867, Congress divided the South into five military districts. Each district was led by a military commander, supported by federal troops, who prepared the district for readmission as states. Specifically, these commanders instituted a registration of voters, which included all adult black males and white males not disqualified by participation in the Confederacy. In 1869, Congress went even further with the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, which forbade the federal government from denying the right to vote to any citizen on “account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”<sup>2</sup>

Between 1866 and 1877 – the traditional years of Reconstruction – blacks made many other gains at the national level for civil rights. Indeed, voter registration was a success. By 1868, 700,000 blacks had been registered, drastically increasing voter turnout in the South for state and national elections.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, an articulate black political leadership emerged, with many

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, “Amendment XIV,” June 13, 1866, The Constitution: Amendments 11–27, [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_amendments\\_11-27.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html) (accessed May 8, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., “Amendment XV,” February 26, 1869, The Constitution: Amendments 11–27 (accessed April 13, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Henry J. Sage, “Radical Reconstruction,” Reconstruction: The Challenge of Freedom, <http://sageamericanhistory.net/reconstruction/reconstruction.html#radical> (accessed April 14, 2016).

blacks, including Turner, serving in state legislatures and in the Congress.<sup>4</sup> In the administration of Republican President Ulysses S. Grant (1869–1877), the Department of Justice was created (1870), and the federal government – through the Enforcement Acts (1870–1872) and the Ku Klux Klan Act (1871) – demonstrated a willingness to enforce the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, and ensure blacks their rights in the South.<sup>5</sup> In 1875, Grant even signed the Civil Rights Act of that year, which outlawed racial discrimination in public transportation and accommodation.<sup>6</sup>

While there were clear Reconstruction successes, the late 1860s and early 1870s were riddled with division and reaction. Indeed, they were turbulent years, and constituted what Eric Foner called “a society in which all forms of social relations were in turmoil ... in which seemingly trivial encounters between black and white became tests of racial and class power.”<sup>7</sup> Amidst the hard-won “victories,” then, seeds were sown that contributed to the rise of Jim Crow discrimination and Reconstruction’s ultimate failure by the 1880s. In Georgia, in the immediate postwar years, Turner and other black Republicans faced significant challenges in the effort to rebuild their respective state government. One obstacle was the administration of President Andrew Johnson (1865–1869). His belief in white supremacy and his personal racism conflicted with both mainstream and Radical Republican thought.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, his lenient policies encouraged the South to believe that it could escape the consequences of secession and civil

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<sup>4</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 49–52, 151–153, 195–197, 226–227.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 195–197.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 226–227, 233–234.

<sup>7</sup> Foner, “Reconstruction Revisited,” 95.

<sup>8</sup> Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents*, 76.

war.<sup>9</sup> Johnson moderately supported southern states' Black Codes, which were statutes that greatly restricted blacks' freedoms and attempted to restore slavery in all but name. "This is a country for white men," Johnson privately declared, "and by God, as long as I am president, it shall be a government for white men."<sup>10</sup>

Another challenge facing Republicans in the South was a "a finite northern patience," when it came to Reconstruction.<sup>11</sup> Northern Republicans developed "war weariness" from the four-year conflict and became irritated with Reconstruction's slowness as well as the racial violence.<sup>12</sup> They were more concerned with commercial interests and trading in the North rather than racial reconciliation and political restructuring in the South.<sup>13</sup> Finally, weak Republican state governments struggled to maintain legitimacy as they dealt with challenges from white supremacy groups and ex-Confederates who resented "Negro Republican rule."<sup>14</sup> State leaders, then, relied heavily on federal troops to deal with the Ku Klux Klan and mobs while enforcing law and order.<sup>15</sup> Ex-Confederates and Klan vigilante groups undermined blacks' sense of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Hans L. Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 236.

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents*, 133. Furthermore, Grant's administrations were plagued with corruption and scandals. Even more disturbing was the fact that the president had a lackadaisical attitude regarding civil rights and black voters. Surrounded by Liberal Republicans in his administration and Congress, Grant's thoughts and policies regarding Reconstruction changed over time. His nonchalant actions sent the message to slowly disfranchised blacks and poor whites that he (and northern Republicans in general) was willing to abandon his black constituents for national peace and sectional reconciliation because his campaign slogan in the 1868 presidential campaign was "Let us have peace."

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 133–144.

<sup>13</sup> Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents*, 133–144; Lewis L. Gould, *Grand Old Party: A History of the Republicans* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2004), 54–65. Violence destroyed the peace and stability that black, as well as white, southerners worked to achieve.

<sup>14</sup> Gould, *Grand Old Party*, 45–49, 50–56; Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 146, 184–191, 195–197.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

security while reaffirming whites' sense of superiority.<sup>16</sup> In this racially charged background, Turner prepared to strengthen and encourage the freedmen with his sermons, lectures, and political work in the Georgia state legislature because freedom encapsulated "the enjoyment of 'our rights in common with other men.'"<sup>17</sup>

In 1865, Turner was re-appointed a chaplain in the United States Army and later assigned to work in the Freedmen's Bureau, an organization created by Congress to help recently freed slaves become acclimated to post-war American society.<sup>18</sup> The Freedmen's Bureau established churches, built schools, and supported blacks' political aspirations. The organization also helped ex-slaves develop a sense of government with little to no encroachment from white northerners. Furthermore, ex-slaves desired to build houses and farms, and rear families on forty-acre plots of land.<sup>19</sup> In response to southern whites' criticisms against freedmen's desires for land and work animals, Turner noted, "The mule and forty acres of land, which has been so often ridiculed for being expected by the black man, was a just and righteous expectation...."<sup>20</sup>

The Freedman's Bureau, in addition to sympathetic white northerners, helped blacks assert their rights in a reconstructed, unstable South and establish a sense of autonomy.<sup>21</sup> Turner oversaw the organization of several AME churches throughout the South, especially in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1989), 78.

<sup>18</sup> Redkey, "Henry McNeal Turner," 347; Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 374-376; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 236-238. President Johnson assigned Turner as an agent to work with the Freedmen's Bureau in Georgia.

<sup>19</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 46-48.

<sup>20</sup> Turner, "An Emigration Convention," (1893), in *Respect Black*, 149.

<sup>21</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 44-52.

Georgia.<sup>22</sup> He also ensured that white Methodists did not take advantage of the freedmen and coerce them into joining the more rigid Methodist Churches.<sup>23</sup> Describing himself as a “minister of the gospel and kind of politician,” Turner’s concern, then, was to equip the freedmen spiritually, politically, and educationally to combat the racism and prejudice that still plagued the South.<sup>24</sup> He realized that while the Confederacy and slavery may have been defeated in war, overcoming the social constraints imposed by slavery and racial prejudice was a completely different struggle.<sup>25</sup>

In 1868, Turner successfully sought political office, winning election to the Georgia House of Representatives as one of twenty–nine blacks to serve that state. In the campaign, he encouraged his readers to vote wisely in state elections and align themselves with Republicans. Furthermore, Turner wrote a brochure that detailed the Republican and Democratic parties’ views of the freedmen, and reassured white southerners of the party’s intentions.<sup>26</sup> Republicans readily distributed his work to approximately four million freedmen throughout the South.<sup>27</sup> Turner also organized the freedmen into a powerful voting bloc for the Republican Party. His political and ministerial work, which garnered attention in Republican circles, allowed him to

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<sup>22</sup> Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 374–376.

<sup>23</sup> Redkey, “Henry McNeal Turner,” 347–350; Batten, “Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary,” 236–238. If the freedmen joined the predominantly white Methodist churches, the churches, through coercion and intimidation, would have forced the blacks to abandon their emotional styles of worship for stricter forms of conducting church services.

<sup>24</sup> Batten, “Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary,” 236–240; Redkey, “Henry M. Turner,” 347–357; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 39–40; Turner, *Respect Black*, 30–31.

<sup>25</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 31–32, 58–59.

<sup>26</sup> Batten, “Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary,” 237; Turner, “Henry M. Turner’s Speech to the Georgia Legislature,” in *Crossing the Danger Water*, 315.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

“claim the honor ... of having been the instrument of convincing hundreds – yea, thousands – of white men, that to reconstruct under the measures of the United States Congress was the safest and the best course for the interest of the state.”<sup>28</sup>

Throughout his speeches, Turner persuaded white Georgians to accept, rather than resist, Congress’s plans for a peaceful return to the Union. Documenting his political work, Turner noted that he “first organized the Republican Party in this state” and “worked for its maintenance and perpetuity as no other man in the State has. ... put more men in the field, made more speeches, organized more Union leagues, Political Associations, Clubs, and have written more campaign documents that received larger circulation than any other man in the state.”<sup>29</sup> His labors assisted in Reconstructionist policies being peacefully implemented. Because of his hard work, Turner was one of the black delegates sent to the Georgia Constitutional Convention (December 9, 1867–March 11, 1868) in Atlanta to help rewrite the state’s constitution under the Republican–dominated state government.<sup>30</sup> Once again, Republican officials noted that Turner, even though he did not have a prominent role in the convention, was dedicated to reforming the state government and advancing the freedmen’s cause through educational empowerment.

This focus on education was a key component in the Republican Party’s development in Georgia. Turner had a deep respect and appreciation for college, especially institutions of higher learning founded by and primarily for African–Americans.<sup>31</sup> A liberal arts education could not

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<sup>28</sup> Turner, “Henry M. Turner’s Speech to the Georgia Legislature,” in *Crossing the Danger Water*, 315.

<sup>29</sup> William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland, OH: Geo M. Rewell and Co., 1887), 813–816.

<sup>30</sup> Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 381–382; Batten, “Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary,” 236–237; Leeman, “Speaking as Jeremiah,” 228–229.

<sup>31</sup> Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 381–382; Herndon, “Henry McNeal Turner’s African Dream,” 329; Leeman, “Speaking as Jeremiah,” 228–229; Edmund L. Drago, *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia: A*

only instill pride, dignity, respect and confidence in black Americans but also uplift the entire race by demonstrating that blacks were worth the investment of higher education and had the potential of becoming productive, hardworking members in American society.<sup>32</sup> He campaigned for and won a seat in the Georgia State legislature in July 1868 based on changing the state government internally, helping black and white constituents live in peace, and simultaneously ensuring that the freedmen knew about, and exercised, their constitutional rights protected by the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments.<sup>33</sup>

His short term (1868) was marked by personal frustration, racism, and resentment from both Democratic and Republican legislators, and, in the end, lasted only a matter of days. Turner sponsored bills such as legal protection for sharecroppers, an eight-hour workday, a charter for African-American cooperative joint-stock companies, an end to the convict lease system, and grants for black colleges and universities; subsequently, those bills were ultimately defeated.<sup>34</sup> State leaders from both parties moved to expel the twenty-nine black representatives from their seats in the Georgia legislature.<sup>35</sup> These Republicans and Democrats argued that black representatives were too ignorant to understand the complex legislative process of making

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*Splendid Failure* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), eBook, 27, <https://books.google.com/books?id=JXL7t1rVltkC&lpg=PP1&pg=PA27#v=onepage&q=Henry%20M.%20Turner&f=false> (accessed April 8, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 381–382; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 329; Leeman, "Speaking as Jeremiah," 228–229; Drago, *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia*, 27; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 161–163.

<sup>33</sup> Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 236–237; Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 381–382; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 329; U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, "Amendment XIII, January 31, 1865; Amendment XIV," June 13, 1866; "Amendment XV," February 26, 1869, in *The Constitution: Amendments 11–27* (accessed May 8, 2016). Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 and the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866. Congress later passed the Fifteenth Amendment in 1869.

<sup>34</sup> Leeman, "Speaking as Jeremiah," 229; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 161–163.

<sup>35</sup> Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 383; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 329.

laws.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, suffrage did not guarantee blacks the right to campaign and hold public office because the revised state constitution did not mention serving in the legislature.<sup>37</sup>

According to one historian, while the Republican Party was supported by federal troops in the South after 1867, it was still in a precarious position. Indeed, party leaders hoped to build a diverse political coalition that included black freedmen, poor, southern whites, and southern Republicans. In Georgia, black Republicans were deemed expendable in the revised state constitution and this new political order. By 1868, blacks were encouraged to actually “abandon politics and concentrate on ‘earn[ing] an honest subsistence.’”<sup>38</sup>

In September 1868, Turner – unlike some of the other black representatives who appealed “to the sympathies of Members on the opposite side, and eulogize their character for magnanimity” – denounced the move.<sup>39</sup> Although “weak and ill,” Turner believed he “could not sit passively here and see the sacred rights of my race destroyed in one blow.”<sup>40</sup> Overall, Turner outlined five major points about the move to expel the black legislators. His eloquent speech demonstrated resistance to their’ stereotypical views of black Americans. For example, Turner observed that, “The Anglo–Saxon race ... is a most surprising one. No man has ever been more deceived in that race than I have been ... I was not aware that there was in the character of that race so much cowardice, or pusillanimity. The treachery which has been exhibited by gentlemen

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<sup>36</sup> Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 383; Redkey, “Bishop Turner’s African Dream,” 237; Herndon, “Henry McNeal Turner’s African Dream,” 329.

<sup>37</sup> Herndon, “Henry McNeal Turner’s African Dream,” 329–330; Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 383; Leeman, “Speaking as Jeremiah,” 223–224; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 347.

<sup>38</sup> Drago, *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia*, 48–52.

<sup>39</sup> Henry M. Turner, “On the Eligibility of Colored Members to Seats in the Georgia Legislature,” (1868), in *Respect Black*, 14.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



belonging to that race has shaken my confidence in it....”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Turner chose his carefully words to convey a sense of injustice and betrayal if the state leaders moved forward with their plan.

First, Turner reminded the body of the definition of the legislature – and the meaning of the new Georgia assembly,

Is [this] a white man’s Legislature, or is it a black man’s Legislature? Who voted for a Constitutional Convention, in obedience to the mandate of the Congress of the United States? Who first rallied around the standard of Reconstruction? Who set the ball of loyalty rolling in the State of Georgia? And whose voice was heard on the hills and in the valleys of this State? It was the voice of the brawny–armed Negro, with the few humanitarian–hearted white men who came to our assistance. I claim the honor, sir, of having been the instrument of convincing hundreds – yea, thousands – of white men, that to reconstruct under the measures of the United States Congress was the safest and best course for the interest of the State.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout his speech, Turner reiterated the undeniable fact of blacks’ dignity and worth. He commented, “Am I a man? If I am such, I claim the rights of a man ... This movement ... is a thrust at the God of the Universe, for making a man and not finishing him; it is simply calling the Great Jehovah a fool.”<sup>43</sup> Turner argued that God is not a respecter of persons and loves diversity. He fairly meted out blessings, judgment, and correction to His children. Furthermore, Turner had an unwavering hope that God would take vengeance on behalf of black Americans, help them grow from the negative experiences, enhance their faith and willpower, and chastise whites.<sup>44</sup>

Second, Turner argued the legitimacy of the Reconstruction Acts, insisting that if the “measures did not base their action on the ground ... [what was] the grand fulcrum on which

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 16, 25.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

they rested? ... If Congress has simply given me a merely sufficient civil and political rights to make me a mere political slave for Democrats, or anybody else ... I do not thank Congress for it. Never, so help me God, shall I be a political slave.... I have been a slave long enough already.”<sup>45</sup> Turner boldly objected to the approximately four million freedmen returning to slavery because they worked, rebelled, and fought valiantly, even to the point of sacrificing themselves, for their long overdue rights. In spite of their accomplishments, white southerners and northerners were opposed to viewing blacks as their equals, socially, religiously, politically, and intellectually. As an example, Turner noted the inescapable plight of the black legislators – “these colored men, who are unable to express themselves with all the clearness and dignity and force of rhetorical eloquence, are laughed at in derision by the Democracy of the country” – to demonstrate how the nation viewed its black citizens while they struggled to find their place in American society.<sup>46</sup> As God’s mouthpiece, Turner spoke a word from the Lord while representing the entire black community.<sup>47</sup>

Third, he challenged the legislature to petition Congress for an explanation of the Reconstruction Acts. “I dare you, gentlemen, to do it.” “If not,” Turner continued, “call together the convention that framed the [state] constitution under which we are acting; let them take a vote upon the subject and I am willing to abide by their decision....”<sup>48</sup> The state leaders did not petition Congress because they knew their actions were illegal and unjust.<sup>49</sup> Turner suggested

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 18–19.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>49</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 149–150.

that the Democrats and Republicans openly address the issues of blacks holding public office, as well as having the right to vote, rather than dealing with the political turmoil through underhanded means. Regardless of the outcome, he exemplified more dignity, patriotism, and honor than his corrupt counterparts by expressing “contentment” and a willingness “to abide by their decision....”<sup>50</sup>

Fourth, Turner insisted that the move would lead to a failure of black support for the nation. “The black man cannot protect a country, if the country doesn’t protect him; and if, tomorrow, a war should arise, I would not raise a musket to defend a country where my manhood is denied.”<sup>51</sup> He reminded his listeners that the Union war effort was destined for defeat if blacks had not valiantly served the North. Observing that disgruntled members of both parties may attempt to assassinate him for his courageous stand, Turner encouraged the black male citizens to “never lift a finger nor raise a hand in defense of Georgia, until Georgia acknowledges that you are men and invests you with the rights pertaining to your manhood. Pay your taxes, however, obey all orders from your employers, take good counsel from friends, work faithfully, earn an honest living, and show, by your conduct, that you can be good citizens.”<sup>52</sup> The circumstances that transpired in the legislature were a brief glimpse into the nation’s hesitation to grant black Americans full citizenship to honor their bravery and commitment. Therefore, blacks had to prove they deserved political and civil rights, and would “never vote a Democratic [or Republican] ticket again.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Turner, “On the Eligibility of Colored Members to Seats in the Georgia Legislature,” (1868), in *Respect Black*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

Fifth, he expressed hope “that our poor, downtrodden race may act well...,” and that a righteous God would come to their aid. “You may expel us, gentlemen,” Turner concluded, “but while you do it, remember that there is a just God in Heaven, whose All – Seeing Eye beholds alike the acts of the oppressor and the oppressed, and who despite the machination of the wicked, never fails to vindicate the cause of Justice, and the sanctity of His own handiwork.”<sup>54</sup> The road to vindication and justice for blacks took approximately another century because a long war of attrition was at hand. The question was how blacks and whites would respond to the long-term war. Blacks had started developing a stronger faith, mental resolve, determination, and hope.<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately, these characteristics failed to stop the tide of racial hostilities or ex-Confederates’ attempts to reassert their control over the freedmen.

Overall, then, Turner had a sound, logical, powerful argument that affirmed blacks’ identity and potential. His rhetoric and the structure of his arguments served as a stark contrast to whites’ racist views about blacks. In this jeremiad speech, he humbly discussed freedmen’s and slaves’ contributions to the United States, observing, “though we are not white, we have accomplished much. We have pioneered civilization here; we have built up your country; we have worked in your fields, and garnered your harvests for two hundred and fifty years! And what do we ask of you in return? ... we ask you, now, for our RIGHTS...”<sup>56</sup> Representative Turner’s rebuttal exposed the Republicans and Democrats’ duplicity as well as fierce opposition to the black legislators’ taking their seats. Turner prophesied that whites, and the nation, would

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>55</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 35–45, 52–54; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 6–30, 32–63; Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 44–52.

<sup>56</sup> Turner, “On the Eligibility of Colored Members to Seats in the Georgia Legislature,” (1868), in *Respect Black*, 25.

face judgment for their manipulation, evilness, hypocrisy, entitlement, racism, and prejudice.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, just as God covered the Israelites on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, He would protect blacks and lead them to their destiny. Nevertheless, state leaders ignored Turner's words and expelled the black legislators in an 83–23 vote.<sup>58</sup>

Turner's unsatisfied aspirations led to his political involvement on a local level. Initially, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Turner as Macon, Georgia's postmaster.<sup>59</sup> In 1869, a Republican newspaper editor in Macon, Georgia, J.C. Swayze, was furious that Turner, instead of himself, received the appointment as Macon's postmaster general, and began commenting against Turner in private while congratulating the pastor in public.<sup>60</sup> Swayze tried to bribe Turner into serving as Macon's postmaster nominally while Swayze held the real power, but Turner did not accept his offer, which led to slanderous attacks against Turner's name. The pastor traveled to Washington, D.C. to defend his new position, and request that Grant's administration investigate cases of blatant discrimination and racism in Georgia. As Turner traveled back to Macon, he rode on the train with Marian Harris, a prostitute with whom he had an adulterous relationship since 1867. When Harris stopped in Augusta, she had approximately two thousand dollars in counterfeit money on her and was arrested; afraid that he would be connected to the crime, Turner asked Swayze for help, who refused.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 15, 27–28. White-Americans, liberals, moderates and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, would face judgment for their hatred, greed, murderous hearts, and vile natures.

<sup>58</sup> Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 383.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>60</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 93–94.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Swayze viewed the situation as an opportunity to reclaim his stolen position and discredit Turner, whom Swayze derided as “the Reverend blackguard, whoremaster, forger and passer of counterfeit money.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, a three-day hearing ensued with a federal commissioner presiding as judge to determine if the allegations against Turner were legitimate for him to go to trial. The newspaper editor could not muster enough witnesses to discredit the AME pastor, and Marian Harris, the one seemingly reliable witness involved in the case, changed her story approximately three different times while on the witness stand. Furthermore, Turner’s supporters, especially the clergy, came to his defense and testified on his behalf. Their testimony not only invalidated Swayze’s account of the situation but also destroyed his character and integrity.<sup>63</sup>

The allegations of bribery and misappropriation of funds undermined Turner’s trustworthiness, but the charges of adultery were worse as blacks and whites alike criticized him harshly.<sup>64</sup> He lost a significant number of supporters in the AME Church, especially among the women. This incident increasingly eroded Turner’s faith in white Americans and his political aspirations because of his experiences being “the constant target of Democratic abuse and venom, and white Republican jealousy”; furthermore, he resigned as Macon’s postmaster general because of pressure from President Grant.<sup>65</sup> In 1870, Turner regained his position as a state

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<sup>62</sup> J.C. Swayze’s comments, *Macon American Union* (Macon, GA), April 30, August 20, 1869, quoted in Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1989), 348.

<sup>63</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African–American Religion in the South*, 96.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Even though Turner pastored St. Phillip Monumental AME Church in Savannah, Georgia, he struggled to regain blacks’ trust in AME Churches throughout the state. Turner was hurt by Swayze’s comments and embarrassed by the allegations.

<sup>65</sup> Alexander, *African–American Chaplains Who Served in the Civil War*, 19; Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 383–384; Redkey, “Bishop Turner’s African Dream,” 237; Herndon, “Henry McNeal Turner’s African Dream,” 329–330; Turner, *Respect Black*, 31.

representative with Congress's help, but he lost reelection due to a fraudulent campaign.<sup>66</sup> After dissolving his relationships with the Republican Party, Turner left the political arena and resumed pastoring. To some extent, Turner was able to regain the black community's trust in later years, but the damage took a long time to repair.<sup>67</sup> Turner's experiences within the party demonstrated how Reconstruction unleashed a myriad of forces, both good and evil, that determined the future of black freedmen in the South.

Turner's experience with Republican politics led him to question the Grand Old Party's (GOP) commitment to civil rights beyond Reconstruction. By the end of the 1870s, it was clear to him that it was not just the GOP, but white, northern society as a whole that was eager for "reunion" at any price – including civil rights. Indeed, northern whites felt relieved that blacks could no longer seemingly scam the federal government for civil rights legislation after hearing of the Supreme Court's decision in *U.S. v. Stanley* (1883), overturning the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited discrimination in public transportation.<sup>68</sup> Many northern Republicans felt that blacks needed to work hard and take charge of their destinies, individually, and as a race, to prove their worth as American citizens.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Democrats and Republicans sought to impose the free labor stereotype on black Americans so they had an incentive to earn their rights as other Americans had to do; however, the Supreme Court's ruling destroyed the little protection that

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 105; Alexander, *African-American Chaplains Who Served in the Civil War*, 19; Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 383–384.

<sup>68</sup> Angell, "A Black Minister Befriends the 'Unquestioned Father of Civil Rights,'" 56–57. Senator Charles Sumner sponsored the Civil Rights bill, but he died in 1874 and did not live to see its passage in 1875. Congress approved the bill in a lame duck session, but later the Supreme Court declared Sumner's bill unconstitutional in an attempt to ease white southerners' fears at the expense of undoing the African-American community's early civil rights victories.

<sup>69</sup> Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction*, 145–151.

blacks had against segregation.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, blacks allowed themselves to become manipulated into the Republicans and Democrats' political games. Both political parties differentiated hardworking, northern, freedmen who adhered to the free labor theory as “good blacks” who merged into the “better class of blacks” (i.e. middle class) and “bad blacks” (i.e. poor, working class southerners) who refused to work but expected assistance from the federal government. Instead of middle and working class blacks uniting for the common goals of addressing social and political inequalities, they allowed class prejudices to hinder their effectiveness.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, Ku Klux Klan groups whipped, raped, murdered, terrorized, and humiliated hundreds of southern, working class blacks and their sympathetic white allies.<sup>72</sup> For instance, a white male schoolteacher was blindfolded, led into a forest, and forced to kiss the bodies of several naked blacks, including a woman's genitals.<sup>73</sup> When the Klansmen told him to sleep with a black woman, he summarily refused. The vigilantes beat him mercilessly, and the ringleader asked him, “How did he like that for nigger equality?”<sup>74</sup> The experiences were much worse for blacks who lived in constant fear for their families' safety.<sup>75</sup> A Klan mob attacked a black

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 152–155.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 156–182.

<sup>72</sup> Gould, *Grand Old Party*, 45–49, 50–56; Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 146, 184–191, 195–197.

<sup>73</sup> U.S. Congress, *KKK Hearings*, (Washington, D.C., 1872), South Carolina, 366, quoted in David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 118.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Gould, *Grand Old Party*, 45–49, 50–56; Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 146, 184–191, 195–197; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 110–122.



freedman named James Beckwith after storming into his house and demanding money. The group then unsuccessfully tried to lynch him twice from trees, but his feet were so close to the ground that he survived.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, the Klan whipped his wife without pity.<sup>77</sup> As a result of the brutality, they worked and lived in fear. Although Beckwith and his wife survived the attack, their mental states were permanently scarred.

Between 1870 and 1871, bipartisan Congressional subcommittees heard testimonies of gruesome Klan brutality against southern blacks and their northern Republican allies. The purpose of the hearings was to prosecute vengeful whites and give hope to blacks as well as their allies by delivering justice swiftly. Unfortunately, the hearings developed into a mock trial as the Republicans and Democrats, aided by partisan newspapers, sought to outdo each other.<sup>78</sup> White southerners denounced Klan activities as “myths” created by northern Republicans and fearful blacks to justify Reconstruction in the South. Furthermore, the rise of southern apologists and Klan defenders further hindered the efforts of Reconstruction, ultimately leading to its abrupt end.<sup>79</sup> Freedmen, ex-Confederates, Republican officials, ex-Union soldiers, sympathetic southern whites, and Ku Klux Klan members testified of the horrors the supremacy group committed against blacks and their northern allies.<sup>80</sup> Republicans and Democrats employed detectives to investigate the alleged crimes and discredit the opposing party. The crimes proved to be true, and Klan members unashamedly retold of their deeds to horrified audiences.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 110–122.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 195–197; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 110–122, 130–139.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 195–197.

<sup>81</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 108; Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 195–197.

Justice was never truly accomplished during the yearlong Klan trials, and blacks lived with unspeakable horror, shame, guilt, fear, and anger for years to come. Many southern whites revolted to the new social order being established and labored unceasingly to restore the region to its antebellum years.<sup>82</sup> Simultaneously, they sought to reconcile sectional differences for the sake of racial harmony. The little known trials served as evidence of this reconciliation.<sup>83</sup> The only legislation designed to curtail southern violence against blacks were the Enforcement Acts of 1870–1871. Most notably, the Ku Klux Klan Act gave Congress the authority to punish violent acts of terrorism, as well as the Klan’s attempts to encroach on blacks’, and northern whites’, political rights.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, the law gave the president the authority to send in federal troops to protect blacks’ civil rights if necessary. The Compromise of 1877 destroyed any attempts of Republican legislation to defend blacks, as well as civil rights, because northern and southerners sacrificed racial peace for economic growth and national reconciliation. *The Nation*, a prominent magazine founded by abolitionists, observed, “The negro will disappear from the field of national politics. Henceforth, the nation, as a nation, will have nothing more to do with him.”<sup>85</sup>

Having endured Reconstruction, white southerners by the 1880s sought to redefine it and the Civil War. They attempted to rewrite history through the lens of Decoration Day, now celebrated as Memorial Day. Black freedmen initially founded the holiday in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1865.<sup>86</sup> Along with members of the Freedmen’s Bureau and their northern white

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<sup>82</sup> Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 195–197.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., *The Nation*, 245.

allies, the ex-slaves wanted to honor the Union dead and reflect on their sacrifices. Over time, northern Republicans used the occasion to lecture crowds on Union soldiers' heroic actions, the South's treachery and inevitable defeat, and how the Union triumphed over seemingly insurmountable odds. Furthermore, they conveniently avoided the issue of slavery over the years to focus on national reconciliation. As northern whites found cause to celebrate Decoration Day, their actions sent the message that black Americans' actions, bravery, commitment, and patriotism did not matter in the larger narrative of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and mainstream American society.<sup>87</sup>

After observing white northerners' festivities on Decoration Day, southern whites tailored the holiday to restore their sense of security, where they gloried in an early version of the Lost Cause, rewrote the outcome of the Civil War to suit their needs, and slavery gradually faded into the dark corners of American history, as if the issue never happened.<sup>88</sup> According to Lost Cause ideology, southerners fought to defend their country, families, and homes from northern aggression; plantation owners valued and treated their slaves well; the slaves reciprocated this love by developing strong relationships with and faithfully serving their masters; Confederate soldiers epitomized a long legacy of southern gentlemen defending their honor in battle; and the actions of fallen Confederate soldiers immortalized them in southern history as patriots. For instance, the southerner Thomas Nelson Page, who grew up during the early years of Reconstruction, idolized the antebellum South and wrote idyllic stories of plantation owners' experiences.<sup>89</sup> Unfortunately, these tales were filled with Lost Cause mythology and depicted

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<sup>86</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 65–72, 76–77, 92–93.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 222–227.

black slaves as happy, carefree, ignorant, loyal “Mammies” and “Uncles,” who did not desire freedom while plantation owners and their families struggled with the ravages and chaos of the Civil War. In these “Lost Cause” accounts, southern soldiers died nobly on the various battlefields, defending their homes from the aggressive northern invaders, and loyal slaves carried their masters’ bodies back home for proper burials on the plantations. In this way, Page, and southerners as a whole, could reminisce about the “good, ole days” amidst the social changes following Reconstruction. Furthermore, these stories, with “Sambos,” “darkies,” “Uncles,” and “Mammies,” served as a way to keep blacks “in their place” while the approximately four and half million ex-slaves exercised their overdue political and civil rights.<sup>90</sup>

As black southerners gave the impression that they wanted more civil rights legislation and fewer job opportunities, the Republican Party, specifically northern whites, limited its support and assistance to this disenfranchised group. For many Republicans, southern blacks seemed ungrateful for the party’s help in previous years and became increasingly violent when the federal government did not provide any reassurances for civil rights legislation.<sup>91</sup> Black southerners continued to work hard and provide for their families in spite of the blatant racism, but Republicans and some Democrats viewed black freedmen as shiftless compared to white laborers in the North and South, as well as immigrants from Europe and China. Both parties failed to realize that the free labor method truly worked when there was an abundance of resources available to help blacks succeed.<sup>92</sup> Southern blacks had very few means of responding to the repressive social and economic conditions plaguing the South. They not only despised the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction*, 183–206, 208–224.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

resurgent sense of superiority among whites but also withstood intense pressure to conform to degrading stereotypes.<sup>93</sup>

Turner sought to encourage his mostly poor, working class black constituents and congregations to persevere in spite of their bleak situation as racial violence increased throughout the South. For example, the Supreme Court ruled the 1875 Civil Rights Act as unconstitutional because eight of the justices could not bear the thought of blacks being equal with whites.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, the justices feared that more socializing between blacks and whites would lead to interracial marriages and families, thereby destroying the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race.<sup>95</sup> Following the Supreme Court's decision, Turner increased his calls for emigration to Africa, which brought much criticism. Responding to his critics in 1883, Turner wrote an article for the *Christian Recorder*, observing,

What is to be the end of this [black] race? ... War, efforts of extermination, anarchy, horror, and a wail to heaven ... there is only one thing that will prevent its realization, and that is marriage between whites and blacks; social contact that will divide blood; blood that will unify and centralize feelings, sympathy, interest, and abrogate prejudice, race, caste, color barriers, and hair textures.<sup>96</sup>

As he wrote the article, Turner may have reminisced on his service as a Union chaplain during the Civil War where he witnessed the horror of battles while ministering to the troops in his regiment. Although he dreaded the consequences of an imminent race war and wanted to find a

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Johnson, "Chapter Three: 'To Seek Other Quarters; Turner's Mission Oriented Prophecies,'" in *The Forgotten Prophet*, 74–75; Turner, "The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court," (1883), in *Respect Black*, 65–67.

<sup>95</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 74–75; Turner, "Emigration to Africa," (1883), 56; "The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court," (1883), in *Respect Black*, 65–67.

<sup>96</sup> Turner, "Emigration to Africa," (1883), in *Respect Black*, 56.

peaceful solution to the early stages of Jim Crowism, Turner realized that both ethnicities would staunchly oppose the plan of interracial marriages.

In the eighteen years since the end of the Civil War, the gains that blacks had forged and earned during Reconstruction were subtly and boldly, in some cases, being rolled back by vengeful whites.<sup>97</sup> Bishop Turner prophesied that the Republican Party, especially the Supreme Court, would suffer defeats on multiple levels for appeasing white, southern Democrats while failing to protect blacks and their civil rights.<sup>98</sup> Thus, Reconstruction ended ingloriously. In 1884, Grover Cleveland won the presidential election and became the first Democrat elected since James Buchanan in 1856. Blacks feared an imminent return to slavery.<sup>99</sup> At a conference of AME pastors to discuss the implications of Cleveland's victory, Turner helped ease the fears of many blacks while encouraging them to develop pride in their rich heritage, commenting, "No race of people can rise and manufacture better conditions while they hate and ignore themselves. A man must believe he is somebody before he is acknowledged to be somebody ... neither the Republican nor Democratic party can do for the colored race what they can do for themselves. Respect black."<sup>100</sup> As America entered the twentieth century, blacks became increasingly marginalized, stripped of their identity, and civil rights. Some became apathetic to the denial of their rights.<sup>101</sup> Turner believed emigration was the only viable option for blacks to escape discrimination, oppression, and injustice in the United States.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 74.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>99</sup> Turner, "The Democratic Victory," (1884), in *Respect Black*, 71–72.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>101</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 76.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

Demagogues arose during, and certainly after, Reconstruction to reassure racist whites of their superiority over black freedmen and comfort those who still lamented the Confederacy's defeat. Furthermore, "fire-eaters," or race-baiters, came in the form of local politicians hoping to get elected to Congress, distressed, angry, southern white women, and disgruntled ex-Confederate officers hoping to continue the war in all aspects of society. Rebecca Latimer Felton advocated for the renewal of the Old South, protection of white women's chastity, and the lynchings of all blacks, especially men, whom southerners viewed as inherent rapists and bloodthirsty animals.<sup>103</sup> Benjamin Tillman, on the other hand, was the racist, agrarian-reform minded, pragmatic governor of South Carolina during Reconstruction who capitalized off the period's chaos and discontent to eventually get elected to Congress, where he represented South Carolina in the U.S. Senate. In the midst of their stump speeches and lectures, Felton and Tillman made extremely derogatory comments about blacks that stoked the fears of southern whites. For example, in a lecture to a predominantly southern white male audience, Felton commented, "if it takes lynching to protect woman's dearest possession from drunken, ravaging human beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week if it becomes necessary."<sup>104</sup> The demagogues played off the people's fears of "Negro rule" by suggesting that black men lurked in the shadows waiting to prey on southern women, both young and old alike.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Rebecca L. Felton to the *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 19, 1898, clipping in Scrapbook 24, in the Felton Papers, 76–77, quoted in Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black White Relations in the South since Emancipation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 95.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Rebecca Latimer Felton, *Country Life in Georgia: In the Days of My Youth* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 87, 155–156. Felton's comments in 1898 are a stark contrast to her thoughts in her 1919 memoir, where she observed, "If there had been no slaves there would have been no war. To fight for the perpetuation of domestic slavery was a mistake. The time had come in the US to wipe out this evil. The South had to suffer [...]." Thus, as Felton became older in the early 1900s, she may have recognized and accepted responsibility for her inflammatory lectures, which further widened the seemingly irreparable breach in race relations.

Self-serving politicians, such as Tillman, sought the support of ex-Confederates and Democrats by appealing to their commonly shared racist sentiments. Tillman noted, “[W]e have turned our land over to the Negroes to manage, the Anglo-Saxon abdicating in favor of the African, brains and energy giving place to muscle and ignorance.”<sup>106</sup> Tillman strongly believed that a race war was necessary for the preservation of white Americans and the suppression, or extinction, of blacks. Furthermore, the senator’s dedication to white supremacy energized his rhetoric, which he forthrightly stated, “[T]he poor African became a fiend, a wild beast, seeking whom he may devour, filling our penitentiaries and our jails, lurking around to see if some helpless white woman can be murdered or brutalized. We realize what it means to allow ever so little a trickle of race equality to break through the dam.”<sup>107</sup> Tillman’s fierce devotion to white supremacy later motivated a newer, younger generation of radicals, represented by the literature and mindset of Thomas Dixon, Jr., author of *The Leopard’s Spots* (1902) and *The Clansman* (1905).<sup>108</sup>

Ex-Confederates wrested control of state governments from the Radical Republicans, solidifying Reconstruction’s failure. Weary of the political and social turmoil, the Freedmen’s Bureau and northerners retreated from Reconstruction, creating more instability in the South. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, as Jim Crowism became the law of the land, blacks suffered untold horrors. Jim Crow society emphasized the notion of inferiority to young blacks

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<sup>106</sup> Benjamin Ryan Tillman’s comments, *Charleston News and Courier*, Charleston, SC, January 18, 1886, quoted in Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 115.

<sup>107</sup> Benjamin Ryan Tillman, *Race Problem*, speech in the U.S. Senate, February 23–24, 1903, 10, 28–29, quoted in Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 258.

<sup>108</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 183–185, 234–236.



and destroyed their dreams of having better lives while stealing the elderly blacks' last bit of hope and dignity.<sup>109</sup> Middle class blacks seemed to weather the storm because of their money, small amount of influence, and frequent contact with northern and southern whites. Nevertheless, racist legislators created reprehensible laws to put middle class blacks "in their place."<sup>110</sup>

By the early to mid-1880s, black Americans' worth and capability to assimilate into American society, in addition to gaining civil and political rights, was the center of the debate regarding race and national reunification. Both northerners and southerners evaded the question of racial harmony at the expense of regional reconciliation because neither side wanted to address the painful subjects of race, rape, lynchings, Jim Crowism, or slavery; therefore, blacks felt they had no advocates among northerners or southerners.<sup>111</sup> Subsequently, most white Americans who favored national instead of racial unity ignored the black community's spokesmen, such as Frederick Douglass, Bishop Turner and Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois. Northerners and southerners were content avoiding the discussions of slavery and other race-related issues because guilt permeated both groups.<sup>112</sup> For example, Union and Confederate veterans wrote memoirs of their experiences to create sympathy for their respective causes while fascinating readers with their accounts of the war in outlets such as the *Philadelphia Weekly Times and Century Magazine*.<sup>113</sup> Union and Confederate veterans helped foster reconciliation between the North and South as readers came to define the war's purpose and significance through heroism,

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<sup>109</sup> Ayers, preface, vii-x, and epilogue to *The Promise of the New South*, 348-349; C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History: The Origins of the New South* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 3-25.

<sup>110</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 44-52.

<sup>111</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 251-254.

<sup>112</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 44-52; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 167-170.

<sup>113</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 145-160.

valor, honor, and commitment while glossing over the war's causes, most notably slavery. Similarly, the veterans' relegation of blacks to subservient roles as bystanders or loyal slaves furthered book sales and enhanced the reconciliation process while hindering progress in race relations; consequently, most of the American public ignored blacks' commitment, courage, and sacrifice.<sup>114</sup>

Black freedmen, with iconic leaders, such as Turner, Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet (a former United States Colored Troop chaplain and ambassador to Liberia), and Martin Delany (a Union veteran, writer, and civil rights activist), reminded white Americans of their indelible contributions to the war and American society. Although blacks sacrificed their lives in slavery, on battlefields, and in society to earn the same rights as white Americans, no one seemed to care. Douglass, and Turner, especially, wanted blacks to resist legalized segregation and discrimination through hard work, developing a solid Christian faith, and obtaining an education. Southern whites did not respect blacks in any aspect of society; therefore, in Douglass's and Turner's minds, blacks had to demonstrate their ability to gain respect but not at the expense of appeasement. Furthermore, a quality education, when combined with Christianity and hard work, was the only means of breaking segregation's shackles from the minds, bodies, and souls of black freedmen, especially young children. An article in the *Chicago Tribune* noted that black Americans' "good behavior, thrift, eagerness and aptness to learn" demonstrated "the wisdom of admitting them to all the rights of citizens."<sup>115</sup> Thus, education was vital to the black community's social, political, and economic advancement.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 167–170.

<sup>115</sup> Educational efforts among freedmen, *Chicago Tribune*, Chicago, IL, July 14, 1868, 2.

In 1890, Republican Senator Henry W. Blair sponsored an education bill, known as the Blair Education Bill, in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives to provide money for educational purposes throughout the nation.<sup>116</sup> The bill allotted \$57,750 for the establishment of schools for freedmen throughout the South. Much of the black community supported the bill, while individual blacks wanted the bill to adequately address school segregation.<sup>117</sup> Unfortunately, the bill lacked support in the North because the federal government would have endowed blacks with substantial aid.<sup>118</sup> Subsequently, northern Republicans, who held the majority of seats in the Senate, rejected the legislation. After another attempt to revise and pass the bill through both Houses of Congress, Democrats, Republicans, and independents cooperated to kill the bill in the Senate. They feared that it conflicted with the northern Republican view of free labor capitalism.<sup>119</sup>

Similarly, ignoring the arguments of powerful, intelligent black leaders, such as Turner, Douglass, and Du Bois became another tactic for whites to sidestep racial conflict in the early twentieth century.<sup>120</sup> But, the leaders did not back down from the challenges of discussing racial issues and drew much criticism from blacks and whites alike. Turner, for example, denounced white Americans with bitter rhetoric and made critical statements such as, “the United States constitution is a dirty rag, a cheat, a libel, and ought to spit upon by every Negro in the land,” following the Supreme Court’s 1883 decision in *U.S. v. Stanley*.<sup>121</sup> Many other civil rights

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<sup>116</sup> Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction*, 207.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 207–208.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 251–254.

activists, along with Turner, expressed their anger at the state of race relations in different ways.<sup>122</sup> Turner became more vocal in his views on emigration to Africa.

Angered by the verdict, Turner presented a scathing analysis of the political situation during an interview with a St. Louis newspaper, where he criticized the Supreme Court's decision and ominously foreshadowed the backlash that blacks would receive from those bent on revenge. The Supreme Court was mostly Republican, and the justices' actions were a major disappointment in an eight to one ruling, with associate justice John Marshall Harlan casting the dissenting ballot.<sup>123</sup> Turner commented, "Mark my word, there will be bloodshed enough over that decision.... It absolves the allegiance of the negro to the United States.... Now, I ask, shall we sit still and be conservative, hold our peace and submit to this degradation? ... No, not ... a member of the negro race."<sup>124</sup> He encouraged blacks to prepare themselves to fight the injustices that were about to test their resolve.<sup>125</sup> The Supreme Court's decision eroded his hope in the United States government and the possibility of ever allying with white Americans, both northerners and southerners, to address injustices related to civil rights.<sup>126</sup>

Many northern blacks, such as T. Thomas Fortune, Benjamin Tanner, J.T. Jenifer, and Francis J. Grimke, viewed emigration such as to Africa as a ridiculous idea.<sup>127</sup> They did not

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<sup>121</sup> Turner, "The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court," (1883), in *Respect Black*, 63.

<sup>122</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 251–254.

<sup>123</sup> Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction*, 150.

<sup>124</sup> Turner, "The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court," (1883), in *Respect Black*, 62–63.

<sup>125</sup> Turner, *Respect Black*, 60–63; Henry M. Turner, "Emigration to Africa," in *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed., ed. Milton C. Sernet (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 289–295; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 90–91, 99, 167–169. Bishop Turner strongly encouraged African-Americans to emigrate to Africa.

<sup>126</sup> Turner, *Respect Black*, 60–63; Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 404.

experience the harshness of racism as much as southern blacks. Thus, many northern blacks removed themselves from the struggles of their southern brothers and sisters. In 1893, at a convention in the North, Turner's challenge was to persuade a room full of successful black Americans, mostly entrepreneurs, doctors, teachers, and pastors, of southern blacks' struggles as well as the need for rediscovering black Americans' rich history and culture by emigrating to Africa.<sup>128</sup> His speech at the convention, titled "To Seek Other Quarters," emphasized the fact that blacks had no citizenship, honor, or respect from whites. From Turner's viewpoint, black Americans had negative views of themselves because "we are degraded by the public press, degraded by class legislation, degraded on the railroads after purchasing first class tickets ... degraded in many states at the ballot box.... Thus we are degraded in so many respects that all the starch of respectability is taken out of the manhood of millions of our people...."<sup>129</sup> As a result of slavery's debilitating effects, many blacks, both North and South, developed conditioned mindsets that they would never be anything; summarily, Turner urged emigration to Africa to restore downtrodden blacks' sense of independence, dignity, and pride.<sup>130</sup>

From 1877 to 1900, black Americans slowly became disenfranchised.<sup>131</sup> In the midst of their struggles, they needed to learn from their slave ancestors who had a strong faith in God,

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<sup>127</sup> Turner, "Emigration to Africa," (1883), 52–59; "Turner and His Critics," (1895), in *Respect Black*, 161–163.

<sup>128</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 80.

<sup>129</sup> Turner, "An Emigration Convention," (1893), in *Respect Black*, 151.

<sup>130</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 81. Because slavery warped their mentalities, many blacks internalized negative notions that they would become rapists and murderers. Similarly, black women viewed themselves as shameless prostitutes. In his speech, Turner observed that slavery was always about greed, money, and whites prospering. Even more disturbing, most whites never intended to convert slaves to Christianity.

<sup>131</sup> Turner, "Emigration to Africa," (1883), 52–59, "The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court," (1883), 60–69, "The 'Force Bill,'" (1890), 81–82, "Turner and His Critics," (1895), in *Respect Black*, 161–163.

character, integrity, determination, bravery, diligence, and willpower.<sup>132</sup> Encouraging blacks to take the injustices and oppressive times as an opportunity to blaze their own trails, Turner observed, “the nation as such, has no power or disposition to give us manhood protection anyway.... Now the ... Supreme Court has the power to declare that the Negro has no civil rights under the general government ... and Congress proposes no remedy by legislation or by such a constitutional amendment as will give us the status of citizenship in the nation....”<sup>133</sup> Turner reminded his audience that in courts of law, black men, and by definition, all blacks, were guilty until proven innocent. The black community was understandably tired of experiencing discrimination, racism, and prejudice. Knowing this, Turner challenged his audience to take a stand against injustice and oppression, especially lynchings. In turn, they would set good examples for their children and families while inspiring their race.<sup>134</sup>

To give context to his message, Turner addressed the issue of black men allegedly raping white women. Turner did not excuse rape or any other crime, but advised blacks to investigate alleged cases of rape and bring the wrongful members of their community to justice because black Americans needed to “do right, though others do wrong. ... be cool-headed, calculating, and show the world that we wish to be fair and just. ...honesty will be the best policy when dealing with this question [rape], as it is in dealing with every other. ... We are a free people, ...we will have our own destiny to work out, and nobody cares about us particularly....”<sup>135</sup> In this way, blacks did not have to turn the perpetrators over to the vengeful white southerners or

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<sup>132</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 83.

<sup>133</sup> Turner, “An Emigration Convention,” (1893), in *Respect Black*, 155.

<sup>134</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 86.

<sup>135</sup> Turner, “An Emigration Convention,” (1893), in *Respect Black*, 152.

northerners, but slowly earn the respect of sympathetic whites.<sup>136</sup> In using the term “to seek other quarters,” Turner was being playful with his words in order to disguise emigration. The situation in the United States became increasingly dangerous; thus, blacks needed to emigrate immediately.<sup>137</sup> Pessimism, anger, and weariness led Turner to shift his rhetoric and thoughts on America. In the midst of his anger, Turner still had a glimmer of hope – blacks would emigrate.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 149–154. Turner advised blacks to create disciplinary committees to try black men accused of rape. If innocent, the men were freed and continued with their lives. If guilty, the committees punished the perpetrators harshly by whipping them one thousand times on their bare backs. Similarly, if black men were caught in the act of rape, then black “justice keepers” were vindicated to cut off the would be offenders’ right ears and brand their cheeks or foreheads with the letter R for raper, thereby warning everyone of the perpetrators’ shame. The men would not only live with embarrassment and guilt for the rest of their lives but the black communities would also detest the offenders’ memories when they died.

<sup>137</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 86, 92.

### Chapter 3

#### Under His Own Vine and Fig Tree: Turner as a Prophet

The end of Reconstruction in the 1870s witnessed a retreat from the commitment to secure civil rights for blacks. White, southern “redeemers” soon filled the void left by the federal government, while a “Lost Cause” romanticism soon dominated scholarship in both the North and South.<sup>1</sup> In Turner’s Georgia, and across the South, state legislatures passed laws establishing poll taxes, literacy tests, and property qualifications as requirements for voters. Meanwhile, southern white authors, such as Thomas Nelson Page, tapped into industrial America’s nostalgia for an idealized agrarian past and portrayed slavery as a beneficial institution.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on the Georgia state legislature’s passage of a disfranchisement bill in the early twentieth century, Governor Hoke Smith (1907–1909, 1911) expressed confidence that, “White supremacy will be preserved ... without the necessity for intimidation or violence ... and there will ... be no danger at the ballot box from the ignorant and purchasable negro voters.”<sup>3</sup> Professional Republican leaders – now a minority in the South – mounted little resistance to these kinds of changes and challenges. Furthermore, black leaders were divided on how to respond to the Jim Crow order. Booker T. Washington, perhaps the most well-known civil rights figure by 1900, insisted that blacks pursue an industrial education, work hard, obtain economic independence, and not concern themselves with regaining civil, and political, rights.<sup>4</sup> However, other leaders, including

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<sup>1</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 152–178; James Tice Moore, “Redeemers Reconsidered: Change and Continuity in the Democratic South,” in *C. Vann Woodward: A Southern Historian and His Critics*, ed. John Herbert Roper (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 95–101.

<sup>2</sup> Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., “Hoke Smith: Progressive Governor of Georgia, 1907–1909,” *The Journal of Southern History* 15:4 (Nov 1949): 433; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 222–227.

<sup>3</sup> Hoke Smith, pamphlet address delivered March 9, 1908, in Smith Collection, quoted in Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., “Hoke Smith: Progressive Governor of Georgia, 1907–1909,” *The Journal of Southern History* 15:4 (Nov 1949): 434.



Turner, the aged Frederick Douglass, and later, W.E.B. Du Bois, attempted to answer black Americans' questions, ease their fears, and encourage them to strive for excellence in an oppressive society.<sup>5</sup>

As Jim Crowism grew throughout the South, Turner encouraged blacks with his soul stirring preaching and speeches.<sup>6</sup> In 1880, the AME Church elected Turner as a bishop of a church in Georgia.<sup>7</sup> In addition to being ordained a bishop, Turner served as the president of Morris Brown College, an African-American college in Atlanta, from 1880 to 1892. Around 1888, Bishop Turner created Turner Normal and Industrial Institute in Shelbyville, Tennessee, but did not formally dedicate the school until 1908. He later founded Turner Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. For Turner, blacks' survival and the lack of civil rights protection by the federal government demanded that young students begin their education immediately.<sup>8</sup>

Turner inspired his church members, and the larger black community, to resist Jim Crowism through protests, demonstrations, and hard work.<sup>9</sup> He also prophesied the Republican Party's downfall in multiple elections for abandoning black freemen during Reconstruction.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 152–178, 206–208, 225–232; Booker T. Washington, “The Atlanta Exposition Address,” in *Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing*, ed. Deirdre Mullane (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1993), 364–365.

<sup>5</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 152–178, 206–208, 225–232.

<sup>6</sup> Leeman, “Speaking as Jeremiah,” 224–229, 237–241; Cummings, “The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner,” 457–462; Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 404; Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 128–132.

<sup>7</sup> “Opening of Turner Normal,” *Nashville Globe*, Nashville, TN, September 25, 1906; Redkey, “Bishop Turner’s African Dream,” 273–274; Batten, “Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary,” 240; Edwin S. Redkey, foreword to *Respect Black*, vii–viii; Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 403.

<sup>8</sup> Redkey, “Bishop Turner’s African Dream,” 273–274; Batten, “Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary,” 240; “Opening of Turner Normal,” *Nashville Globe*, Nashville, TN, September 25, 1906; Edwin S. Redkey, foreword to *Respect Black*, vii–viii; Coulter, “Henry M. Turner,” 403.

<sup>9</sup> Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 30–31, 86–87, 126–127, 130–131.

<sup>10</sup> Turner, “The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court,” (1883), 60–69; “The Democratic Victory,” (1884), 70–72; “The ‘Force Bill,’” in *Respect Black*, 81–82.

Turner became angry over the growing number of blacks who were increasingly apathetic about their civil rights and sought to empower the majority of working class blacks, in both the South and the North, with the educational, spiritual, and mental resources to fight back against Jim Crowism's attempts to not only break their spirits but also steal their dignity.<sup>11</sup> As a free, young man, Turner had worked alongside slaves and saw the institution's detrimental effects firsthand. Now, in the late nineteenth century, he despised Jim Crowism's debilitating influence because the legalized institution relegated blacks to the status of second-class citizens.<sup>12</sup> He supported blacks' protests and demonstrations that brought awareness to segregation, and lectured on dismantling the oppressive system through hard work and education.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, he used many occasions to not only teach his congregation about their history, their greatness, and their flaws, but also suggested reasons for why God allowed blacks to remain enslaved for two and half centuries.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Turner always reminded his audiences to continue working hard, learning about their history, developing a strong Christian faith, ensuring that their character and integrity remained impeccable, and setting examples for their children.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 327–329, 329–332; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 457–462, 464–465; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 238–241; Gregory Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," *The Journal of Negro History* 79:4 (Autumn 1994): 366; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 160–163.

<sup>12</sup> Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 327–328; Alexander, *African-American Chaplains Who Served in the Civil War*, 19; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 457–461; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 232–234.

<sup>13</sup> Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 238–241; Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 366; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 160–163.

<sup>14</sup> Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 457–462; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 330; Anthony B. Pinn, "'Double Consciousness' in Nineteenth Century Black Nationalism: Reflections on the Teachings of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," *Journal of Religious Thought* 52:1 (Summer/Fall 1995), 19–20.

<sup>15</sup> Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 457–462, 465, 467.

Washington championed the Republican ideology of self-reliance, thrift, and industry while rebuilding Tuskegee Institute (now University).<sup>16</sup> As he advocated for an industrial education, Washington lambasted liberal arts education and the intellectual elite, such as Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois.<sup>17</sup> He strongly disliked black ministers and politicians because these “so-called leaders” who were “ignorant,” “immoral,” or “selfish” led the black community astray with their sermons and speeches of racial uplift.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, he felt that the politicians and ministers stirred up the black Americans’ passions into a frenzy only for Jim Crowism’s harshness to destroy their hopes. Although crooked politicians and clergy in the black community existed, many others, such as Hiram Rhodes Revels, the first black senator to represent Mississippi in Congress and Blanche K. Bruce, the first black senator from Mississippi to serve a complete term in Congress, strove to demonstrate excellence to the black community.

In his youthfulness and zeal over the years, Washington criticized the established community leaders in his anger and disgust.<sup>19</sup> Yet, his adherence to Republican political, economic, and social principles hindered the black community’s efforts to regain civil rights while giving the appearance that Washington, and in a larger sense, the above mentioned community, was willing to compromise with southern whites.<sup>20</sup> White southerners prepared to make blacks experience humiliation, shame, rejection, and fear because they were unworthy of

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<sup>16</sup> Mixon, “Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine,” 367–371; Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 63–65.

<sup>17</sup> Spencer, “Spokesman for the Race,” 78–85.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> “Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine,” 366–370.

citizenship as well as civil and political rights.<sup>21</sup> Washington did not see the flaws in his plans as he supported industrialism, thrift, and hard work. Turner and Washington were colleagues who disagreed over the best strategy for blacks to achieve social and political equality. Turner struggled in vain to help Washington see the errors of his political and social compromising, but Washington remained devoted to his belief that the black community had achieved “progress” despite the harsh reality.<sup>22</sup> Thus, he died in 1915 believing that black Americans had made “progress,” but in reality, they had regressed in every aspect of American society.<sup>23</sup>

Washington’s adherence to Republican ideals of hard work, thrift, and service coincided with his advocacy of industrial education as the sole method of uplifting the black community. Historian Samuel R. Spencer, Jr. noted that Washington bargained for many concessions with his Atlanta Compromise speech of 1895 by asking white southerners to cooperate with their former slaves to achieve racial harmony and progress.<sup>24</sup> While reassuring his white audience members of the black community’s non-violent intentions, Washington simultaneously asked southern blacks to surrender their dreams of regaining civil and political rights as well as social equality, because those avenues were pointless when dealing with white Americans and the Jim Crow system.<sup>25</sup> The “Wizard of Tuskegee” encouraged his black listeners to focus on developing

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<sup>21</sup> Mixon, “Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine,” 367–370; Turner, “Critique of the ‘Atlanta Compromise,’” (1895), in *Respect Black*, 165–166; Spencer, “Spokesman for the Race,” in *Booker T. Washington and His Critics*, 86–92.

<sup>22</sup> Turner, “Critique of the ‘Atlanta Compromise,’” (1895), in *Respect Black*, 165–166; Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, 217–228, esp. 227–228.

<sup>23</sup> Spencer, “Spokesman for the Race,” in *Booker T. Washington and His Critics*, 86–92; Mixon, “Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine,” 367–370; Turner, “Critique of the ‘Atlanta Compromise,’” (1895), in *Respect Black*, 165–166; Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, esp. 227–228.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel R. Spencer Jr., *Booker T. Washington and the Negro’s Place in American Life*, ed. Oscar Handlin (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1955), 3–12; Mixon, “Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine,” 366–370.

economic stability, character, integrity, and credible reputations with whites.<sup>26</sup> The only way blacks achieved success was through an industrial education and manual labor.<sup>27</sup>

Washington's "Atlanta Compromise Speech" in September 1895 provided a model for race relations for approximately seven decades. He strove to appease southern whites, befriend northern Republicans, and serve as the primary spokesman for the entire black community while not realizing the damage of deference to southern whites with his accommodationist stance.<sup>28</sup> In advocating for industrial education, Washington reminded his black listeners, "in the great leap from slavery to freedom, ... the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in the proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor ... there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem."<sup>29</sup> The educator wanted his black listeners to understand that agricultural and industrial labor, instead of political service and a liberal arts education, earned southern whites' respect and trust while opening doors to greater opportunities in society.

Similarly, in reassuring his white listeners of blacks' submissiveness to Jim Crowism, Washington observed, "you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has ever seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, ... so in the future, in our

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<sup>25</sup> Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, 217–219.

<sup>26</sup> Spencer, *Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life*, 178–201.

<sup>27</sup> Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, 217–219, 222–223.

<sup>28</sup> Raymond Smock, introduction to *Booker T. Washington: Black Leadership in the Age of Jim Crow* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 2009), 3–15; Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, 222–223, 227–228.

<sup>29</sup> Washington, "The Atlanta Exposition Address," in *Crossing the Danger Water*, 365.

humble way, we shall stand by you with ... devotion....”<sup>30</sup> Washington unknowingly gave the impression that blacks would faithfully serve white Americans in menial, degrading roles such as butlers, domestic workers, and cooks. Washington’s speech had good reasons for supporting racial reconciliation in the South and encouraged ex–Confederates to reach out to their former slaves. In some of the most memorable lines from his speech, Washington urged his black listeners to “cast down your bucket where you are; ... cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions,” as the only way to progress in American society, earn white Americans’ trust, and not be concerned with achieving political and civil rights, as well as social equality.<sup>31</sup> The educator received acclaim from middle class blacks, moderate white northern Republicans, and southern whites. Nevertheless, working class blacks in the audience cried because of the unseen repercussions his speech would have on race relations in the South.<sup>32</sup>

Many northern, middle class blacks praised Washington and his speech, labeling him the “new Frederick Douglass.” Southern black leaders, such as Turner, and some concerned northern blacks, such as Dr. Benjamin Tanner, lambasted Washington for his accommodationist position, noting that he had done much harm to blacks.<sup>33</sup> “Prof. Washington is a great man, he is doing a great work, and it [the Atlanta Exposition] was a great occasion ... With all due respect to Prof. Washington personally,” for we do respect him personally,” Turner wrote in the fall of 1895, “he

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 364.

<sup>31</sup> Washington, “The Atlanta Exposition Address,” in *Crossing the Danger Water*, 365.

<sup>32</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 319–337; Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, 220.

<sup>33</sup> Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, 225–228, esp. 227; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 319–337.

will have to live a long time to undo the harm he has done to our race.”<sup>34</sup> Turner continued, “His remarks on social equality, which is nothing more than civil equality, will be quoted by newspapers, lawyers, judges, and all grades of whites to prove that the Negro race is satisfied with being degraded, not that the Professor meant it, but such will be the construction given it by our civil and political enemies.”<sup>35</sup> By seemingly playing into the hands of northern and southern whites, Washington sent the message that the black community was passive and accepted its “place” as defined by Jim Crowism.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, Washington did not realize that the majority of southern, working class black Americans had not chosen him to speak on their behalf.<sup>37</sup> Thus, blacks had a hard time understanding God’s plan for slavery and dealing with the institution’s abuses.

Turner and other black ministers advocated a providential view of slavery. They believed God used the evils of slavery to bring Africans to America where they would be converted to Christianity in order to redeem the United States, and eventually Africa, from perversion and corruption.<sup>38</sup> “Slavery was a providential institution, not a divine institution,” Turner commented, for “there is a God who was not asleep or oblivious to passing events.”<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, he encouraged southern freedmen to develop a strong Christian faith in order to

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<sup>34</sup> Turner, “Critique of ‘The Atlanta Compromise (1895),’” in *Respect Black*, 166.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 319–337; Turner, “Critique of ‘The Atlanta Compromise (1895),’” in *Respect Black*, 165–155; Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, 225–228.

<sup>37</sup> Harlan, *Booker T. Washington and the Making of a Black Leader*, 227–228.

<sup>38</sup> Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 77.

<sup>39</sup> Turner’s views on slavery, *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Nashville, TN, October 8, 1888, in *Respect Black*, 74–75.

withstand segregation's abuses and humiliations.<sup>40</sup> Washington's advice to southern blacks to "cast down their buckets" delivered empty promises regarding civil and political rights.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, Turner was ready to lead, if not inspire, the masses of southern blacks to their Canaan (Africa) where they could rest under their own vines and fig trees.<sup>42</sup>

At the dawn of the twentieth century, blacks' expectations, whites' stereotypes, and harsh realities seemed to violently clash. This is evident in black and white Christians' views of Africa in the context of emigration and European colonialism. Although various European nations carved out territories for their imperial designs and decimated African tribes' cultures, many blacks, especially southerners, longed to escape oppression from whites who were determined to restore the South, as well as the nation, to the glory days of antebellum society.<sup>43</sup> Even though slavery was abolished, southern whites retaliated against free blacks' attempts to achieve civil and political rights (as well as blacks' sense of pride, which southerners derisively called "uppity niggers") by enforcing poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and literacy tests, in addition to lynchings, race riots, and attacks by the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>44</sup> Thus, many southern blacks sought to emigrate to Africa in order to distance themselves from white influence, oppression, and coercion. Turner spearheaded the movement while Washington pushed for blacks to obtain an industrial education to combat the mounting racism and prejudice. Washington argued that blacks should not concern

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<sup>40</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 319–337.

<sup>41</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 120–126.

<sup>42</sup> Mic. 4:4; Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 79.

<sup>43</sup> Luker, "Chapter 3: The Redemption of Africa," in *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885–1912* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), eBook (accessed May 5, 2016), 30–56.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



themselves with emigration because Africa was not their home and they would be worse off by emigrating.<sup>45</sup>

The black community was divided by these two arguments. Those who followed Turner, primarily working class, southern blacks, sincerely longed to emigrate while Washington's supporters of middle class blacks, moderate Republicans, and some northern clergy argued that blacks should strive for excellence in their occupations and not be deceived by foolish thinking.<sup>46</sup> Although Turner did not achieve much progress with an emigration convention in 1893, the discussion among Washington, Turner and other black leaders nevertheless fostered greater dialogue on the best way to achieve racial uplift in the black community.<sup>47</sup> Southern blacks desired emigration and did not relinquish that dream until the early 1900s as European nations carved out approximately fourteen percent of African lands for their colonial interests, forcing their traditions, society, and Christianity on the "heathens" while disregarding African cultures.<sup>48</sup> In time, the United States joined the crusade and missionaries, from both the North and South, viewed their work of "redeeming" African tribes from a condescending perspective. The missionaries felt called to paternalistically "redeem" Africans, which included imposing white Americans' societal and religious standards on their subjects while paving the way for southern

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Washington, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, 149.

<sup>47</sup> Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*, 30–56.

<sup>48</sup> Ehiedu E. G. Iweriebor, "The Colonization of Africa," *Africana Age: African & African Diasporan Transformations in the 20th Century*, <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-colonization-of-africa.html> (accessed May 7, 2016). By the early 1900s, the British, French, Spanish, Germans, Belgians, Portuguese, and Italian Empires had conquered the resistant African tribes and established imperialistic governments throughout much of Africa, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia. The Italians eventually conquered Ethiopia in 1935.

black Christians to continue the evangelization process. Thus, blacks faced discrimination at home and abroad if they emigrated to Africa.<sup>49</sup>

Over the years, Washington's policies of industrialism, compromise, and manual labor produced heightened tensions and severe strains in race relations as evidenced by the increased number of lynchings.<sup>50</sup> When Spencer published his work, *Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life*, in 1955, the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum and publicity with the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The title of his book justly summarizes the middle class and intellectual elites' views of blacks' "place" in society – eternally confined to the bottom of the social ladder with no room for advancement in every aspect of life (religious, educational, political, legal, and economic) and perpetually dependent on whites for guidance, direction, and leadership (a modified version of paternalism) during the years of the Movement as well as Washington's time. Unfortunately, Washington did not foresee or live long enough to grasp the full, negative measure of his plan to serve as a compromiser, power broker, and mediator on racial affairs among the northern Republican capitalists, southern Democratic politicians, and masses of poor working class blacks struggling to survive under Jim Crow oppression.<sup>51</sup> Turner, on the other hand, always encouraged his predominantly working class black congregations and audiences to develop a sense of racial pride, continue working hard, make progress for their race, and prepare to defend themselves against racial injustices.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*, 30–56.

<sup>50</sup> Spencer, *Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life*, 3–12; Smock, introduction to *Booker T. Washington*, 3–15; NAACP, "Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889–1919," 29.

<sup>51</sup> Smock, introduction to *Booker T. Washington*, 3–15.

<sup>52</sup> Turner, *Respect Black*, 165–166; Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–367, 370, 371–373, 377. Although many of the intellectual elite and growing black middle class disdained Turner and ignored his warnings of the dangers of appeasement, he realized that the future of black Americans was at stake, and appeasement further hindered their efforts to regain stolen civil rights. Therefore, he risked his reputation to

Turner's relationship with Washington was cordial at best and tenuous at worst. Stephen Angell observes that the clergyman would have frequently agreed with Booker T. Washington on most issues regarding education. However, Angell does not adequately assess Turner's thoughts on W.E.B. Du Bois. The author makes the statement, "He [Turner] deplored the notion, then advanced by DuBois [classical education, i.e. science, literature, mathematics, grammar, and history] [...]." <sup>53</sup> In a previous chapter, Angell noted that Turner not only supported but also implemented education reforms in the AME Church. Liberal arts education, [i.e. book knowledge], combined with hard work and industrial education [i.e. a trade] had the ability to transform the black community. <sup>54</sup> Turner strongly encouraged black Americans to obtain an education.

As a young man, Turner received a modest education and reaped the benefits. From his viewpoint, a mixed, Christian-based education would develop the well roundedness of black citizens and empower them to resist Jim Crowism. He did not agree with Washington's views of accommodation; simultaneously, Turner disagreed with Du Bois's militant stance at various times because Turner was a moderate in some of his views. Bishop Turner believed that black Americans needed to develop a strong Christian faith, work hard, and gain an education, whether liberal arts, industrial, or a combination of both aspects. In reference to education, Turner would have agreed with various aspects of Washington's and Du Bois's philosophies. <sup>55</sup> On the issue of Jim Crowism, Turner's thoughts would have aligned more with Du Bois.

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advance the cause of civil rights, and encouraged blacks to defend themselves through his rhetoric, sermons, and political action.

<sup>53</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 239–241.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 239–241; Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–366, 370, 371–373.

As he aged, Turner became increasingly cantankerous. Nevertheless, Du Bois had a respect for him and appreciated his ideas of resistance, even though the two men did not always agree politically. They both denounced Washington's ideas of passivity and conformity to white American stereotypes as the worst strategy for blacks' advancement in politics, as well as society. Furthermore, Turner's radicalism seemed to inspire Du Bois to cofound the NAACP in 1909. Du Bois once commented that Turner was "the last of his clan" – referring to the generation of AME pastors that grew up enslaved and later experienced freedom during Reconstruction – as Turner's popularity began fading after his death in 1915.<sup>56</sup>

In the midst of the chaos following Reconstruction's abrupt end, Edgar Gardner Murphy emerged as the leader for southern whites from the late 1880s into the 1900s. As an Episcopal priest, Murphy preached from his church pulpit a message of the "Social Gospel," that everyone deserved an opportunity to hear the Gospel while meeting people's physical needs.<sup>57</sup> As he founded churches in various black communities, Murphy's thinking underwent a radical shift.<sup>58</sup> After advocating that God had imbued all races with certain talents, abilities, and strengths, Murphy began arguing in 1904 that blacks needed to be legally and socially separated from white Americans in order to achieve true racial progress and tap into their ethnically imbued gifts; furthermore, segregation answered the prayers of both races because the purpose of the system was not "to condemn the negro forever to a lower place but to accord him another place."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 364; Redkey, foreword to *Respect Black*, viii–ix.

<sup>57</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 208–232, 233. This was a message that poor, working, middle, and rich classes, black as well as white, may have possibly received.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

For blacks, they could become autonomous, develop businesses, churches, and schools away from harassment by jealous, vengeful whites, and develop racial pride. For whites, they could systematically humiliate and force blacks into subordinate positions while ignoring blacks' humanity since "there is likely to be enmity and there is very sure to be suspicion."<sup>60</sup> Therefore, white Americans could enhance their society, contemplate on the greatness of their Anglo-Saxon heritage, and teach their children about the benefits of whiteness (goodness, righteousness, virtue, and purity) while disdaining blackness as evil, vicious, perverse, and sexual immorality.<sup>61</sup> To lessen the chaos of tumultuous political elections, an influx of Europeans and Jews arriving in the nation, and blacks' rebelliousness to their prescribed social and legal conditions, many white southerners found solace in Murphy's preaching.<sup>62</sup>

During the 1890s, the growing black middle class belittled Turner's plans of emigration because they did not want to sacrifice their status and comfortable lifestyles in American society for an opportunity to start afresh in Africa.<sup>63</sup> They respected Turner's position, but disagreed with his plan to address segregation.<sup>64</sup> Disillusioned with the idea of civil rights in the United States, Turner not only advocated the proposal that blacks should emigrate to Africa to start new lives but also planned and led voyages to Liberia, a model colony founded by ex-slaves in the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>60</sup> Edgar Gardner Murphy, *Problems of the Present South: A Discussion of Certain Educational, Industrial and Political Issues in the Southern States* (New York: MacMillan, 1904), 16, quoted in Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black-White Relations in the South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 213.

<sup>61</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 208–232, 233.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 117–131.

<sup>63</sup> Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 272–276; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 460–462; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 330–332, 334–335.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

early 1800s.<sup>65</sup> His largest group of supporters was among the working class blacks in the South who dealt with Jim Crowism's harshness, violence, and humiliation on a daily basis; however, they had neither the money nor means of getting to Africa.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Turner did not want the entire black population to emigrate because the move would have overwhelmed the blacks and the African tribes that were falling victim to European imperialism.<sup>67</sup> He wanted two to three million hard working, intelligent, self-reliant, working class southern blacks to emigrate over a set timeframe.<sup>68</sup> Turner strongly believed that blacks did not have any value in the United States and needed to rediscover their heritage in order to dispel white Americans' notions that blacks were lazy, shiftless, and undeserving of civil rights; therefore, emigrating to Liberia gave black Americans the opportunity for a fresh start.

After sponsoring the country as a safe haven for black Americans, Turner seemingly raised most of the funds himself and led two trips from 1895 to 1896. The experience disheartened the large travel groups of middle class blacks, who then blamed him for the waste of money, resources, and time.<sup>69</sup> Because the Liberians and middle class black Americans were from two different cultures, both groups had a hard time being acclimated to each other.

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<sup>65</sup> Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 241–243; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 330–332, 334–335.

<sup>66</sup> "Bishop Turner's Defense: Reply to Recent Charge against the Colonization Society," *Washington Post*, Washington, D.C., March 20, 1892; "Bishop Turner's Scheme: The Negro Problem to be solved by Emigration to Africa," *Washington Post*, Washington, D.C., February 15, 1893; Redkey, "Henry McNeal Turner," 276–280.

<sup>67</sup> Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 242–243; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 279; Turner, "Turner and His Critics," (1895), in *Respect Black*, 161–163; Ehiedu E. G. Iweriebor, "The Colonization of Africa," (accessed May 7, 2016).

<sup>68</sup> Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 330–333; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 279–280; "Bishop Turner's Scheme: The Negro Problem to be solved by Emigration to Africa," *Washington Post*, Washington, D.C., February 15, 1893.

<sup>69</sup> Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 334–335; Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 370–372, 377.

Furthermore, black Americans realized that regardless of wherever they settled in Africa, they would have to uproot their families and start over in a new continent. The travel groups respectfully disagreed with Turner's emigration plans because the move would have placed too much stress on themselves and their families. Black Americans did not want to emigrate because of fear, the anticipated reception of the African tribes, and the stories by white Americans that Africa was plagued with diseases, humidity, and unending jungles. Consequently, when the groups returned to the United States in 1895 and 1896, respectively, their negative reports about Liberia began undermining Turner's credibility and influence within the black community, as well as the AME denomination.<sup>70</sup> After the failed voyages to Africa, Turner's rhetoric became harsher, and he became increasingly bitter over the state of black Americans' affairs.

Turner's bitterness and disappointment with the federal government's lack of protection for civil rights was his motivation for advocating blacks' rights to defend themselves. He allowed his anger to fester and urged the majority of his working class black followers to defend their rights, as well as their families, with violence if necessary.<sup>71</sup> In 1896, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* destroyed Turner's hopes of racial reconciliation and healing.<sup>72</sup> He

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<sup>70</sup> Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 243; Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 405–406; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 459–464; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 330–333; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 280–281; "Bishop Turner's Scheme: The Negro Problem to be solved by Emigration to Africa," *Washington Post*, Washington, D.C., February 15, 1893.

<sup>71</sup> Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 286–287, 289–290; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 239–241; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 333–336; Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–366, 370, 371–373. Booker T. Washington's speech at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895 encouraged blacks to accept the reality of Jim Crowism's permanence, see the value of working in trades and obtaining an industrial education as opposed to the folly of liberal arts education, and forget protesting for civil and political rights. His speech won praise from the moderate white Republicans, southern whites, and middle class black Americans, but the working class blacks despised his advice because they dealt with segregation's abuses on a daily basis. Turner's anger was in response to Washington's speech, the apathy of the black middle class, and Washington's paternalistic tone toward black Americans. The educator did not fully realize the controversy he created by seemingly encouraging black Americans to passively submit to white Americans' stereotypes. Thus, his speech created a rift within the black community.

became increasingly disillusioned with the federal government, apathetic working class blacks, and the growing class of black accommodationists. Although Turner's rhetoric and actions eroded his reputation among his followers, he continued to have an influence among working class blacks who suffered humiliation from Jim Crowism, especially disfranchisement. Turner knew that blacks could not live in peace by accommodating legalized segregation, and advocated that black Americans defend themselves if a racial war erupted.<sup>73</sup> Many working class blacks, especially in the South, agreed with Turner's message, and prepared to defend themselves and their families against segregation's humiliations.<sup>74</sup>

In later years, Bishop Turner made some rash statements on blacks' future in the United States, thereby alienating himself from much of the working class, and the growing black middle class, in the AME denomination. Turner did not know how to express properly his anger and frustration with the federal government's gradualist response to lynchings, lack of protection for civil rights, and idleness over Jim Crowism.<sup>75</sup> He denounced the United States and the national leadership for its apathy toward civil rights in the newspapers he founded, the *Voice of Missions*, and later, the *Voice of the People*.<sup>76</sup> The once loyal support system of working class blacks, in

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<sup>72</sup> Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 242–243; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 328–329, 331–332.

<sup>73</sup> Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 330–334; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 460–464, 466–467; Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–366, 370, 371–373, 377.

<sup>74</sup> Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–366, 370, 371–373, 377; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 460–464, 466–467; Turner, *Respect Black*, 60–69, 165–166, 188–191; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 90–91, 99; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 286–287, 289–290; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 239–241; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 333–336.

<sup>75</sup> Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 461–463; Turner, "The Negro and the Army" (1899), 184–185, and "The Afro-American Future," (1902), in *Respect Black*, 188–191.

<sup>76</sup> Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 463; Turner, "The Negro and the Army" (1899), 184–185, and "The Afro-American Future," (1902), in *Respect Black*, 188–191.



addition to the rising black middle class, deserted Turner for new leaders, such as Washington, Du Bois, and later, Marcus Garvey.<sup>77</sup> For example, Turner met with other noteworthy black civil rights leaders, including Du Bois, at a conference in Macon, Georgia, in 1906, to protest the federal government's denial of civil rights. While there, Turner stated, "to the Negro in this country, the American flag is a dirty and contemptible rag," and "... hell is an improvement upon the United States where the Negro is concerned."<sup>78</sup> His contempt for the federal government angered President Theodore Roosevelt, who criticized Turner's behavior to Booker T. Washington, the president's advisor on racial matters.<sup>79</sup> Washington helped mediate the conflict, but the damage to Turner's reputation among moderate whites, many working class blacks, the intellectual elite, and the growing black middle class was irreparable after the incident.<sup>80</sup>

Even though many blacks and whites viewed Turner as irrelevant, he diligently served the masses of southern, working class blacks by continuously speaking out against injustice, racism, and Jim Crowism until his death in 1915.<sup>81</sup> Turner made some controversial statements and sinned as all people do. Nonetheless, his legacy as a trailblazer, civil rights activist, Christian, pastor, and family man lives on.<sup>82</sup> He not only represented and chastised southern

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<sup>77</sup> Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–364; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 271–272; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 333–335.

<sup>78</sup> Turner, "The American Flag," (1906), in *Respect Black*, 196–197.

<sup>79</sup> Redkey, "Henry McNeal Turner," 290; Turner, "The American Flag," (1906), in *Respect Black*, 196–199.

<sup>80</sup> Turner, "The American Flag," (1906), in *Respect Black*, 196–199; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 333–335; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 286–287, 289–290; Pinn, "'Double Consciousness' in Nineteenth Century Black Nationalism," 21.

<sup>81</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 109; D.A. Dickert, "Bishop Henry McNeal Turner: The Greatest Living African," *Herald and News*, Newberry, SC, November 26, 1909.

<sup>82</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 109.

blacks but also encouraged them to defy whites' expectations as well as Jim Crowism's humiliations with a deep-rooted faith, hope, and mental resolve – the only resources that blacks had to anchor them – aside from obtaining a mixed, Christian-focused education.<sup>83</sup> Although emigration may have been an obsolete topic, Turner's unrestrained desires for justice, equality, and egalitarianism did not diminish; rather, they seemed to increase in his later years.<sup>84</sup> He had a deep-rooted love, appreciation for, and commitment to southern blacks who lived under the bitterness of racial oppression during slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crowism. Turner, as one colleague observed, was, “a mighty leader, a Moses conducting a sometimes reluctant people toward the Promised Land” – Africa.<sup>85</sup>

When the fiftieth anniversary reunion of the Civil War approached in the years leading up to World War I, Americans were eager to celebrate the nation's reconciliation but had mixed feelings about Jim Crowism and racial strife plaguing society. Thus, the Union and Confederate veterans, approximately fifty-three thousand men, as well as spectators and press reporters, relived the days of battlefield glory while fighting at Gettysburg.<sup>86</sup> The heart of the matter was how the nation, and Americans, chose to remember the war. At the outset of the Blue and Gray Reunion at Gettysburg, the veterans' and spectators' actions sent a clear message that mainstream white American society chose to remember the war as a conflict where soldiers from both sides displayed valor, manliness, courage, devotion to their countries (and families) as well

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<sup>83</sup> Mixon, “Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine,” 363–366, 370, 371–373.

<sup>84</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 116.

<sup>85</sup> Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 79.

<sup>86</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 381–397.

as commitment to principles.<sup>87</sup> Ultimately, the nation was reconciled. The American people chose to ignore the signs of increasing racial tensions and blacks' pleas for justice.<sup>88</sup>

In turn, blacks criticized the fiftieth anniversary reunion, as well as the enforced Jim Crow policies, in their newspapers, pulpits, and writings. Although white Americans wanted to suppress slavery as the war's chief cause, blacks did not allow them to forget by constantly bringing slavery and racism to the discussion. Consequently, many whites enjoyed ignoring blacks' pleas for help and finding other ways to humiliate the disenfranchised, socially marginalized group.<sup>89</sup> Thomas Dixon, Jr., a former politician, lawyer, and a Baptist preacher, wrote and published several successful books throughout his lifetime that glorified the South while reviving Lost Cause mythology, but *The Leopard's Spots* (1902) and *The Clansman* (1905) remained his two most sought after works. He used the sensationalized novels to accomplish several purposes – as therapy to bring himself healing for his troubled childhood, vindicate the South for the causes of the Civil War, rewrite its military defeat as a social and political victory with the death of Reconstruction, praise the Ku Klux Klan as defenders of southern heritage, especially women's chastity, dehumanize blacks, and make them the scapegoats for the South's problems, especially racial tensions.<sup>90</sup> Dixon attempted to take *The Clansman* and translate his novel into a movie script, and in 1913, he sold the rights to David W. Griffith's motion picture company. Griffith made Dixon's script into the first, silent, lengthy film (complete with music), *Birth of a Nation* (1915).

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 111–116.

Overall, the film encouraged white American masses to protect their rights, freedoms, and families from the heinous nature of predatory black Americans who had a thirst for blood, insatiable sexual appetites, and inherently bestial, criminal behaviors.<sup>91</sup> In the last months of their lives, Turner and Washington debated the film's meaning while opposing the larger forces of racism and prejudice wreaking havoc in American society.<sup>92</sup> Turner denounced the movie and held whites accountable for their actions, calling for a ban against the film. Washington, on the other hand, supported Griffith's First Amendment right to show the film in theaters.<sup>93</sup> The reaction among northern and southern whites was generally favorable. Southern whites were elated that Griffith's film vindicated the South and brought honor to their Lost Cause mythology. Simultaneously, the drama assuaged both groups', especially northerners', fears as blacks began migrating north and immigrants flooded the urban cities in masses.<sup>94</sup> Griffith's film demonstrated that cinema provided an opportunity to rewrite history to fit one's needs, perpetuate old stereotypes, arouse fears as well as hatred (especially abhorrence at the thought of interracial marriages between blacks and whites, thereby tainting the Anglo-Saxon race), and instill a sense of superiority as well as appreciation for Anglo-Saxon heritage in whites within a dangerous, complex, and constantly changing society.<sup>95</sup>

In response to Jim Crowism's constant reminders of inferiority, Du Bois cofounded the NAACP in 1909 to equip black Americans with the educational, mental, and financial resources

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 381–397; Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 111–116.

<sup>93</sup> Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation*, 215–226; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 381–397.

<sup>94</sup> Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation*, 216–225.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

to persevere in American society. When Turner and Washington died in 1915, black Americans desperately searched for new leaders to take up the mantle during those perilous times. For example, the Ku Klux Klan resurged in Georgia that same year and met on Stone Mountain, reaffirming their commitment to oppress blacks, Jews, Catholics, and immigrants.<sup>96</sup> Like a brightly shining lamp whose radiance repels darkness, Turner's work as a pastor, politician, and prophet for fifty-two years (1863–1915) helped roll back injustices against black Americans. As a lamp's radiance completely fades, denoting the end of its usefulness, Turner's death signified that his work was complete, and rising black leaders, such as Du Bois, had to fill the void.<sup>97</sup> Du Bois boldly represented the black community for approximately four decades (1915–1963) by serving as the editor of *Crisis*, the journal of the NAACP, and defending blacks in his writings until Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> "Bishop Turner Dead," *Kansas City Sun*, Kansas City, MO, May 15, 1915; Roscoe C. Jamison, "Bishop Henry McNeal Turner: Sonnet and Memorial Ode," *Kansas City Sun*, Kansas City, MO, June 12, 1915; Roscoe C. Jamison, "Bishop Henry McNeal Turner: Memorial Ode," *Kansas City Sun*, Kansas City, MO, June 12, 1915; "Boone, Iowa: Bethel A.M.E. Church Resolution for Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," *Iowa State Bystander*, Des Moines, IA, July 23, 1915.

<sup>98</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 61–69, 271–280.

## Conclusion

Henry M. Turner was a man of great strength, bravery, and unwavering principles who dedicated himself to fighting injustice. He died on May 8, 1915, in Windsor, Canada, from a brief illness while attending AME Church business.<sup>1</sup> Bethel AME Church in Detroit, Michigan, held homegoing services for Turner, before transporting his body back to Atlanta. It lay in state for informal for a week.<sup>2</sup> Over twenty-five thousand mourners, both black and white, paid their respects to Turner while his body lay in state.<sup>3</sup> More than fifteen thousand mourners honored his life and legacy during the funeral on May 19, followed by a graveside service. State and national leaders attended the funeral to pay their respects.<sup>4</sup>

Reactions to Turner's death were mixed. Some who eulogized Turner noted his faults while others who developed personal friendships over the years summarized his life with more eloquent tributes.<sup>5</sup> Booker T. Washington's acknowledgement to Turner was fitting, as the two men disagreed over the best plans for educational and economic empowerment in the black community. "By the death of Bishop Henry M. Turner, the Negro has lost one of its ablest citizens, the country one of its most useful citizens. It is in this latter respect that I wish to say some words of appreciation," Washington commented.<sup>6</sup> He continued,

The enfranchised Freedmen were unsettled and inclined, in many instances to wander about. Rallying centers needed to be established for them. The Churches became such centers. It was in the establishing of Churches throughout Georgia

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<sup>1</sup> Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 48, 120.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 152–172.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

which then, as now, had the largest Negro population of any State in the nation, that he rendered the South a signal service.... These Churches were not only places where the people were taught the truth of the Gospel, but they were, most important of all, the Negro's first social centers; their organization for general uplift. Here they were taught what it was necessary for them to do to become useful citizens. The importance of settling down and going to work, of acquiring property and getting an education was impressed upon them.... In 1874, nine years after the close of the war, the Negroes of Georgia had accumulated over six million dollars' worth of property. The very large part which Bishop Turner had in laying these foundations makes him worthy of being classified as a useful citizen in its largest sense.<sup>7</sup>

Washington's tribute was quite touching when viewed in the context of their rivalry. However, he struggled with acknowledging Turner's legacy regarding civil rights.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Du Bois honored Turner in the July 1915 issue of *Crisis*. Du Bois wrote that Turner,

was a man of tremendous force and indomitable courage. As Army chaplain, pastor, and bishop he was always a man of strength. He lacked, however, the stern education and moral balance of Bishop Payne. In a sense Turner was the last of his clan: mighty men, physically and mentally, men who started at the bottom and hammered their way to the top by sheer brute strength; they were the spiritual progeny of ancient African chieftains and they built the African church in America.<sup>9</sup>

Although Du Bois alluded to Turner's sin of adultery with the phrase "lack of moral balance," Du Bois nevertheless conveyed a sincere respect for Turner while not always agreeing with his ideas. Turner earned his place in the assembly of nineteenth and twentieth century civil rights activists, including Frederick Douglass, Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary McLeod Bethune, Fannie Lou Hamer, Thurgood Marshall, A. Phillip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and James Farmer.

<sup>7</sup> Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 153–154.

<sup>8</sup> Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*, 227–228; Smock, introduction to *Booker T. Washington*, 3–15; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 319–337; Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 53–61; Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 153–154.

<sup>9</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Crisis* 10:3 (July 1915): 129, 132, Google books (accessed April 25, 2016).

Indeed, Turner's courageous stand, Christian principles, and unwavering commitment to social justice inspired Du Bois to lead the early civil rights struggle with his writings and speeches.

Turner's legacy as a trailblazer deserves to be revisited because of his work in building up the AME Church and the black community during the Civil War, Reconstruction, and post-Civil War American South. During his years as a pastor and Union Army chaplain, Turner used jeremiad messages, and later, apocalyptic sermons, to inspire his congregations, and the First USCT Infantry Regiment, to persevere in the midst of seemingly bleak situations. Turner's pastoral career coincided with the rise of his prophetic role for the black community in the early years of Reconstruction, where he advocated that black freedmen learn to "love the whites, and let by-gones be by-gones, neither taunt nor insult them for past grievances; respect them; honor them; work for them; but still let us be men. Let us show them we can be a people, respectable, virtuous, honest and industrious, and soon their prejudice will melt away, and with God for our father, we will all be brothers."<sup>10</sup> Over the years, as Turner became dissatisfied with Republicans' abandonment of blacks in the South, he encouraged his members to develop an authentic Christian faith in order to resist Jim Crowism's humiliations.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, he advocated that blacks obtain a mixed, Christian-based education to combat segregation's abuses, white Americans' stereotypes, and low expectations.<sup>12</sup>

As a politician, Turner was dedicated to helping black and white citizens of Georgia live together peacefully. While the transition from slavery to freedom was tenuous, Turner remained

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<sup>10</sup> Turner, "On the Anniversary of Emancipation," (1866), in *Respect Black*, 10–11.

<sup>11</sup> Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 458–461; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 329–332; Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 238–241; Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–366, 370, 371–373; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 160–163, 239–241.

<sup>12</sup> Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–366, 370, 371–373.



determined to help his people adjust to their new circumstances and exercise their rights, especially the right to vote. He briefly worked for the Freedmen's Bureau, then became involved in Reconstruction politics, which culminated with his successful campaign and election to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1868.<sup>13</sup> Turner sponsored various bills, but his proposals were defeated.<sup>14</sup> Republican and Democratic state leaders, who resented sharing political power with twenty-nine black representatives, expelled them from the legislature. Turner's eloquent speech denounced the state legislators' actions and foreshadowed dark times ahead for both blacks and whites. After being expelled from the state legislature, Turner retained strong political aspirations in the face of strong resentment from white Georgians. Unfortunately, his dreams ended in 1869 after a debacle regarding the postmaster generalship position of Macon, Georgia, and led to his abandonment of the Republican Party.<sup>15</sup>

As a prophet, Turner encouraged his black congregations to persevere with his soul-stirring preaching and speeches. He supported hard work, protests, and demonstrations as exemplary means to resist Jim Crowism.<sup>16</sup> In 1883, the Supreme Court overruled the Civil Rights Act of 1875 as unconstitutional in *U.S. v. Stanley*. Furious with the verdict, Turner began advocating that blacks emigrate to Africa, specifically Liberia, where they could start fresh and build their own nation.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, he prophesied that the Republican Party would face

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<sup>13</sup> Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," 236–237; Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 381–382; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 329.

<sup>14</sup> Leeman, "Speaking as Jeremiah," 229; Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, 161–163.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander, *African-American Chaplains Who Served in the Civil War*, 19; Coulter, "Henry M. Turner," 383–384; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 237; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 329–330; Turner, *Respect Black*, 31.

<sup>16</sup> Ponton, *Life and Times of Henry M. Turner*, 30–31, 86–87, 126–127, 128–131.

political defeats on the national, state, and local levels for its abandonment of southern, working class blacks Americans.<sup>18</sup> Poor, working class, southern blacks admired Turner's bold stance and desired to emigrate; however, they had neither the means nor money to do so. On the other hand, successful, northern blacks, who sided with northern Republicans, ridiculed the idea of emigration and Turner, while distancing themselves from the struggles of their southern brethren.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, he relied on mission-oriented prophecy to encourage blacks in their struggles to regain control of their lives and give them hope in the midst of oppression as segregation became the de facto law in the nation, most notably the South, before *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) legitimized the system. "We are degraded by the public press, degraded by class legislation, degraded on the railroads after purchasing first class tickets ... degraded in many states at the ballot box," Turner noted in an 1893 speech. He continued, "Thus we are degraded in so many respects that all the starch of respectability is taken out of the manhood of millions of our people...."<sup>20</sup>

The black community's respect, dignity, and self-preservation depended on emigration to Liberia because white Americans ignored blacks' civil rights. Similarly, the federal government ignored the heightened racial tensions as lynch mobs and race riots constantly targeted poor, working class blacks throughout the South.<sup>21</sup> After sponsoring, fundraising, and leading two failed voyages to Liberia in the mid-1890s with middle class blacks, Turner became more

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<sup>17</sup> Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 272–276; Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," 460–462; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 330–332, 334–335.

<sup>18</sup> Turner, "The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court," (1883), 60–69; "The Democratic Victory," (1884), 70–72; "The 'Force Bill,'" in *Respect Black*, 81–82.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., "The Barbarous Decision of the Supreme Court," (1883), in *Respect Black*, 63.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., "An Emigration Convention," (1893), in *Respect Black*, 151.

<sup>21</sup> Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 120–126, 131–148, 233–270.

critical in his views of race relations, and black Americans who did not share his passion for emigration.<sup>22</sup> His harsh language led his mainly working class black supporters to follow newer leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, and later, Marcus Garvey.<sup>23</sup> Turner's trailblazing work as a pastor, politician, and prophet empowered civil rights activists to carry the mantle of leadership into the twentieth century, culminating in the modern day Civil Rights Movement. In spite of his flaws, temper, and unbridled passions, Bishop Henry M. Turner's courageous political leadership and preaching served as a beacon of hope for many African-Americans who experienced injustices during the Civil War, Reconstruction, and beyond.

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<sup>22</sup> Johnson, *The Forgotten Prophet*, 91–92; Cole, introduction to *Freedom's Witness*, 24; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 334–335; Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–364, 370–372, 377; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 271–272; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 333–335.

<sup>23</sup> Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine," 363–364; Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," 271–272; Herndon, "Henry McNeal Turner's African Dream," 333–335.

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