

The Independent African-American Church
1865 – 1900

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O water, voice of my heart, crying in the sand,
All night long crying with a mournful cry,
As I lie and listen, and cannot understand
The voice of my heart in my side or the voice of the sea,
O water, crying for rest, is it I, is it I?
All night long the water is crying to me.

Unresting water, there shall never be rest
Till the last moon droop and the last tide fail,
And the fire of the end begin to burn in the west;
And the heart shall be weary and wonder and cry like the sea,
All life long crying without avail,
As the water all night long is crying to me.

ARTHUR SYMONS

28 February 1865 – 22 January 1945

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1. Introduction

In the early days, the African-American church played an important role in the African-American society; to date this role has not changed much. The African-American church still plays an important role in the African-American community. On March 18, 2008; Senator Barack Obama delivered a speech, 'A more perfect Union', in Philadelphia. In his speech, he tried to convey a profound meditation on race in America. It traced the deep historical roots of racial inequality and injustice. In 'A more perfect Union', Obama tried to explain his experiences and the experiences of African Americans in their churches. He said: 'like other black churches, Trinity's services are full of raucous laughter and sometimes-bawdy humor. They are full of dancing, clapping, screaming and shouting that may seem jarring to the untrained ear. The church contains in full the kindness and cruelty, the fierce intelligence and the shocking ignorance, the struggles and successes, the love and yes, the bitterness and bias that make up the black experience in America.'¹ It seems to me that Obama presented the same image of the role of the independent African-American church in the community, as the independent African-American church did around 1865. On the first of January 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. The majority of the African-Americans saw the Emancipation Proclamation as a re-enactment of the Exodus story of the ancient Israelites: God had intervened in human history to liberate his chosen people. But the Emancipation Proclamation did not solve poverty, dislocation, chaos and uncertainty.

Thousands of African-Americans were converted, baptized and instructed in the Gospel of Christ by white men after their journey to the 'New World'. During their captivity in slavery, most African-Americans had worshipped together with the white Americans. Most African-Americans had been limited in their religious practices by their white masters. The gap between the African-Americans and the whites within the church tended to widen as time went by.² African-Americans never felt completely at home in the white man's church with its separate place for them to worship; they were not allowed to sit mixed with the white Americans, while they were attending the religious meetings in the white church.³

¹ Barack Obama, 'A more perfect Union', 2008, <https://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hisownwords> (June 21, 2013)

² Walter H. Brooks, *The evolution of the Negro church* (Washington 1922) 13.

³ *Ibidem*, 15.

In the turbulent Civil War period between 1860 and 1865, the African-Americans in the South obtained their freedom, which meant that they could leave the church of their white brethren. Despite the fact that the African-Americans worshipped together with their white brethren for over fifty years, the majority of the African-Americans decided to create their own independent African-American or black churches. The churches were built up to help the freedmen to develop their talent to lead an independent life.

Much research has already been done into the role of the independent African-American church in the American society; I will reflect on this in the theoretical framework/historiography. However, few researchers looked into the question why the African-American decided to leave the white churches after the abolition of slavery. Therefore, my focus will be:

Why did the African-Americans decide to establish their own independent African-American churches?

In order to answer this research question, I will look into the general history of the independent African-American church, after which I will consider this question on the basis of autobiographies and work of the most influential, leading religious figures after the abolition of slavery in 1865.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

First of all the terms black church and independent African-American church are both used in this thesis. The terms, used both in a sociological and a theological way, refer to the pluralism of the African-American Christian churches in the United States. As most other scholars, as a form of sociological and theological use this term in shorthand, as it refers to the pluralism of the African-American Christian churches in the United States. The independent African-American church consists of eight different divisions, the most significant of which will be highlighted in Chapter 3.

In order to understand cultural transformations, I shall firstly present some theories on the value and explanation of cultural concepts. The importance of the explanation of cultural concepts arises from the fact that the culture of a community significantly shapes its debate and actions. By understanding and interpreting certain cultures, historians can trace the

development of complete communities.⁴ These theories on religion and culture effectively complement my thesis, as it is my opinion that religion and culture are inherently integrated, and should not be seen as separate entities.

According to Paul Tillich, culture is a form of religion and religion is the heart of culture. He argues that religion is demonstrated in cultural forms like music, songs, styles and content of preaching, and modes of worship. At the same time, religion is also the heart of culture because it raises the core of values from diverse communities. These core values will survive forcefully with the free transmission to other destinations, which ultimately form the base of cultural extension and expression.⁵ As Emile Durkheim adds to Tillich in his work *The Elementary Form of the religious Life*, religion is above all a social phenomenon, an experience, shared by a group of people that has shaped and influenced the cultural sense of human communication and interpretation⁶.

To conclude, Tillich sees religion as a system of ideas, which individuals apply to themselves and to their society with its relations in which they participate. Durkheim firmly agrees on the direct relation between religion and society.

W.E.B. Du Bois argued in 1898 that the past had caused an impermeable barrier between the white Americans and African-Americans. In order to understand these racial barriers in the American society, Du Bois found the theory of ‘double consciousness.’⁷ He argued that racism was caused by the fact that people internalized their oppressors. Internalization involves the integration of attitudes, values, standards and opinions of others, in this case the white oppressors, into the African-American identity and the way the African-Americans behave in the American society.

The majority of historians have viewed the African-American church as an institution in the African-American community, which performed a variety of valuable and salient functions, such as the administration of the communal spiritual needs, access to social services, the base for political activism, an agent of social control. It also became a mother figure in terms of family relations.⁸ The independent church created a nation within a nation.⁹

In the tradition of Karl Marx, a number of other scholars argued that religion and

⁴ M.A. Brennan, ‘The importance of local culture in community development’, 2009, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> (March 26, 2013)

⁵ Eric E. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The black church in the African American experience* (Durham 1990) 7.

⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* (New York 1995) 44.

⁷ W.E.B Du Bois, *Some efforts of the American Negroes for their own betterment* (Atlanta 1898) 11.

⁸ Little Boy Blue, *The African-American church, a sociological history* (Indiana 2009) 18.

⁹ Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro church in America* (New York 1963) 21.

religious institutions generally provide individuals with emotional reprieve from pain and injustice, while at the same time these institutions support to maintain the status quo and suppress the efforts to subvert unjust social arrangements.¹⁰ Marx argued differently, religion and religious practice should be replaced by critical reflection on the true causes of despair. He believed that this critical reflection could serve as a first step towards revolutionary action.

The history of the African-American genesis also comments on how deeply the intertwined race dynamics were with class dynamics. Race and class have always been interconnected. Historians disagree as to when racial segregation appeared in the post-war South, whether it was before, during or after reconstruction.¹¹ But according to Anthony Orum and Charles Sibleman, the isolation from civic affairs and the mass apathy towards the African-Americans resulted in the creation of the independent church. According to Orum and Sibleman, the African-Americans were involuntarily isolated from the American society, due to the predominantly lower-class status of the African-Americans.¹² In other words, because of their race, African-Americans did not have the choice to participate in the American Society.

Nelsen and Nelsen argue that the ethnic community-prophetic model contributed to the establishment of the independent African-American church. This model emphasizes the significance of the independent black church 'as a base for building a sense of ethnic identity and a community of interest among its members.'¹³

According to the compensatory model of St. Claire Drake and Clinton, some progressive African-Americans saw a chance to obtain power, control and respect within the African-American society, by becoming preachers and establish their own independent churches in their societies.¹⁴

Mamiya and Lincoln discuss the dialect between concepts of 'other worldly' versus 'this worldly'. The concept of 'this worldly' projects the orientation that believers have toward the world. 'Other worldly' means being concerned only with heaven and the eternal life in the world beyond; it neglects political and social concerns.

I also propose the hypothesis that the independent African-American church was formed by the aim to educate the just liberated African-American in both a spiritual and an educational way.

¹⁰ Jacqueline S. Mattis, 'Religion and African American political life' *Political Psychology* 2 (2001) 267.

¹¹ Bruce J. Dierenfield and John White, *A History of African-American Leadership* (Harlow 2012) 25.

¹² Anthony M. Orum, 'A reappraisal of the social and political participation of Negroes', *American Journal of Sociology* 72(1966) 33.

¹³ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The black church*, 12.

¹⁴ St. Clair Drake and Horrace Cayton, *Black metropolis: a study of Negro life in the North* (Chicago 1993) 43.

In order to research my main question I also used the concept of Manning Marable. According to Marable, the history of the African-Americans consists of two decisive politics, the crucial axis of resistance versus accommodation.¹⁵ Every African-American and every African-American institution participated in making compromises between these poles. The pole of accommodation meant that the majority of African-Americans and African-American institutions were influenced to take part in the American culture and society, sometimes intentionally sometimes unintentionally.

Historians have described the independent African-Americans churches as being mediating institutions. With the term mediating institutions is meant that the independent African-American churches were the main mediating and socializing motor for millions of former slaves, teaching them economic rationally, urging them to get an education, helping them to keep their families together, and providing leadership for the early African-American communities. As one of the totally African-American controlled and independent institutions, the independent African-American churches accommodated a major role in resistance. Politically, this resistance meant self-determination and self-affirmation, which could be created by the independent African-American churches.

1.1.1 Historiography

Several historians have argued that the notion of religious faith and freedom has shaped much of the American political and social philosophy. For many Americans religion is not just a way of thinking, but it has become a way of life. The independent African-American church has long stood at the center of the African-American community.¹⁶

In *Under Their own Vine and Fig Tree, the African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900* (1994), William E. Montgomery presents the reader with a comprehensive essay of the black church and the Southern environment in which it functioned between 1865 and 1900. It presents a portrait of the independent African-American church as a vibrant and powerful institution, which is often seen as the purveyor of opium to the oppressed people. However, Montgomery argues that in reality the independent church was an instrument for African-Americans to uplift their race.

The Black Church in the African American Experience (1990) by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya presents an analysis of the black church as it relates to the history of

¹⁵ Manning Marable, *How capitalism underdeveloped black America* (Boston 1983) 26.

¹⁶ Michelle M. Simmspar, 'Significance of black church burnings', *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law* 3 (1998) 127-151.

African-Americans and to contemporary black culture, based on a study of ten years. The book examines both the internal structure of the independent African-American churches and the reaction of the church to external, social challenges. Lincoln and Mamiya succeed to give the reader an insight in the church's relationship to politics, economics, women, youth, music, organization, and trends within the religious thoughts.

In *Slave Religion: the Invisible Institution in the South*, the writer Raboteau is able to analyze the transformation of the African religious tradition into evangelical Christianity. He analyzed this on the basis of slave narratives, missionary reports, travel accounts, African-American autobiographies and the journals of white observers.¹⁷

Unlike those researches, my research will look into the question why the independent African-American church was shaped, and how one can relate its establishment to the autobiographies and works of some of the most influential preachers and ministers at the time of the reformation towards the independently established African-American churches. My research will look into the lives of those preachers and ministers on the basis of their works and autobiographies. I will subsequently connect those works to the genesis of the independent African-American church. Where the previous researches presented the portraits, structures, and reactions to the challenges of the independent church or looked into the transformation of the African religious tradition, my research will look into the reason why the independent African-American church was shaped and how the African-American preacher and ministers became the leading figures in the establishment of this independent Church.

1.1.2 Material and Method

For this thesis I used the works and autobiographies of five specific preachers and ministers: William Heard, Elijah Marrs, William Turner, E.K. Love, J.W. Hood.¹⁸ These ministers and preachers are seen as the most influential leading figures within the establishment of the independent churches. They all challenged the transformation towards an independent

¹⁷ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American dilemma* (New York and London 1996); Timothy Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, *African-American religion, interpretive essays in history and culture* (New York 1997); Little Boy Blue, *The African-American Church, a sociological history* (Indiana 2009); Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the storm for so long: the aftermath of slavery* (New York 1979); Franklin E. Frazier, *The Negro church in America* (New York 1963).

¹⁸ M.M Ponton, *Life and times of William M. Turner* (Atlanta 1917); Henry Turner, *The barbarous decision of the United States Supreme Court declaring the Civil Right Act unconstitutional and disrobing the Colored race of Civil protection* (Atlanta 1893); H. Turner, *African letters* (Nashville 1893); E.P Marrs, *Life and history of the Rev. Elijah Marrs* (Louisville 1885); William Heard, *From slavery to the Bishop in the A.M.E Church, an autobiography William Heard* (Philadelphia 1924); E.K Love, *History of the first African Baptist Church, from its organization* (Savannah 1888) J.W. Hood, *Sketch of the early history of the African Episcopal Zion Church* (New York 1914); J.W Hood *One Hundred of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (New York 1895)

African-American institution during and after the abolition of slavery. These charismatic individuals lead the African-Americans into the independent black churches.

First of all I will give some general information on the autobiographies and works of the preachers and ministers I will discuss in this thesis.

William Heard wrote his autobiography in 1924 in Philadelphia. He wanted to give his race hope and show his people the opportunities of life, given to them by the independent church. As he wrote: ‘The A. M. E. church (African Methodist Episcopal Church) is an instrument in this country that has done, and is doing more for the uplift of the race than any instrument conditioned as it is; I, therefore write this booklet as an A. M. E. Bishop, using the A. M. E. church as a vehicle to carry it to the ends of the earth.’¹⁹ This source provides evidence of the cultural traditions of the African-Americans and is used in relation to the secondary sources in this thesis.

E. Marris’ autobiography counts 147 pages and was written in 1885, in Louisville.²⁰ Marris’ wrote his autobiography with the intent to give his readers an insight into his life and into the important and dark events of the past. As he puts it in his book: ‘I do not put forth this work as one of merit, but a book somewhat of value in a historical point of view, and one that will be entertaining to those, at least, who are old enough to remember the occurrences and events of the dark days of the past.’²¹

M.M Ponton wrote the biography of William Turner. The biography of Turner is also known as a hagiography, which means that I, as a history researcher have to be careful with interpreting the information in this work. The references are often perceived to be uncritical of reverential to their context; however in my research (auto) biographies incorporate a valuable record of the institutional history. These sources also provide evidence of the cultural traditions of the African-Americans church and are used in relation to other primary and the secondary sources in this thesis.²²

Two other works of William Turner were used, written by himself, *Barbaric* and *African Letter*, both published in 1893.²³ *Barbaric* counts 53 pages and *African letter* counts 78 pages. Both The two works are included in this thesis in order to be more concrete about the events and experiences in Turners life.

¹⁹ Heard, *From slavery*, 18.

²⁰ Marris, *Life and history*, 1-147.

²¹ *Ibidem*, preface

²² Charles G. Hebermann, ‘Hagiography is the branch of learning that has for its object the history of the saints and their veneration’, *The Original Catholic Encyclopedia*. 21 July 2010,

http://oce.catholic.com/index.php?title=Curricula:_Hagiography (9 February 2013)

²³ Turner, *African Letters*, 40.

As E.K Love and J.W Hood did not write autobiographies, therefore I looked into other works published by these preachers. Three of their works are included in this thesis, two by J.W Hood and one by E.K Love:²⁴ *One Hundred Years of the Episcopal Methodist Zion Church* and *Sketch of the Early History African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Both preachers wrote their works with the intention of giving their readers a full genesis of the establishment of their churches. Both works can be defined as primary sources, because the works give a reflection of the establishment of the independent African-American churches. They include valuable information, as Hood writes in his introduction: ‘The facts here presented have been gathered from three sources; namely, first: Lost chapters of early Methodism, which gives an account of the colored membership in John Street M. E. church from its beginning. Second: A compilation of the minutes of the Methodist conferences from 1778-1799. Third: From Christopher Rush's History of the Rise and Progress of the A. M. E. Zion church. We have copied largely from this which is the best source of information on this subject.’²⁵ This quote confirms that Hood researched his topic using the primary sources available around his time period.

In addition I used the works of O.P Fitzgerald, W.E.B du Bois and Booker T. Washington²⁶, *John B Mc Ferrin, a Biography* (1888) and *The Defect of the Negro Church* (1891) by Orishatukeh Faduma, which all show a critical objectivity to the role of the African-American Preachers and Minister in the independent churches.

To conclude, all above books are written between 1888 and 1924. All authors had survived slavery and lived in the period of the Civil War. Therefore I can state that these works reveal valuable information on the causes and events that lead to the creation of the independent African-American churches.

²⁴ Love, *History of* (1888); Hood, *Sketch of* (1914); Hood *One Hundred of* (1895).

²⁵ Hood, *The early history*, 15.

²⁶ O.P Fitzgerald, *John B Mc Ferrin, a biography* (Nashville 1888); Orishatukeh Faduma, *The defect of the Negro church* (Lanham and London 1891); Booker T. Washington, *The story of the Negro, the rise of the Negro race from slavery* (London 1909); W.E.B Du Bois, *Some efforts of the American Negroes for their own betterment* (Atlanta 1898).

2. The Beginnings of the Independent African-American Church

In the years from 1865 till 1900, the church emerged as a vibrant and powerful institution, one that is often seen as the purveyor of an ‘other worldly’ opiate for oppressed people, as is argued in the theoretical framework by Marx²⁷. However, other scholars have argued that the independent African-American church was an important instrument for a steady progress of African-Americans in the American society. The independent black church not only provided a domain for religious expression but also created a collective African-American will and identity.²⁸ The independent church has a complex history of rivalry and competition. The post-Civil War era was a time of tremendous strain and a time of transformation within the African-American culture. The post-Civil War era affected the African-American community, as well as the white American Society.

In this chapter, I shall trace the history of the African-American independent church before and just after the Civil War in the United States. The history of the independent church helps us to appreciate and understand the value of institutions, like the church in communities. The independent church helped to shape and defines the African-American community. In this chapter I will discuss the historical background of the religious tradition of the African-Americans and the most important thoughts during this transformation of the African-American culture.

The end of slavery had created a desire for an independent African-American church without any interference of the white Americans. The majority of African-Americans shared the opinion that they could not trust white Americans.²⁹

It is argued that the importance of the independent church rose from the fact that the church brought the African-Americans together for a common cause.³⁰ The church trained them for concerted action; it provided an organized fellowship for leadership. This institution attempted to improve the African-Americans and wanted to give them a voice in the protest against inequality.³¹ These institutions became institutions on their own, away from the presence of the whites, which created a feeling of freedom amongst the African-Americans.

²⁷ Himel Shagor, *Marx and Religion: a brief study*.

²⁸ W. Montgomery, *Under their own vine & fig tree* (Louisiana 1994) 24 -37.

²⁹ *Ibidem*

³⁰ Mydral, *An American dilemma*, 1007.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

The book *An American Dilemma* argues that the creation of the independent church rose out of the caste system, whereby African-American men were graded to the lowest caste.³²

The genesis of the independent churches in the North and the South differed a lot from one another. In the next section, I will provide an insight into these differences.

Historically, before the start of the Civil War, the churches in the North had remained more independent than in the South. The black church in the North was more than a place of worship; it was a social center in the African-American community, where the African-Americans could exercise their powers. The independent black churches tended to create a place where the African-Americans could achieve self-realization and ambition. Woodson added to that: ‘The African-American church gave the African-American the opportunity for self-expression and status. Religion, and therefore indirect the church, became a place where the African-Americans could develop themselves, and prayed for better lives.’³³

After emancipation, it appeared that in the South, African-Americans stood alone in the establishment of their independent churches. But that was not entirely true. Initially white church dominations, such as the Presbyterians, Congregational churches, and Episcopal churches started to sponsor missions to the South, opened schools for the freed African-Americans, and aided welfare of Southern African-Americans.³⁴ However, the majority of the African-Americans in the South rejected the aid of the white Christians and joined the African-American controlled churches.³⁵ Education played a major role in the rejection of the Northern missionaries by the Southern African-Americans. Most African-Americans had been forbidden to read or write and saw religion as an oral tradition and immediate experience and emotion. This was in contrast with the Northern African-Americans, who stressed that one could not truly be a Christian unless one was able to read and understand the bible. The spiritual meetings in the post-bellum period therefore evolved from two very different understandings of what constituted religious worship, each understanding guided by its own distinctive logic.³⁶

African-Americans from the North also entered the South, but the freedmen did not welcome these Northern African-American missionaries. The assistance of the Northerners,

³² Myrdal, *An American dilemma*, 1014.

³³ Woodson, *The history*, 97.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 29-46.

³⁵ Blue, *The African-American church*, 35.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

white or African-American, was not welcomed by the Southern African-American, as most Northern African-Americans, like white Americans, saw the Southern African-Americans' worship as hopelessly outdated, uneducated and uncivilized. The Northern African-American, like the white Americans, wanted to convince the Southern freedmen to give up their remnants of African practices and embrace a more sedate, intellectual style of religion.³⁷

Simultaneously, the Southern African-Americans started to create their own churches. They wanted to create a place with its own form of religious worship in which the white man could not invade. What mattered was the way the freedmen were treated in the church; the church gave him an opportunity for self-expression and status.³⁸ The church became a shelter wherein the African-American could escape from the painful and fearful experiences of slavery, racism and discrimination. The independent African-American church became far more than a place to worship; it became a place of self-realization, ambition, communal life, and a social place where the freedmen could enjoy freedom without any interference from the whites.³⁹ A book called *The Negro Church in America* argues that the Christian religion provided a new basis for social cohesion and a common base to structure the social life of the African-American race. Religion drew the African-Americans into a union with each other.⁴⁰ W.E.B du Bois added that the church became the only social institution where the African-Americans could share their traditions and share common interests.⁴¹ The African-Americans in the North had been able to make this progress before the start of the Civil War, but now it was the turn of the African-Americans in the South to establish their independent African-American church.

The black independent church became a nation within a nation. The church was a religious place where the African-American could worship God, as well as an area of political life, education, economic co-operation, and social involvement within the African-American community. As is stated in *The Negro Church*: 'the role of the church was more than a place for religious worshipping. It became also a place for social economic co-operation.'⁴²

But within the African-American community rivalry and competition occurred among the independent churches. The Christian African-American tradition was related to the African

³⁷ Carter Goodwin Woodson, *The history of the Negro church* (Washington D.C. 1945) 47-56.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, 29-46.

³⁹ Myrdal, *An American dilemma*, 1017.

⁴⁰ Frazier, *The Negro church*, 54.

⁴¹ Du Bois, *Some efforts* 88.

⁴² Frazier, *The Negro church*, 29.

heritage, when the African-Americans were first transferred to the New World as slaves. The conversation with Christianity, during slavery and its aftermath, created its own unique and distinctive forms of culture and worldviews as parallels rather than replications of the culture in which they were involuntary guests.⁴³ These different experiences created the differences in opinions, which would later lead to rivalries between the diverse denominations of the African-American churches. Each church became a primary political and cultural meeting point for many types of people.⁴⁴ The independent African-American church emerged as a powerful institution for social and political change in the African-American community, whereby the African-American preachers and ministers took the initiative and played an influential role. Events, like the National Baptist Convention, one of the largest religious movements among the African-Americans, organized by the African-American church leaders, were instrumental in transforming the independent African-American church into an influential force for self-help.

The independent church started to serve the poor by building schools, which eventually would shape the forces of the ultimate challenge of the racial and gender subordination.

To conclude, contrary to what the abolition of slavery had promised, the African-American freedman was not treated equally as compared to the white American. Some scholars argue that the mistreating of African-Americans was one of the reasons why African-Americans wanted to create their own independent African-American churches. Because of their unequal position in the American society, most African-American freedman had a great desire to shape their own African-American institution, which they could control without any instruction or restriction the white American man. The African-American freedman fought for an independent, autonomous, and self-controlled African-American institution within the American society.

Some scholars view aspects of cultural creation as attempt to mimic the mainstream white American cultures, while others suggest that the African-American slaves were nothing else than American. The African-American slave had no values or culture to guard or protect.⁴⁵ Various scholars have suggested many aspects of the establishment of the

⁴³ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The black church*, 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ Mamiya and Lincoln, *The African-American experience*, preface.

independent African-American church, but my hypothesis is that the freed African-Americans fought simultaneously for an independent African-American church.

In this chapter I suggested that the oppression of slavery caused a desire to create an independent African-American church. In the next chapter I will discuss the feelings of freedom in the years before and after the Civil War, and how these feelings could cause the establishment of an independent African-American church.

3. Emancipation

Slavery chain done broke at last!
Broke at last! Broke at last!
Slavery chain done broke at last!
Gonna praise God till I die!

Wake up in that valley,
Pray-in' on my knees,
Tell-in' God a-bout my troubles,
And to help me if He please.

I did tell him how I suffer,
In the dungeon and the chain;
And the days that I went with head bowed down,
An' my broken flesh and pain.

I did know my Jesus heard me,
'cause the spirit spoke to me,
an' said, " Rise my chile, your childeren"
An' you will be free.

I done 'p'int one mighty captain
For to marshall all my hosts;
An' to bring my bleeding ones to me,
An' not one shall be lost.

Now no more weary trav'lin',
' Cause my Jesus set me free,
An' there's no more auction block for me
Since He give me liberty.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Irvin Silber, *Soldier songs and home-front ballads of the Civil War* (New York 1964) 41.

This slave song shows the feelings of liberation among the slaves and how they relate their freedom to the word of God. This adds to my explanation why the independent churches were established. As stated previously, a lot of Southern African-Americans left the white controlled churches at the end of the Civil War. A whole race decided to establish its separate and independent churches.

What could have provoked, caused or given rise to the movement of the African-American freedmen to absent themselves from the white controlled churches? In this chapter I will try to answer this question.

3.1 The first feelings of freedom

First, I will describe the years just before the end of slavery, in order to give an indication of the thoughts and feelings of freedom that were present in religion and livelihood of the African-American race.

In the night of April 2, 1865, Robert Lumpkin, a well-known dealer in slaves, tried to remove his slaves by the same train that later would carry Jefferson Davis out of the Confederate capital. By the time Lumpkin reached the railroad station, he was held back by a panic-stricken crowd. Lumpkin soon noticed that he could not remove his African-American slaves out of the city, and sent them back to jail. The African-Americans settled down in their cells for another night, unaware of the fact that this would be their last night of bondage.⁴⁷ The next morning, freedmen and ex-African-American slaves, thronged into the streets of Richmond to greet the Federal troops: God's messenger was bringing redemption from slavery.⁴⁸ The black soldiers outside Lumpkin's jail unlocked the slave cells and the African-American prisoners came pouring out, shouting and praising God and 'master Abe' for setting them free.⁴⁹ They truly believed it was God who has set them free, not the end of the war. Most African-American slaves had never doubted to the purpose of God for their race and were convinced that God had set them free.

The news of the redemption of slavery also reached a plantation in Yorktown. The white family broke into tears, not only over the fall of Richmond, but also over the rumor that the Yankees had captured Jefferson Davis. Davis advocated the freedom for every state to make its own decisions, including the decision to abolish slavery or not. In contrast to the white family, their African-American slave ran to a well, where she was sure to be alone, and

⁴⁷ Leon F. Litwick, *Been in the storm so long, the aftermath of slavery* (New York, 1979) 167-168.

⁴⁸ Montgomery, *Under their own fig*, 40.

⁴⁹ Litwick, *Been in the storm*, 169.

gave full vent to her feelings: 'I jump up an' scream, "Glory, glory, hallelujah to Jesus! I's free! I's free! Glory to God, you come down an' free us: no big man could do it. He do all dis great work. De soul buyers can neber take my two chillen lef me: no neber can take 'em away from me no mo.'"⁵⁰ This African-American lady also praised the Lord for her freedom, not the Union Army, not the Yankees, but the Lord had set the African-Americans free.

The war was not a bloody signal for the uprising of African-American slaves in the South against their masters. Southern African-American participated late in their fight against the slaveholding regime in the Southern States. Even if they became armed, most of the African-American slaves were scared to turn their weapons against their white masters.

3.2 The union and the obstacles

Freedom and independency had replaced slavery. A few months after the Union Occupation, one of the most spectacular and largest demonstrations of African-American freedmen took place in Charleston. More than 4,000 black men and women marched through the streets of Charleston. They emotionally responded to a mule-drawn car, in which two black women sat, while next to them an ex-slave stood mocking and shouting; 'How much am I offered?' Behind this car sixty men marched tied together like slaves, followed by a coffin inscribed with the words 'slavery is dead'. Union soldiers, schoolchildren, firemen, and members of various religious congregations, such as the Baptist and Methodist congregations, participated in the march along the black laborers. The march showed the important role the African-Americans played in the local economy. This parade became a symbol for the African-American community as an impressive organization where the African-Americans obtained self-pride.⁵¹ This statement is worth mentioning as this parade showed a preview of how the African-Americans would unite themselves and would control their communities and institution without the interference of the white Americans.

In the first years after the Civil War, state legislatures and elected federal officials were replaced in the South by the military. National attempts were made to integrate the African-American freedmen into the American civil society by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment of the constitution. The Thirteenth Amendment of the United States constitution outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. The Thirteenth Amendment was passed by the Senate on April 8, 1864, by the house on

⁵⁰ Antonio F. Holland and Gary R. Kremer, *Missouri's black heritage, revised edition* (Missouri 1993) 88.

⁵¹ Litwack, *Been in the storm*, 178.

January 31, 1865, and adopted on December 6, 1865. On December 18, 1865, the Secretary of State, William H. Seward, proclaimed that the Thirteenth Amendment had been ratified. The Thirteenth Amendment was the first of the three reconstruction Amendments that were adopted after the American civil war: the beginning of a turbulent period for the African-Americans.

A freedman from Virginia explained: ‘They were like a bird let out of a cage. You know how a bird that had been long in a cage will act when the door is opened; he makes a curious fluttering for a little while. It was just so with the colored people. They did not know at first what to do with their selves. But they got sobered pretty soon.’⁵² That same imagery of bird occurred to a white woman in Georgia, but she could only think of birds who were helpless and others, like the hawk, whose release would more likely inflict “mischief” on everyone.⁵³ The Negro was in the wilderness: but at the same time he was a free man, and untrammelled, with an open field for development before him,⁵⁴ which meant that he had to fight against the obstacles of discrimination and racism. The African-American ministers in the various churches with their religious meetings became their only handhold in their struggle for equality and the uplift of their own race.

3.3 Rejecting the white churches

The antebellum period was considered a period of transition and coincided with an intense religious revivalism. Scholars also call this period the ‘Awakenings’. In the Southern States of America, where the institution of slavery still prevailed before the Civil War, the number of slaves that converted to the evangelical religions such as Methodist and Baptists still increased. Some white clergymen encouraged worships in ways that many African-Americans found to be similar, or at least adaptable, to the African worship patterns, with enthusiastic singing, clapping, dancing and even possession of spirit.⁵⁵ However, the most white owners insisted on slave attendance at the white controlled churches, since they were fearful that if they allowed the slaves to worship independently they would ultimately plot rebellion against their owners.⁵⁶

⁵² Litwack, *Been in the storm*, 178.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ J.W. Hood, *Sketch of the early history of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church with Jubilee Souvenir and an Appendix* (Charlotte 1914) 45.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ Lincoln and Mamiya, *Under their own vine*, 87.

The Civil War brought the African-Americans the status of freedmen. This status affected the church in several ways. Not only were the freed African-Americans now allowed to set up their own churches, the ex-masters and ex-slaves did not fit along each other in the old 'meeting houses' as they had done in the days before the emancipation.⁵⁷ The African-Americans wanted to create their own place of worship, while the white men in most cases feared and hesitated to lie on the hand of the ordination of the African-American in their own white controlled churches.⁵⁸

For example, in Montgomery, Alabama, the African-Americans had left the First Baptist church out of discontent and unequal treatment. Before the Civil War, the African-Americans slaves had worshipped in the First Baptist church, on Perry Street. The slaves were only allowed on the balcony of the church: 'They were never allowed on the main floor of the sanctuary unless they were sweeping or mopping.'⁵⁹ But when the Civil War ended, seven hundred African-Americans marched to an empty lot in the corner of Ripple Street and Columbus Street, and declared that the lot had become their first independent Baptist Colored church; the Columbus Street Baptist church. It became the first free African-American institution in the city of Montgomery, Alabama. Nathan Ashby became its first pastor and later the first president of the Colored Baptist Convention in 1866, in Alabama.⁶⁰

Other African-American freedmen left the white churches for other reasons and without discontent of unequal treatment. For example, in Arizona, the African-Americans established the African-American Calvary Baptist church. At the convention of the Madison Baptist church in Phoenix, Arizona, on September 2, in 1865, African-Americans expressed their desire to organize an independent African-American church, separated from the Madison Baptist church. On September 16, 1865, a large number of African-Americans appealed to Rev. S.A. Berry, the clerk of the Madison church for a letter of demission, in order to organize their own church. In response, the dismissed brethren were permitted to hold their services in the old church buildings, which were still owned by the Madison Baptist church. In 1865, the African-American brethren of the first Madison Baptist church established their own separated church, the Calvary Baptist church. Often, the African-Americans left the white controlled churches with a letter of demission. They requested their white ministers and preachers for a letter of demission, in order to leave the white controlled church, and organize

⁵⁷ Frazier, *The Negro church*, 23.

⁵⁸ Charles Octavius Boothe, *The cyclopedia of the colored Baptists of Alabama, their leaders and their work* (Birmingham 1895) 34.

⁵⁹ Donnie Greenshaw and Wayne Williams, *The thunder of angels; the Montgomery bus boycott and the people who broke Back Jim Crow* (Chicago 2006) 101.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*

or join an independent African-American church.

Similar is the story of Joseph Bays More: in 1865, after being emancipated, Bays More filed for office as one of the qualified voters for or against a convention to reconstruct the State of North Carolina. Bays More was also said to be called by God to work for the Gospel Ministry. In 1865, Bays More established a Baptist Church with only five members, where he preached as a licensed minister, and became a temporary pastor until 1866. In 1866, he was ordained to the work for the ministry. On November 22, 1866, Bays received letters of demission from 26 members from the white Baptist church. On the June 24, 1866, the congregation was sent to Petersburg to form a council, which would organize the Church. That day, Rev. J. Jasper and two deacons organized the independent African-American Baptist Church and baptized 39 members. Within a year the congregation had grown from five to 69 members of the Independent African-American Church. Bays continued to serve the Church as a preacher for 18 years, and within these years he established eight more Baptist churches. The same happened to the Shady Grove Baptist church, in East Dublin, Georgia. In December 1865, after the Thirteenth Amendment freed the slaves, 47 African-Americans requested the church by letter if they might organize their own Church. The Shady Grove Baptist church approved their request and Mr. Joseph Cox gave the African-American an acre of land in order to establish their own separated church. The church was located on Browning Road and was called the First Bush Arbor. The members of the church also organized a Sunday school.⁶¹

In 1866, the African-Americans of the First Bush Arbor were blessed again with two acres of lands, given by the whites. On this land the African-Americans could build their new church, which they called New Hope Missionary Baptist church.⁶²

As discussed above, some freedmen accepted the aid of white Americans, who had decided to help the African-Americans to establish their separated churches. For example, in 1866, in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, African-Americans, who had first attended the First Baptist church for whites during slavery, received help from the white church members to build their own church, the Olive Branch Baptist church.⁶³ In 1867, the white members of the Fairfield Baptist church of Northumberland County, Virginia blessed their African-American brothers with the establishment of their independent African-American church. In addition

⁶¹ Joseph Baysmore, *A historical sketch of the First Colored Baptist Church, Weldon, N.C with the life and labor of Elder Joseph Baysmore, with four collected sermons* (Weldon 1887) 1-2.

⁶² New Hope Baptist Church, 'Church History', 2010, www.webringnewhope.org/history.php. (June 21, 2013).

⁶³ Dorothy Sterling, *We are your sisters* (Benet 1997) 403.

they decided to give their brethren two plots of land to build their church on.⁶⁴ Another white American, Obadian Woods, a former slave owner with one of the largest plantations of Alabama, donated land to his former slaves in 1868, in order to build their own Mount Zion Baptist church.⁶⁵ But more often, African-Americans established their independent churches in the gin houses, log cabins, under cane sheds on plantations, or in rented houses in cities. In 1867, only a very few churches owned property like the ones discussed above.⁶⁶

There are always exceptions opposing to history. Some African-Americans were averse to leaving the white churches. But, some whites were looking for ways to distance themselves from the liberated African-American, in order to ensure their white supremacy within the church.

While discussing the movement of African-Americans separating themselves from the white controlled churches, a comment must be made. The independent black church was the only social institution, which had survived slavery. In times of slavery, invisible churches were already created in the South under the leadership of African-American preachers and after emancipation the independent African-American church became the center of the African-American social life. Some African-American churches had established themselves in cooperation with the white Americans before the Civil War, like the St. Louis Street Missionary Baptist church. This church began as part of Mobile's African-American church, located in Alabama, and this Congregation already became active in 1836.⁶⁷ The church was not fully organized independently by African-Americans until 1860. Until 1860, a white Baptist minister, Joshua Hawthorn, had preached his sermons to the African-Americans. In 1860 the congregation's first African-American, minister Charles Leavens, succeeded him. The appointment of Charles Leavens as the first African-American minister, made the congregation completely independent, and separated from the white Americans. This church had already established itself before the Civil War.⁶⁸

3.4 The relation with the whites

After the Civil War, some white Americans helped the African-Americans with establishing their separated churches in other ways. For example, in 1865, the members of the white

⁶⁴ Sterling, *We are your sisters*, 403-409.

⁶⁵ Penelope Majeke, *Your obedient servant: the United States army in Virginia during the reconstruction 1865-1867* (Wayne 1980) 40-42.

⁶⁶ W. Hicks, *History of Louisiana Negro Baptists from 1804 to 1914* (Nashville 1915) 27.

⁶⁷ Litwack, *Been in the Storm*, 89.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

church of Christ in Circleville, Texas, allowed African-Americans to use their facilities until they could purchase a meetinghouse of their own.⁶⁹ However it seemed that all African-Americans wanted to leave the white controlled churches after the emancipation; some ME churches in the North had to convince some of the African-Americans to leave their white controlled churches, in order to establish their own.

As Rev. Wesley J. Gaines argued at the Methodist Episcopal General Conference in 1866: 'There would have been no division of the colored Methodist in the South, except for those who would join the ME church. The AME church, North, was well organized and could take care of the colored Methodists in the South. There was no need of a Colored Methodist church of America, as set up by the ME Church South. It was the fear of the political influence of the North that made the church organize this CME church of America. They felt that the AME church was a political church in harmony with the North. The ME Church, South had already felt at that early date, the serious transition, which must take place when the colored people acquired independent church bodies, and feared the possible results.'⁷⁰ By organizing the C.M.E., and convincing the African-Americans to leave the white A.M. churches, the white were still able to control the African-American meetings in a certain way. Thereby they could 'protect' them from the political upheaval toward the white society.

Not all white Americans reacted enthusiastically toward the establishment of an independent church. The establishment of the churches gave some whites the feeling that they would lose their supremacy over the African-Americans. In reaction to these establishments, they burnt down the African-American churches, as these had become the symbol of African-American autonomy. For example, in North Carolina, fires, caused by white American rebels, destroyed the churches. Both the African-American churches in Wellington and Cleveland were burnt down to the ground.⁷¹

Some whites reacted outrageous to this new situation, wherein the African-American slaves had become freedmen and were allowed to establish their own independent churches. In the period after the Civil War, no African-American, no African-American institution nor African-American building, especially in the rural areas were immune to the severe attacks by whites.⁷² White Americans united groups to attack the African-Americans. The Ku Klux Klan became one of the most infamous groups because of their terror against the African-Americans.

⁶⁹ Penelope, *Your obedient servant*, 40-42

⁷⁰ Rev. Wesley J. Gaines, *African Methodism in the South, twenty-five years of freedom* (Atlanta, Georgia 1890) 21-22

⁷¹ William B Byrne, *Burden and the heat of day, slavery and servitude in Savannah, 1733-1865* (Florida 1979) 335.

⁷² Litwack, *Been in the Storm*, 127.

The violence was politically motivated most of the time as the whites attempted to prevent African-Americans from taking part in the governmental office. The African-American churches and ministers often became victims of violence by whites because they used their churches as meeting places for political discussion and events. According to Litwack, white Americans burned down the independent churches because they were afraid that African-Americans became too much involved in politics. The involvement of the African-American in politics may explain the outrageous reaction of whites toward the establishment of the independent African-American churches. White Americans were afraid that the African-Americans became too influential and visible in the American society, and in reaction of that they destroyed their institutions and beloved ones.

However the African-American leaders continued to fight together with their members for an equal place within the American society. The African-American minister, Thomas Allen, was questioned at a select committee in October 1871, whether he thought if the African-Americans preferred to be associated with them selves or with the white American church. Thomas Allen answered diplomatically that most African-Americans preferred to be associated with them selves. This question brought up an important issue: whether the African-Americans truly wanted churches of their own or whether they were being maneuvered into segregated churches by whites who refused to be associated with them in their new condition as freed people.⁷³

3.5 Progress in the independent church

In order to develop the African-Americans needed education. The independent African-American church became an important supporter of education of the African-American freed people. The African-American preachers and ministers were able to establish schools and provide books for a proper education.

In 1866, 975 African-American schools were established in the South, where 1405 teachers educated 90.778 pupils. In 1870 these numbers were already increased to 2677 schools, with 3300 teachers, teaching 149.581 pupils.⁷⁴

After the Civil War, the membership of several churches had changed; in some church divisions, the membership increased while in others it decreased. The Presbyterian Church, for example, was never as popular among the African-Americans as the Methodists and the

⁷³ Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 97.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 78.

Baptists churches. It is even said that after the Civil War, seventy per cent of the African-Americans left their white church to join the Methodists and Baptist churches. The Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church had invaded the South in order to attract freed African-American to their churches. In 1865, the Methodist church in the South had 207.742 members; in 1866 the membership of the Methodist church South had already increased to 78.742 members worshipping God in the Methodist churches.⁷⁵

Other freedmen joined the North Presbyterians because they began to establish schools and missions in order to educate them. Like the Presbyterians, the Congregation church began to raise money right after the Civil War to establish schools for the freedmen.⁷⁶

Even though Booker T. Washington argued that the preachers of the independent black churches were often ignorant and sometimes even immoral, the church remained the center for all those influences that provided welfare and built up the community in which the African-Americans were situated. The preachers were able to connect their people to life and progress in the outside world. 'As the Negro Church grows stronger materially and spiritually so do the masses of the Negro people in advance,' as Washington declared.⁷⁷

The church became an agency of social control, and economic co-operation, it educated its people, and became an arena of political life. An agency of social control signifies, that after the emancipation the roles of women and men in the family changed. For the first time men became responsible for income in order to nourish their families and women were responsible for raising their children, and teaching them morals and religious values of life. The ministers within the churches held a close eye on family life. At the same time they felt responsible for the individual lives of the freed African-Americans.

To conclude, Daniel James Russell wrote in 1920: 'Christianity has provided a platform of brotherly love, sufficiently broad to admit all Christ's followers to a full religious fellowship and religious association; a platform so broad as to exclude the necessity of caste, or race proscriptions, to prevent their Christian association as a religious brotherhood, being a religious social detriment.'⁷⁸ The abolition of slavery made place for the theory of 'this worldly', as mentioned before in the theoretical framework. The feeling of freedom made the

⁷⁵ Booker T. Washington, *The story of the Negro, the rise of the Negro race from slavery* (London 1909) 256.

⁷⁶ Richard Bryant Drake, 'The American Missionary Association and the Southern Negro, 1861-1888', *Ph.D. diss., Emory University* (1957) 198.

⁷⁷ Washington, *The story of*, 278.

⁷⁸ Daniel James Rusell, *History of the African union Methodist Church* (Philadelphia 1920) 4.

African-Americans participate in the American society again. Still with a lot restriction, but at least they could start to build up their own institutions.

4. The power of separation

Close to the end of the eighteenth century free and self-respecting African-Americans in the North, established separated African-American churches, in response to the increased and intolerable discrimination they encountered in the biracial churches. Many African-Americans did not think of themselves as belonging to the independent African-American churches; they rather described themselves according to denominational affiliations such as Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian. The African-Americans had never been monolithic, they had always been diverse and therefore their churches were also decentralized. In this chapter I discuss the complexity of the different African-American congregations. I will give an insight into the genesis of the various African-American congregations within the United States, in order to show the complexity of the independent African-American denominations. Furthermore, I will describe how the African-Americans left their white controlled 'mother' churches, and how they organized their own churches.

4.1 The Methodists

The White Methodist societies took an early stance against slavery and welcomed African-American into their churches. By 1793, the proportion of African-American worshippers had risen over 40 per cent.⁷⁹ This increase in African-American membership resulted in tension and discriminatory treatment with the refusal to fully ordain the African-American preachers within the Methodist church and allow them to join the conference. The increase of African-Americans within the Methodist church resulted in the separation of the African-American from these churches.

4.2 The AME Church

Richard Allen was the first African-American who had been able to organize the first independent African-American church in the North. 'I raised a society in 1786 of forty-two members. I saw the necessity of erecting a place of worship for the colored people.'⁸⁰ In 1786, Allen already preached to the African-American members of Philadelphia's St. George's Methodist church.⁸¹ By the early 1820's the African Methodist Episcopal church (AME church) established itself as a church where African-Americans could find their hopes, and

⁷⁹Lincoln and Mimiya, *The black church*, 56.

⁸⁰ Richard Allen, *The life, experience, and Gospel labors of Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* (Philadelphia 1833) 12.

⁸¹ Montgomery, *Under their vine*, 7.

where they could create their own society as a response to the overall oppression faced throughout the country.⁸²

At the time of the first establishments, the AME church was mostly made up from illiterate and uneducated individuals. But their message was clear: social justice and educational efforts were the most important pillars in their organization. Spiritual growth and social progress were considered to be the high moral standards of the AME church.

Early in the nineteenth century, the AME church penetrated the South and brought its orthodox theology and its ministry to the Southern African-Americans. Wilmore appropriately said: ‘Led for the most part by illiterate preachers, many of whom were slaves or recently freedmen, poverty-stricken and repressed by custom and law, the independent African-American church converted thousands, stabilized family life, enabled family life, established insurance and burial societies, founded schools and colleges, commissioned missionaries to the far corners of the world, and at the same time agitated for the abolition of slavery, supported illegal action of fugitives, organized the Underground Railroad, formed slave uprisings, promoted the civil war, developed community political education and action, and provided the entire African-American community in the united States.’⁸³ The AME church had become an elite church among the Southern African-Americans, with an increasingly large membership. From 1856, the membership of the church increased from 20,000 members to 75,000 worshippers by 1865.⁸⁴

Most white Americans did not welcome the AME missionaries for political reasons. The white Americans became increasingly suspicious of all the independent African-American churches, and they correctly believed that the AME church was actively involved in the anti-slavery movement.⁸⁵ On the other hand, the whites also wanted to suppress the AME churches in order to avoid the attack and increase of its African-American memberships. The dark reality of slavery deterred the AME missionaries in the South, and by the 1850’s the AME church had created a ‘Committee on Slavery’ in order to extend the ideas of the abolitionists.⁸⁶

Before the Civil War, most A.M.E. congregations existed only in the Border States

⁸² Michel Barga, ‘American Methodist Episcopal Church (1794 – present)’ 2013, <http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/eras/american-methodist-episcopal-a-m-e-church/> (June 21, 2013)

⁸³ James H. Cone, *For my people, Black theology and the Black Church, where have we been and where were we going* (New York 1984) 101.

⁸⁴ Barga, ‘American Methodist Episcopal’ 2013, <http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/eras/american-methodist-episcopal-a-m-e-church/> (June 21, 2013)

⁸⁵ Montgomery, *Under their vine*, 28.

⁸⁶ Barga, ‘American Methodist Episcopal’ (June 21, 2013)

and in cities like Mobile, New Orleans and Charleston, where the law permitted the African-Americans to worship in their own religious traditions.⁸⁷

But in the first months after the Civil War, the A.M.E. missionaries became active at the edge in South Carolina where they maintained their domination. In May 1867, the A.M.E. officials organized the Virginia Annual Conference, where they welcomed 3,500 members. The number of followers of the AME Church, South grew slowly during the years after the Civil War.

Not all freedmen joined the AME Church, South, many stayed in the white controlled ME Churches in the South. But in 1870, the small amount of members who remained in the church, was permitted to organize their own separated churches. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was created, which established itself in Jackson, Tennessee.⁸⁸ Some scholars argue that the CME emerged due to political reasons, Hood, however, contradicts this. In my analysis I will discuss this issue in more depth.

4.3 African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

In 1796, a number of African-Americans, most of them members of the Methodist Episcopal Church (ME Church, North) of John Street in New York, took the first step in their separation from their white ‘mother’ church. They were tired of the restraints and paternalistic treatment. Eventually, about hundred African-American Methodists wanted to break away from their Methodist Episcopal Church.⁸⁹

In August 1796, the white church leaders of the ME Church, North, gave their African-American members approval to hold separate meetings. The African-Americans had already held private meeting at the home of James Varrick, a shoemaker and schoolteacher. Varrick would later become the dominations founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ Church) and the first Bishop of this congregation. In the book *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya there is disagreement. Their book argues that at the urging of Peter William, a former slave who had been employed at the John Street church, some African-Americans wanted to organize an African Chapel, in the Cabinetmaker’s shop of William Miller. In this shop, local

⁸⁷Montgomery, *Under their vine*, 28.

⁸⁸Frazier, *The Negro church*, 28.

⁸⁹ Lisa Jones Townselm, *The AME Zion Church celebrates its Bicentennial* (Ebony 1996) 34.

African-American preachers would conduct their services, until a new house of worship was complete in September 1800.⁹⁰

By 1820 the new African-American denomination had established itself firmly when the leaders left the white ME Church. The next year, the founders agreed to call their church the African Methodist Episcopal Church of America, but to distinguish this New York based church from the Philadelphia Black Methodist movement, which emerged about the same time, the word Zion was added to this denomination during the Church's General conference in 1848.⁹¹

The AMEZ Church became known as a denomination where the salvation of the whole person was the top priority; i.e. mind, body and spirit. Besides, the AMEZ Church was long known as 'The Freedom Church', where abolitionists like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Rev. Thomas James and Frederick Douglas became active members and licensed preachers of the local AME Zion Churches.

The AMEZ Church experienced modest growth in the period before the Civil War; it started with 1,400 members and 22 preachers in 1822, and increased its membership to 4,600 members with 105 preachers in 1860. By 1884 the church had grown to 30,000 worshippers, and in 1896 the membership stood at 35,000.⁹²

Initially, the African-American spiritual and ecclesiastical independence was not only grounded in the religious doctrine or in a religious policy, but was an offence toward the racial segregation of the churches and the inconsistency between the teaching of the Methodist religion and the African-American experience of faith.⁹³ In the time before the Civil War, it was clear that the white Methodist Church was a principal instrument for the political and social policies in support of slavery and also the protector against the degradation of the human spirit. Out of discontent the free African-American in the North rebelled against the White Methodist church, and a separated African-American Church emerged, as was discussed above. The African-American Church became a symbol of the African-American rebellion against racial segregation within the Church, a symbol against slavery and a symbol against the degradation of the human spirit.

For the first five years after emancipation the white preachers and ministers in the South were not interested in the religious instruction of the freedmen. The Northern AME and AMEZ missionaries became important leading figures in the early development of the

⁹⁰ Lincoln and Mimiya, *The black church*, 56.

⁹¹ Townsel, *The AME Zion Church*, 63.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 83.

⁹³ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The black church*, 47.

independent African-American church in the South.⁹⁴ Most of their missionary work was done in group associations such as the Methodist Freedmen's Aid Society and the American Missionary Association. A small number of African-American missionaries promoted the AME and the AME Zion churches, because they did not have the financial means to promote their own religious thoughts. However, they appealed to more freedmen in the South than the white missionaries could.⁹⁵

4.4 Methodist Episcopal Church

John Wesley founded the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) in 1784. The Congregation had always been against slavery. They found its institution inhuman and against the laws of the Lord. But this vision changed in the early nineteenth century when some Southern Americans became wealthier, and as such obtained a weakened stance on slavery. Ministers and clergymen in the North were expected not to own slaves but the help them to emancipate, while the South had legalized slavery. The conflict about slavery arose in 1840, when Rev. James Osgood Andrew of Oxford acquired a slave. The MEC General Conference considered this matter seriously, but eventually did not expel Andrew because he kept his slave out fear that she would end up with an inhumane owner. In 1844, four years later, Andrew married a woman who owned a slave as well, which made the Bishop an owner of two slaves. For this reason, Andrew appeared again before the General Conference. The members of the conference decided to suspend Bishop Andrew from practicing his Episcopal office until he no longer owned slaves.⁹⁶ In response, the Southern delegates of the Conference raised questions about the fact that the General Conference could discipline Bishops. Cultural differences had already divided the nation and the MEC during the mid-nineteenth century. This dispute led Methodists in the South to break from their 'mother' church. They established a separated domination, the Methodists Episcopal Church, South (MEC, South).

The MEC South grew rapidly after its separation from the MEC North. In 1860 757,205 people including 537,136 whites were enrolled in the congregation, an increase of 37,442 compared to 1858.⁹⁷

The MEC South was also important in the establishment schools and colleges; in 1858 it operated 106 schools and colleges. The Civil War had been devastating to farms, church buildings and institutions, and the MEC South tried to help uplift the society. Under the

⁹⁴ Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 56.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 57.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 23.

⁹⁷ Lincoln, *The black church*, 67.

direction of Lee's Army, the congregation members spread further throughout the South to help the wounded after the battles. John B. Mc Ferrin described this event as follows: 'At Chickamauga, the slaughter was tremendous on both sides, but the Confederates held the field. I remained on the battlefield eleven days, nursing the sick, ministering to the wounded, and praying for the dying. The sight was awful. Thousands of men killed and wounded. They lay thick all around, shot in every possible manner, and the wounded dying every day. Among the wounded were many Federal soldiers. To these I ministered, prayed with them, and wrote letters by flag of truce to their friends in the North.'⁹⁸

The MEC North enjoyed a large number of new members, it appealed to the freedmen in several ways. Its missionary plan was effectively planned and focused on the spiritual needs of the freed African-Americans. It did not focus on the exclusion of education and the attainment of civil and political right. The church's success in attracting so many freed African-Americans, laid in the fact that the missionaries had the ability to convince the freedmen that their goal was racial integration.⁹⁹ 'God's kingdom was not segregated, and neither was the MEC North. There will be no galleys in Heaven. Those who are willing to go with a Church that makes no distinction as to race or color, follow me.'¹⁰⁰

But this enormous growth of membership of the ME Church changed immediately after the Civil War. The African-Americans created a stigma on the Methodist South; they were once connected with their oppressors. Some African-Americans even thought that some colored Methodists intended to lead the African-Americans back into slavery.¹⁰¹ After the Civil War, large numbers of freed African-Americans were no longer attracted to the Methodist Church; the Baptists now attracted the most African-American freedmen. The ME Church in the South had a black membership of about 207,766 in 1850; however, their membership dropped to less than 78,742 souls by 1860.¹⁰² After the Civil War more and more freed African-Americans became attracted to the membership of Baptist Church.

4.5 The Congregationalists

Congregationalism originated in sixteenth-century in England, within the Calvinist wing of the Protestant Reformation. Political upheaval led these Puritan believers to the North of

⁹⁸ John O.P Fitzgerald, *John B Mc Ferrin, a biography* (Nashville 1888) 31.

⁹⁹ Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 72.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰¹ Woodson, *The history of the Negro church*, 171.

¹⁰² Lincoln and Mamiya, *The black church*, 48.

America at the beginning of the early seventeenth century.

Even before the Civil War, the Congregationalist's became involved with the anti-slavery movement. They became interested in the uplifting of the African-American, and were passionate in their commitment to social reform and freedom for the African-American race. The Congregationalist's came to the South primarily as educators. The leaders of this denomination sympathized with slaves, aided the fugitive and preached the principles of religion to the unfortunate. The Congregationalists were constantly trying to root out the sin in man's soul, but the freedmen craved excitement and a sense of joy and vindication in their religion. A former slave Barney Alford explained: 'I believe in shouring, en I'se kno when yer git happy in de Lord yer got er rite ter tell it.'¹⁰³ But the Congregationalist did not accept such behavior as a legitimate expression of Christian worshipping. They regarded African-American religion as nothing more than a primitive emotional worshipping without any moral basis. They presumed that the slavery had prevented the African-Americans from developing their moral sense and that that was en the essence of sinfulness.¹⁰⁴

For these reasons it became difficult for the Congregationalist to compete with the Methodists and the Baptist, who were more tolerant to the folk culture of the African-Americans. Besides, the Congregationalists observed that the freedmen responded best to teachers and preachers from their own race. The Congregationalist Church grew painfully slowly since its establishment in the United States. By 1878, the denomination counted sixty-four Churches with a membership of 4,189, in the South. The works of the preachers and ministers showed that the Congregationalist denomination was important in the establishment of the independent African-American churches, because they became the first congregation which actively educated the African-American slaves during times of slavery.

4.6 The Baptists

The first African-American church was established in Savannah, in the South of the United States. This church became known as one of the mother churches of the Baptist faith.¹⁰⁵ However, the Church was probably not the first African-American Baptist Church that had established itself in the South, even though it is seen as the first long-established African-American institution in America. Other Baptist African-American churches had already established itself before the Baptist Church in Savannah. Such as an African-American

¹⁰³ Andrew Ward, *The slave's war in the words of former slaves* (Harcourt 2008) 314.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*

¹⁰⁵ Janet Cornelius, *Slave mission and the Black Church in the Antebellum South* (South Carolina 1999) 109.

Baptist congregation that established itself on the plantation of William Byrd III on the Bluestone River in Virginia in 1758 and another congregation that was founded at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, in 1777.¹⁰⁶ But these early churches are not recognized as stable African-American institutions and therefore are not acknowledged as the first long-established African-American Baptist church in America.

Andrew and Hannah Bryan and a congregation of women and men, in the 1780's, founded the African-American Baptist church in Savannah. Andrew Marshall, a free African-American, became in charge of the Church in the 1830's, after he had served a long time as missionary converting the slaves. Marshall challenged the white Baptists and won the right to govern his own church in Savannah.¹⁰⁷ By governing his own church, Marshall aroused the jealousy of the white Americans in Savannah. The whites in Savannah feared his theological independence and his visible success among the African-American slaves.¹⁰⁸

In a sermon by Elder Joseph Baysmore, the Bishop explained what Baptism would bring the African-Americans: 'all true religious practice is based upon the doctrine of the Bible, and all religious practice which is not found in the Bible is utterly false, and it is not the worship of God, but it is the worship of men, for all true religion can find rest in the Bible. Again: some said that baptism is not essential to salvation, but the scriptures declare that "men shall live by every word of God" and if believers are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, it is essential to salvation, for God commands us what to do through Christ, and Christ commands us to believe and be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost Racial separation in the South and North Baptist Churches was not a matter of doctrinal disagreement, but a protest against unequal and restrictive treatment.¹⁰⁹

Other African-American churches developed among the Southern African-Americans between the revolution and the Civil War. Churches like the Springfield Baptist church in Augusta and the Sharper Street church in Baltimore were important for the increase of the establishments of the independent African-American churches.¹¹⁰ The Springfield Baptist church has been seen as a church of national significance. The Springfield Baptist church is one of the oldest African-American churches in the United States. The church is an example of the determination of the African-Americans to be independent during slavery.¹¹¹ The

¹⁰⁶ Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 27.

¹⁰⁷ Cornelius, *Slave mission*, 110.

¹⁰⁸ Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 73.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 25.

¹¹⁰ Cornelius, *Slave Mission*, 109.

¹¹¹ Springfield Baptist Church Augusta, 'History of the Springfield Baptist Church' 2013 <http://historicspringfieldbaptistchurch.org/index.php?nid=108502&s=au> (June 21, 2013).

Georgia Republican Party organized themselves at the Springfield Baptist church at first and the Morehouse college was founded there, which has produced many nationally important and prominent African-American leaders. The Springfield Baptist church proved that history holds alternatives for the African-American identity of victimization. The religious expression of the Great Awakening, particularly that of the separate Baptists, proved to be congenial to the need of African-Americans and a threshold to the merging of African and American cultural tradition.¹¹² Most local churches operated on this basis, they emerged here and there, as the Baptist preachers went travelling seeking for members to follow them in the new independent African-American church.

Most of these churches were established on the periphery of slavery or were assembled by free African-Americans, led by white ministers. Whites often led these churches, because educated African-American priests were rare. However, the few educated African-American ministers did become really important in preaching and converting the African-Americans to the Baptist church. At the same time, it was common for slaves to join the churches of their masters or the churches that were accessible on the antebellum plantations.¹¹³ The majority of the African-Americans were Baptists for reasons entirely apart from the religious conviction of the significant whites in their lives. The percentage of African-American who joined the Baptist Congregation was much higher than among the whites.

Scholars argue that the Baptist theology blended particularly well with the African religious traditions. The Baptist congregation distinguished itself from other evangelical dominations, because of its traditions, which resembled river ceremonies that were common in areas of West Africa, where many African-Americans had their heritage. But more important, many African-Americans were attracted to Baptism because they wanted independence from white controlling Americans. The Baptist community had no outside authority that influenced the congregation's freedom; they knew no hierarchy and Bishops. Therefore, individual congregations did not have the authority to dismiss or call their preachers and ministers, contrary to the Methodists. Baptist ministers and preachers received their calls and could preach the gospel in the Churches, as they wanted. It became very easy for the African-Americans to become ministers and preachers in the Baptist churches. The Baptist preachers or ministers were not depending upon their possessed grade of education.

¹¹² Springfield Baptist Church Augusta, 'History of the Springfield Baptist Church' 2013 <http://historicspringfieldbaptistchurch.org/index.php?nid=108502&s=au> (June 21, 2013)

¹¹³ Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 106.

Just hearing the call was enough to become a minister. There were all sorts of degrees of mental development among the African-American freedman. Most preachers had been illiterate when they had become ministers of the independent black church during or just after the Civil War, even though the written word of the bible played an important role in Christianity.¹¹⁴ The congregations were also allowed to form new churches, and to divide the old ones.

From the beginning, the Baptist faith was both black and white, in the South. African-American members and religious meetings helped to shape the Baptist church in its formative years. The Baptist worshippers created a concept of individual responsibility to God that required direct action by the individual through conservation, the priesthood of all believers, and the belief in dignity and worth of each person. This concept gave African-American women and men more opportunities for participation and religious experience.¹¹⁵ The African-Americans were freer from the dominance of the ruling whites, and other denominations.¹¹⁶ The Baptist wanted to build an African-American society in which their people would be enforced to become moral and disciplined men and women, and in which there was no place for alcohol abuses, gambling and sexual promiscuity.

After the Civil War, the independent African-American Baptist churches grew rapidly, not only because Baptist missionaries converted the non-believers, but also the African-Americans wanted to wipe out all white controlled churches. For example; in Georgia, the enrolment of African-Americans in the white controlled churches dropped from 27,734 in 1860 to 5,745 in 1870. Conversely, the membership in the independent African-American Baptist churches grew from a few hundred in 1860 to 38,878 in 1870.¹¹⁷

Some African-Americans had left the Methodist church to convert themselves to Baptism, like Eugene J. Carter, an Alabama born slave. He argued that the hierarchy of the Methodist Church leadership was ‘unreasonable and unscriptural’. Carter opposed the position of the Bishop in the Methodist church, which he considered as having too much power that he would often abuse. Besides, Carter asserted that the Congregation focused itself too much on the covenant of Abraham rather than the new covenant of Jesus Christ. These critiques made Carter decide to leave the Methodist Church, and so he converted to Baptism.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Albert Raboteau, *Slave religion, the invisible institution in the antebellum South* (Oxford 1978) 233.

¹¹⁵ Cornelius, *Slave mission*, 25

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁷ Love, *History of*, 234.

¹¹⁸ Eugene J. Carter, *Once a Methodist; now a Baptist. Why?* (Nashville 1905) 14-17.

The independent African-American church movement intensified during the reconstruction and its aftermath, because of race consciousness. At the same time, it was partly a reaction to the discrimination of Southern white Baptists and paternalism of Northern white Baptists. Though in tension with a competing school of thoughts, which were favored, working on a cooperative basis with the whites within the existing Northern Baptist organizations, a separatist ideology prevailed and ultimately culminated in the establishment of an Independent Baptist denomination.¹¹⁹ The African-American Baptist had always been independent, but in the years before and during the Civil War, an important question troubled the minds of the African-American leaders in the Baptist church: would it be better to cooperate with the wealthier white Baptists in order to give every African-American the ability for a good education programs and religious literature, or should they stay independent and depend on their own ability to build their own intellect in their communities.¹²⁰

At the same time, after the Civil War, the Baptist policy attracted a lot of African-American who wanted to be independent from white control.¹²¹ The African-American Baptist did not succeed in organizing an independent national church until after the Civil War; even though they were the first to set up separate churches for themselves.

After the Civil War, the Christian Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians workers took the lead in the establishment of schools in order to uplift the whole race. The Baptists, for example had established Shaw University at Raleigh in 1865, Robert Williams at Nashville and Morehouse at Atlanta in 1867, Let land at New Orleans and Benedict at Colombia in 1871. The Methodists established Walden at Nashville in 1865, Rust at Holly Spring in 1866, Morgan at Baltimore in 1867, Haven Academy at Waynesboro in 1869, Clafin at Orangeburg in 1869, and Clark at Atlanta in 1870.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The black church*, 26.

¹²⁰ Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 96

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, 102.

¹²² Woodson, *The history of the Negro*, 180-182.

5. Analysis

In this chapter I will discuss the reasons why the independent church established itself after the Civil War. As previously mentioned, the majority of the African-American race decided to establish their independent and separate churches immediately after the end of the Civil War. What could have provoked or caused the emancipation movement of the African-American freedmen? Why did they have the desire to absent themselves from the white controlled churches? Which were the underlying ideas to detach themselves from the white controlled churches and build their own? In this chapter these underlying ideas for the establishment of the independent African-American church will be analyzed.

5.1 Plan of God

As showed in the historical background of this thesis, the majority of the African-Americans believed that slavery had been part God's plan to develop the African-American race.

In accordance with the above, Hood saw the forced separation of the African-Americans from the white church and the formation of churches for themselves, as a part of Jehovah's plan to develop the African-American men. For him the separation of the African-American was necessary in order to develop the African-American race. He argued that 'the history of men and women who have risen, risen by force of God-given ability and God-given help; have risen from the discomfort and poverty of their enforced condition.'¹²³ From his point of view, slavery was shaped by the force of God to develop the African race.

Similar to the ideas of Hood, Love wrote: 'There is an open door of usefulness of abundant entrance into the inviting fields of Christian activity, intelligent Christian work and devout consecration to the service of God in lifting up fallen mankind to heaven and God.'¹²⁴ He believed that slavery had brought the African-Americans Christianity in order to uplift the African-American race.

Enslavement had all been part of God's plan, to Christianize his chosen people and advance their race. The African-American people were his 'chosen' people. The independent church became a playground where his 'chosen' people could continue the progress of their race.

¹²³ J.W Hood, *One hundred years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church: or the centennial of African Methodism* (New York 1895) xii

¹²⁴ E.K Love, *The history of the first Baptist church* (Savannah 1888) xiii

5.2 Rejection of the Whites

Even though, the most African-Americans had seen Christianity as the plan of God and were Christianized by whites, they wanted to separate themselves from the white churches. As argued in the historical background, the African-Americans and the Americans did not fit in the same churches anymore. Hood argued that the secessions from the white churches were generally the result of differences of opinion on doctrine or church government.¹²⁵ But difference of opinion between whites and African-American were not the only reasons that led to the separation of the independent church.

The majority of the African-American became tired of the restraint and paternalistic churches of the whites. The whites often dehumanized and minimized the African-Americans in their common churches. This is perfectly argued in *Sketch of the early history of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* by Hood, in which he wrote: 'Back seats, sometimes called 'Nigger' pews, were provided for them. Galleries which were reached by outsteps, and in some cases, outside sheds were provided without any means of keeping warm, where they could hear the preacher, but could not see him. They were denied the privilege of the Lord's Table, until all the whites had communed. The line of proscription was also drawn at the baptismal font. Such were some of the many vexations and indignities to which the colored members were subjected in the white church.'¹²⁶ In conclusion he wrote; 'Is it any wonder that they came out?'¹²⁷

The African-American experience of oppression and dehumanizing in the white churches left them nothing else than a desire to separate from their white 'brethren'. But this seemed impossible without the help of progressive individuals, who took a leading role in the separation. Most often ambitious individuals with strong progressive ideas would take the lead in the creation of the Black churches.

5.3 Obtain Power, Control and Respect

In this section I will discuss how the progressive individuals obtained their control in the independent churches. Five important African-American preachers and ministers will be examined: Eliah Marrs, William Heard, J.W. Hood, Henry McNeil Turner, and E.K Love. I will present the objective context of these African-American leaders of diverse independent African-American churches. This section highlights their contrasts as well as their similarities

¹²⁵ Love, *The history*, xiii

¹²⁶ Hood, *The early history*, 62.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*.

as leaders of sociopolitical organizations in the African-American community. Also considered are the circumstances in which these charismatic individuals became preachers and ministers.

The majority of the African-American clergymen were born in bondage. Marrs, Heard and Hood had all been slaves before the Emancipation Proclamation. Marrs was born in Shelby County, Kentucky, in 1840. His mother belonged to a man named Jesse Robinson and his father had been a freed man. Even though his father was a freed man, Marrs was born in slavery.¹²⁸ In those days, it was common that the child would obtain the status of the mother, and therefore Marrs could not be a free man.

Similar to Marrs, Heard was born in slavery. On June 25, 1850, Heard was born in a log cabin in Elbert County, Georgia. Both his mother and father lived in enslavement; therefore he was not free.

Love experienced the same faith; he was born in Perry County, near Morison, Alabama, on July 27, 1850. His father and mother were both slaves, so Love would also spend his first years in slavery.¹²⁹

Hood and Turner experienced a different life; both were born free. On May 30, 1831, Hood was born in a Christian family in Kennett Township, in Chester County.¹³⁰ Turner was born as a free man on February 1, 1834 near Newberry, Abbeville, South Carolina. It was very unusual for African-Americans to be born in freedom in those times. But Turner was the grandson of an African Prince, and the British law prohibited the enslavement of royal blood.¹³¹ Therefore Turner could enjoy his status of a free man in the American society. Although Turner was not born in slavery, he was a subject to the slave environment. By means of literature research, I can conclude that there was not much difference between the conditions of Turner and of those, who like Love or Heard were in actual bondage. As Turner wrote in the *Christian Recorder*: 'We want representative men, without regard to color, as long as they carry the brand of Negro oppression. We need power and intellectual equality, with the whites. We want power; it only comes through the organization, and organization comes through unity. Our efforts must be one and inseparable, blended, tied and bound together.'¹³² Here he indicates, that even though he had been a free man his whole life, he never experienced equality to that of a white man.

¹²⁸ Marrs, *History of the Rev.*, 9.

¹²⁹ Love, *History of*, 87.

¹³⁰ Hood, *One hundred years*, 185.

¹³¹ Ponton, *Life and times*, 33.

¹³² Henry McNeal Turner, 'Christian Recorder' (Augusta 1866)

According to St. Claire Drake and Clinton African-Americans wanted to obtain power, control and respect within the African-American society. My research showed that the first step to power, control and respect in the African-American was directed towards religion. As most African-Americans joined a Christian Congregation during their youth, they experienced this inequality in the white Christian churches..

Likewise, the young progressive individuals discussed in this thesis, also joined diverse congregations. Marris became a Christian and went to the Methodist Class in 1851. He would later be converted to the Baptist church at Simpsonville. In that same year, 1851, Turner signed his membership of the ME Church, which enabled him to travel through the South without being molested. In 1859, Heard joined the ME Church, South. Love was baptized in 1868, just after the Civil War.¹³³ Contrary to the above African-American individuals, Hood had always been familiar with an active devotion to the Christian Church. When he became twenty-one, in 1852, he joined the AME Zion Church.

Most clergymen discussed above, initially joined a Methodist Church; Love and Marss were baptized after the Civil War. This is in cohesion with what I discussed in the previous chapters, namely: the membership of African-Americans ME Churches increased before the Civil War, but most African-American joined a Baptist Congregation after the Civil War.

In order to understand how these African-American individuals obtained power, respect and control by joining one of the various congregations, I will discuss in what way their ambition manifested itself.

Obtaining an education was the first ambition of these five individuals in order to obtain self-realization, control and respect in the African-American society. However, being born colored, it was not easy to access a basis education, since the law prohibited the schooling of African-Americans. As is witnessed by statements like Marris': 'My master then removed all objections to my learning how to read, and said he wanted all the boys to learn how to read the Bible, it being against the laws of the State to write.'¹³⁴

However, my research showed that these individuals all realized the importance of reading and writing before their twentieth year of life. These individuals had a great ambition to learn how to read and write, however, their study came often with pauses, sometimes because of lack of money, like Heard, or as in the case of Turner, where the Southern law made is almost impossible to teach African-Americans to read and write.

¹³³ Love, *History of*, 87.

¹³⁴ Marris, *History of*, 16

According to my research, the majority of African-American freedmen and slaves depended on white Americans in order to obtain a basic education. In general, white ladies would teach these young African-Americans how to read and write the alphabet.

At the age of fifteen, a white lady taught Turner the alphabet and how to spell simple words.¹³⁵ Even though he only acquired a basic education, it fed the flames of his mind. His ambition for an intellectual schooling grew by the years. But the law in the South made it impossible for African-Americans to obtain a proper education. Therefore Turners' mother decided to move to Abbeville, South Carolina, where she could raise her ambitious son. In Abbeville, Turners' mother employed a white lady to give the young Turner reading and writing lessons every Sunday. However, this teaching did not last; the white lady was threatened with imprisonment if she further persisted in teaching an African-American. Although, this was a bitter disappointment, Turner was able to get employed by a law firm in Abbeville. This law firm gave him the opportunity to have free access to all literature. Here he learned to read and write more accurately by the lawyers, who took a great interest in helping him.¹³⁶

Love received his basic education privately from several white Americans, while he was working as a slave on various plantations.¹³⁷ As he wrote: 'Having studied very hard for six years privately, getting instruction from white persons on farms who were kind enough to give it to me.'¹³⁸

Marrs sought help from white boys who taught him how to read and write. Marrs took every chance to learn his A, B, C's, and soon after he had learned how to read, the white boys sent him away to the post-office at Simpsonville daily, where he read the addresses of the letters and was also able to read the newspaper.¹³⁹ Later on, a colored man, Ham Graves, secretly opened a night school, which started at 10 p.m. Marrs attended this school where he obtained his basic education. In 1874, he entered the Baptist College. 'The advantage of education that I received while in college was a great benefit.' Further on in this thesis, I will return to the advantages of education.

Heard received help from a poor white boy, named Billee Adams. He paid him ten cents a lesson to teach him how to read and to write.¹⁴⁰ After 1865, Heard attended a summer school for six weeks to study his spelling, reading, arithmetic and other skills, and kept these

¹³⁵ Ponton, *Life and times*, 34.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, 33-34.

¹³⁷ Love, *History of*, 85.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁹ Marrs, *History of The Rev*, 11

¹⁴⁰ Heard, *From slavery*, 32.

studies up at the farm until Christmas. At Christmas, Heard started to work for another employer, Clay Humes. Clay Humes had attended High School and was prepared to learn Heard lesson in reading and writing.¹⁴¹ After six months Heard broke his contract and started to work for his father; by that time a regular school opened its doors in the village and Heard started to attend this school for six weeks. In this school and with the help of a private teacher, he obtained all the knowledge he needed pass his examinations to become a teacher.

The majority of these individuals obtained self-realization through gaining more knowledge. Even Heard argued; ‘A man is blessed in his doing, gaining knowledge, and experience from the every-day things that confront him, and which he masters.’¹⁴² Therefore, they often extended their education by entering universities and colleges.

Marrs attended the Baptist College at Nashville, Tennessee, on August 27, 1874. Here he became familiar with the intellectual life.¹⁴³ Similar to Heard, who stayed at the university until 1880 to be educated. In 1880, he left the university for a governmental job. After he had finished his job at the government, he went back to the university, the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia, to expand his knowledge of Christianity.¹⁴⁴

Love was also an ambitious man as regards to his education. In 1871 he entered Lincoln University, in Marion Alabama, where he studied approx. for six months. Love had to leave the university because he ran out of money. But on November 1, 1872, the church, to which Love belonged, decided that he should get a theological education, in order to prepare himself for the ministry. The church collected the money, so Love could enter the Augusta Institute, in Georgia, on November 20, 1872. This collection to support the education of these men, indicates that these individuals were respected persons with a certain status in the African-American society. Love showed his dedication clearly in his writings: ‘I was often compelled to go several days without eating, I had no bed or bedding and in the winter I was compelled to build fires in the classroom and sleep on the benches to avoid freezing.’¹⁴⁵ Despite all of these setbacks, Love graduated from Augusta Institute with a great ambition for the intellect.

Turner received several doctorate degrees, while being a preacher. In 1872 he received his doctorate degree in Law from the Pennsylvania University. In 1873, Turner received a

¹⁴¹ Heard, *From slavery*, 34.

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, 16.

¹⁴³ Marrs, *History of Rev*, 103-104

¹⁴⁴ Heard, *From slavery*, 38.

¹⁴⁵ Love, *History of*, 88-94.

second degree from the Wilberforce University, on account of his service as a Christian minister and his large contribution to the literature of the African-American race.

Status and respect for the progressive individuals were revealed in several ways. As stated previously, respect was showed by their by financing the further education of these African-Americans. Another way of obtaining respect in the African-American community was to become a religious leader within its community.

In terms of concepts, the calling played a prominent role throughout and within the Bible. The most dominant term that signified the calling in the Old Testament had been the Hebrew term *qura*. The term was not restricted to one event or to one person. It was used for naming, the call of an individual as notion in the relationship to God. It must be seen as an invitation, a divine call to a mission.¹⁴⁶ The progressive individuals in this thesis were all called to the house of God. In this thesis I state that the Call to the house of God most often came unexpected and suddenly. The progressive African-Americans received their calls at respectable young ages. The majority of individuals that I investigated received their calling between their seventeenth and thirty-third year of life. The majority of these young men became attracted to spiritual and religious life in the prime of their lives. All converted men struggled with their feelings of sin and the desire to be called to the ministry of God. At the time of their callings, most African-American men were already involved in religious life; all had joined a certain church in which they had become active church-members.

According to research, God had called Marrs with the words: 'Go, thou, and preach the Gospel. I will be with you always, even to the end of the world. Then Satan would say to me, "You are not good enough; you are unworthy;" and with him I would agree. But hark! The Spirit would say, "Whom God calls he will qualify." Then the wicked spirit would say, "You are not converted." But the Spirit of God would again manifest itself and ask me, "Do you remember the time God freed you?" Then I remembered the passage of Scripture, "Try the Spirit; see which be of God; for many have gone out."¹⁴⁷ This passage indicates that in that specific moment, Marrs was called to the ministry of God. From that moment onwards Marrs would manifest himself as a preacher, called by the house of God.

The same happened to Hood. He was impressed by his calling to the ministry of God when he turned twenty-one. At that time, he led it rest, but he knew that he should feel that it was his responsibility to send the message of God to his people. In 1856, when he moved to

¹⁴⁶ Dierenfield and White, *A history of African-American*, 11

¹⁴⁷ Marrs, *History of the Rev.*, 74.

New York, he finally felt the responsibility of his calling and Hood petitioned for a license to preach.¹⁴⁸

Love became converted in the spring of 1868, shortly thereafter, in July 1868; Dr. W.H. McIntosh baptized him, after which Love got the permission to preach his sermons in several places.¹⁴⁹

Contrary to the other preachers and ministers mentioned above, Heard started to seek conversion every year after he entered the ME Church, South. The ministers told him that all he had to do was to believe in the Lord. Then, in 1879, Heard attended several meetings in April and May in Athens, Georgia and spent many hours every night at the Altar. At one night, just before the service would begin, Heard reached the conclusion that open confession of sins and his acknowledgement of Christ as his savior were the things to do. Heard seemed unable to make his confession and acknowledgement, but while he was standing on his feet, unable to speak, faith came to him: 'My mouth flew open and I shouted for joy, and then I openly acknowledged that I was a sinner and that Christ was my Savior and that he was willing and ready to surrender ALL to him.'¹⁵⁰ On May 16, 1879, Heard was finally called to the house of God.¹⁵¹ In June, he applied for a license to preach at the Quarterly Conference of the Methodist church.¹⁵² After three months Heard was found ready to preach his trial of sermons at the local Church and became a licensed preacher.¹⁵³

Turner obtained his license to preach the Gospel among his people at the age of nineteen, in 1853. 'Large crowds of white and black would come long distances to hear him and listen to the power of his eloquence.'¹⁵⁴ This statement indicates how Turner gained respect and status within the American society.

Not only Turner gained respect by preaching his sermons within the community, so did Hood. He wrote the next quote in his book: 'to care for the spiritual welfare of people you must be of them and among them. No white man could have lived among the colored people, as it is necessary for a pastor to do, and yet retain the respect, or even toleration, of the white people in most sections of the South.'¹⁵⁵ Hood also enjoyed the respect of the white and African-Americans within his community by being a minister of his prominent church.

¹⁴⁸ Hood, *One hundred years*, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Love, *History of*, 142.

¹⁵⁰ Heard, *From Slavery*, 64.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 65.

¹⁵² *Ibidem*, 86.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, 68.

¹⁵⁴ Ponton, *Life and times*, 35.

¹⁵⁵ Hood, *One hundred years*, 16.

Love experienced the same positive attention while he preached his sermons in the Baptist church. Even *The Times* wrote: ‘Rev. E. K. Love has the entire confidence and respect of the citizens of Thomasville, white and black. The church is filled every night to its utmost capacity; all around the iron railing is crowded by anxious listeners and the square in front of the church is crowded with persons anxious to hear the eloquent preacher through the windows.’¹⁵⁶

Marrs became respected within the community when he joined the U.S Army and delivered his prayers to the sick and wounded soldiers. Not yet recognized as a preacher or minister from a certain congregation, he wrote: ‘At their headquarters I had a consultation with them respecting my duties as a non-commissioned officer.’¹⁵⁷ Even when he was not recognized as a preacher by the American and African-American society, whites and African-American who allowed him to preach respected him.

My research allows me to conclude that the progressive African-Americans obtained respect, status and control within the African-American community, as well as in the American community, through their intellect, education, and their calling to the Ministry of God, This opened the doors to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Entering the priesthood of God made it conceivable to win respect of whites and African-Americans within the community. Besides it allowed the progressive African-Americans to take over the control in the independent African-American churches, which at the same time gave them an unusual distinction within their communities.

5.4 Attracting worshippers

The independent church had not been viable without its followers. In this section I will discuss how the several churches attracted their worshippers.

Against all expectations, the national army played an important role in the creation of the independent Black churches. A lot of soldiers who had joined the army in the North during the Civil War, came down to South to convert the African-American slaves and freedmen. During the Civil War many colored men fought in the First Regiment of the U.S Colored Troops. Turner also fought in the First Regiment of the U.S Colored Troops and became a leading figure in the organization. He was the man who brought hope and love in the State of Georgia. He was sent to the homeless and nameless people, and these people were

¹⁵⁶ Love, *The history of*, 99.

¹⁵⁷ Marrs, *History of the Rev*, 24.

eager to hear the Word of Life from one of their own race. Turner brought light into the dark, 'Night and day, Sunday and week days, the heroes went forth to their task.'¹⁵⁸

Marrs became, just like Turner, a leader of the Colored Troops: 'I had twenty-seven men, all told, and I was elected their captain to lead them to Louisville.'¹⁵⁹ During his journey as a soldier, Marrs noted that several priests took care of the destiny of the troops. The sermons by the African-American preachers during the Civil War gave the soldiers support and respect during the time they served the national army. Besides, not all soldiers had been converted before they started to serve the army. This gave chaplains, like Turner, the opportunity to propagate the Christian religion among the colored soldiers. By the movement of the U.S army, the army chaplains could also easily spread the word of God, and recruit many new worshippers for their churches. By moving through the South, the clergymen could reach a great number of African-American slaves and freedmen.

Not only the African-American chaplains became important in the recruitment of African-Americans, the clergymen also became active recruiters in order to attract more worshippers to their churches.

All preachers and ministers, researched in this thesis, had consecrated a significant time of their lives to missionary work. Marrs became a member of the Central District Organization for eight years, in which he was appointed twice as missionary for the district. Bishop Hood became a missionary for the AME Zion Church;¹⁶⁰ Love served for four years as missionary for the State of Georgia under the Home Mission Board of New York and the White Georgia Mission Board.¹⁶¹ Turner became the most intriguing missionary of his time; he believed that the church was so basically established in doctrine and that the divine fathers built the church government, that expansion would serve as a means to enlarge the whole. African Methodism could be found wherever the African-Americans would settle down in search of the home of Christianity.

Missionary work played a big role in the creation of the independent church because the missionaries spread the word of God; thereby they helped to establish self-determination among the African-American slaves and freedmen. They created a place of their own, where African-Americans could worship their own religion without interference of the white; a peaceful place where the African-American man was respected in his own thoughts and traditions.

¹⁵⁸ Marrs, *History of the Rev.*, 79.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 54.

¹⁶⁰ Hood, *Sketch of*, 84.

¹⁶¹ Love, *History of*, 88.

Furthermore, missionary work also became important in a financial way. Love confirmed this when he wrote that incidental missionary collection amounted to more than two thousand dollars to provide for the church's buildings, liquidating debts, and financing the travelling preachers.¹⁶² Corresponding to this, Hood mentioned that his people raised thousands of dollars a year for missionary purposes. The members of the independent church found it very important that the missionaries would spread the word of God, and that they would attract members for their churches.¹⁶³

In summary, missionary work formed an important pillar in the establishment of the independent church, as it attracted African-Americans with common interest toward the churches and supported the churches in a financial way.

5.5 Church as Voice of Protest

The establishment of the independent church somehow followed indirectly from a theory called double consciousness by W.E.B du Bois, previously motioned in my theoretical framework. 'After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teutonic and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with avail, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.'¹⁶⁴

This theory had caused an impermeable barrier between white Americans and African-Americans in the United States. I suppose that the behavior of the African-Americans was influenced by what other white people thought and which was distorted by the negative image of white Americans of their race. This led to low self-esteem. The color issue was created by the fact that people were stereotyped and opinions were prejudiced. Segregation and racism caused a divided American society, in which the African-Americans were left out. Self-consciousness of the African-American helped these men in their fight for equality and civil

¹⁶² Love, *The history*, 201.

¹⁶³ Hood, *One hundred years*, 67.

¹⁶⁴ Du Bois, *The soul of black*, 11.

rights. Du Bois argued that double consciousness would become an important part in the accomplishment of equal right and self-respect for the African-Americans.¹⁶⁵

Tracing the autobiographies of the progressive individuals, it occurred to me that indeed double-consciousness and self-consciousness formed the basis to challenge racial subordination. As Marris stated, just after the abolition of slavery: 'Ideas of freedom began to steal across my brain, and my mind was active with the probabilities of being able some day to put into actual practice the scattering thoughts of my earlier years.'¹⁶⁶ As a race, we were about to cast our ballot for the first time in life, and that we would cast it for weal or woe.'¹⁶⁷ Here Marris indicates that the oppression of the whites had closed his mind, but now, not stereotyped as a slave anymore he had the courage to challenge his faith. In almost the same way Love described the same event of changing the behavior of the African-American from acting like victims of their enslavement to taking action and overcoming their oppressed position in the American society. 'The elevation of the country and the world in intelligence, in justice, in liberty, in moral improvement, and in all the means of private and social happiness is a subject which is occupying a greater number of ardent and generous spirits today more so than at any former period.'¹⁶⁸ Freedom brought self-consciousness, whereby the African-Americans saw the opportunity to change their behavior towards their suppression and become active protesters against the unequal and restrictive treatment in the white churches and in American society. Hood also clarified this in one of his works as he argued: 'To reach the top, the black man must go up on his own plane; he must climb his own ladder. The white man will never step aside to make way for him. The feeling of superiority is inherent in the white race in this country.'¹⁶⁹ After the Civil War, self-consciousness became inherently connected to the African-American race, as is evident by the previous statements of the African-American preachers of the independent churches.

As self-consciousness indirectly formed the basis for the creation of the independent African-American churches, the abolition of slavery directly made room to legally form the first independent African-American institutions. The end of slavery allowed the African-Americans to set up their own churches. In these churches, the African-Americans were free

¹⁶⁵ Shamoon Zamir, *Dark voices, W.E.B Du Bois and American thought, 1888-1903* (Chicago 1995) 116; As Herbert Marcuse puts it in his examination of the relation of Hegel's thought to the development of social science: The world is an estranged and untrue world as long as man destroy its dead objectivity and recognize himself and his own life behind the fixed form of things and law. When he finally wins his self-consciousness, he knows not only to the truth of himself but also of his world. And with the recognition of the doing, he will try to put his truth into action and make the world what it essentially is, namely the fulfillment of man's self-consciousness.

¹⁶⁶ Marris, *The history*, 17.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁸ Love, *The history*, 246.

¹⁶⁹ Hood, *Sketch of the early*, 65.

to organize their religious meeting in their own manner, without any interruption of the white Americans.¹⁷⁰ The tension between the whites and African-Americans in the white “mother” churches had grown, as Hood wrote: ‘It was the race that was oppressed, it was the race that moved. It was a movement by which a race, hampered, proscribed, regulated, and oppressed, gave a grand united exhibition of its determination to find in its own organizations that religious liberty which was denied it in the white Church.’¹⁷¹ Consistent to the story of Marrs, he wrote: ‘we were now free, but were not as yet enfranchised. This was no place for a Negro.’¹⁷²

As such, I conclude that the establishment of the independent African-American church was a response to the overall oppression of the African-Americans in the American society. Subsequently, the independent African-American church occupied a stance against racial segregation and formed political resistance against the racial and unequal subordinations in the American society.

Hood thanked God that he had ‘opened the way by which he had given the oppressed race the Church, the best thing he could have done on earth, as a field for development, and also as a means for the exhibition of his capacity for development.’ Hood used this sentiment to enter the political world in order to challenge the racial segregation. In October 1865, he was elected as president of the first political convention of African-American at Raleigh in the South. At this occasion, he advocated for equal rights of the African-American race.

Likewise, Turner became an active politician using the independent African-American church as his stage. After the Congress had passed the Reconstruction Acts in 1867, he became a reconstruction State Legislator in Macon. He became the first African-American State Legislator during the congressional reconstruction (1867-1876).¹⁷³ After Turner had served the constitutional convention, he was elected to Georgia’s House of Representatives. For three years, Turner was an active politician and worked hard to improve the position of the African-American in the American society. ‘If this is not now a free government, if citizens cannot now be protected, if the three amendments have been undermined by the Supreme Court we must have another, and if that fails, then another; and we must neither stop nor pause until the Constitution shall become a perfect shield for every right of every human being beneath our flag.’¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The black church*, 21; Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 15.

¹⁷¹ Hood, *Sketch of early history*, 7.

¹⁷² Marrs, *The history*, 116-117.

¹⁷³ Stephen Ward Angel, ‘Henry McNeal Turner 1834 -1915’ *UIPUI* (2002) 12.

¹⁷⁴ Henry Turner, *The barbarous decision of the United States Supreme Court declaring the Civil Right Act unconstitutional and disrobing the Colored Race of Civil Protection* (Atlanta 1893) 22.

Besides inspiring his people in the independent churches, Love was a proponent to the disenfranchisement of the African-Americans. He longed for African-American political influence and representation in the three sections of the American government.¹⁷⁵ As a Republican activist, Love opposed the discrimination and the segregation of Jim Crow in the American community.

The independent church became a direct connection to religion and politics. The independent church had established itself in response to the overall oppression, but at the same time it became a political stage in order to challenge the racial and unequal subordinations of the African-American race.

5.6 Sense of Ethnic identity

In my theoretical framework I discussed the theories of Durkheim and Tillich. According to them religion is a social phenomenon, experienced and shared by a group of people and therefore forms the heart of culture.¹⁷⁶

Without an integrated culture and religion, the African-Americans could not have established an independent church. Because the African-Americans shared the same experiences, they were able to raise the core value of their own communities, which shaped their communal cultural sense. 'Their destiny is one and their interest is common.'¹⁷⁷ Their cultural interest differed from the white man's, which caused disaffection by the African-Americans. The white man's church would not allow the African-Americans to worship in their own manner. Cultural differences formed the desire to create their own independent churches. To substantiate this argument I use a quote of Hood, which he used in one of his papers, called *God's purpose in the Negro church as seen in the history of the movement*. He stated: 'To our mind, this was not a Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Baptist movement. It was not a Bethel Union, not a Zion Movement, but a general, grand, united and simultaneous Negro movement. It was the race that was oppressed, and it was the race that moved.'¹⁷⁸ Their common experience of oppression and their African roots ultimately formed the basis of cultural extension and expression. Equivalent to the argument of Love he states that 'the religion of Christ is based upon common-sense reasoning. We have hold of the chain of reason, the opposite end of which is centered in the eternal bosom of God. Religion requires

¹⁷⁵ Sandy Dwayne, 'E.K. Love 1850-1900', *digital Library of Georgia*, 2005, http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/meta/html/nge/ngen/meta_nge_ngen_h-2854.htm (June 21, 2013).

¹⁷⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* (New York 1995) 44.

¹⁷⁷ Love, *The history*, 124.

¹⁷⁸ Hood, *Sketch of the early history*, 62.

us to live a common sense, practical life.¹⁷⁹ For the same reasons, the Baptist congregation suited the African-American without any doubt, because this congregation included ceremonial traditions, which were familiar to the African-Americans from West Africa. This is in accordance to the theory of Tillich, as he argues that core values will survive forcefully with the free transmission to other destinations. Although the African-Americans were transmitted involuntary overseas, the majority maintained the same religious heritage.

Scholars in the tradition of Karl Marx argue that religious institutions released individuals from pain and injustice.¹⁸⁰ In the genesis of the independent church, this institution also serves as place where the African-Americans could relieve their pain of the injustice of slavery. This is also represented in one of the sermons of Love as he wrote: ‘No longer spend your needless pains, To mend and Polish o’er your chains, But break them of before your rise.’¹⁸¹ Here he indicates that the independent church could liberate the African-Americans from the pain of slavery.

Summarizing, the independent church was partly caused by a sense of ethnic identity. The majority of the African-Americans shared the same cultural traditions, which subsequently caused a common interest. The independent church represented a collective will, in which the African-American could be liberated from the pain and injustice of their enslavement. In agreement with Myrdal, I state that the church was linked to the status of the African-American race. It became an escape from the painful humiliation of slavery first and later of the economic situation caused by discrimination and racism. Therefore, I firmly agree that slavery fostered a desire to build an own institution where the African-Americans could organize and establish their own cultural and educational events without any interference from white Americans.

5.7 Salient institution

Up until the reconstruction the African-Americans had only established and maintained one institution of their own in the American society: the independent African-American church. After the abolition of slavery, this institution also had to exercise other functions in the society in order to satisfy the demands and needs of the African-American people. As argued before, the independent church became the foundation for many other activities, which were

¹⁷⁹ Love, *The history*, 112

¹⁸⁰ Jacqueline S. Mattis, ‘Religion and African American political life’ *Political Psychology* 2 (2001) 267.

¹⁸¹ Love, *The history*, 226.

not only religiously orientated. The preachers and ministers often took the lead in shaping the policies within and outside the church.

After the abolition of slavery, the Black church established itself independently beside their white ‘brethren’. It became a center for religious enrichment and secular development. In order to establish their churches independently, the African-Americans needed a stable church organization. The religious leaders were reliable for the creating the organizing matters within the churches. My research shows that every religious leader had his own views and interpretations of organizing their churches. As an example: Turner wrote in his biography: ‘the service of the church is an army of soldiers, but there is only one general. In the army of the Lord, all are in ranks. Hence the church could easily dispense with her leaders and still remain a church, but she cannot dispense with God and the people. God has ever been zealous for the cause of his people.’¹⁸² Each worshipper had a rank within the church and the religious leader was at the top of these ranks. He was the only person, who stood close to God and who could dispense the word of the Lord to his people. In other words, Turner argued that the bishops in the AME church were not a privileged class. They should be the servants of the connection between men and God. They were the central power and temporal government of the church and it’s people.¹⁸³

On the contrary, Love argued that the religious leaders created a feeling of distrust and disrespect among their worshippers. In 1877, the Church was very much divided in the hearts and the sentiment of his people. Love was able to reunite the two parties, and a union followed very soon. This unification led to an increase to the well being of the church. The increase of collections and large congregations showed that the feeling within the church under his leadership improved substantially.¹⁸⁴ Following I summarize some examples of how the independent churches were able to organize their church, in order to form a stable institution within the African-American society.

According to Oram and Sibleman, the African-Americans were involuntary isolated in the American society, due to their predominantly lower-class status.¹⁸⁵ In other words, because of their race, African-Americans did not have the choice to participate in the American society. Referring to an incident with the K.K.K., Marrs indicates how isolated the African-Americans lived from the white society, as he wrote: ‘I then called the colored men

¹⁸² Turner, *African letters*, 67.

¹⁸³ Ponton, *Life and times*, 97.

¹⁸⁴ Love, *The history*, 141.

¹⁸⁵ Anthony M. Orum, ‘A reappraisal of the social and political participation of Negroes’, *American Journal of Sociology* 72, (1966) 33.

together and organized a society for self-protection, calling ourselves the Loyal League.’¹⁸⁶ Almost completely isolated from the American society, colored men had to organize a society to protect their race from outrageous acts of whites, which did not welcome the freemen in the American society. As a reaction to their isolation and lower class status within the American society, the African-Americans established their own independent churches.

In times of slavery the majority of the African-Americans had followed the theory of ‘other worldly’, but soon, during and after the abolition of slavery the African-Americans made place for the theory of ‘this worldly’. The African-Americans were allowed to ‘participate’ in the American society. At least they were allowed to set up their own institutions. The African-Americans became more oriented towards ‘this-worldly’, which provided critiques on the social order within the United States.

The independent churches became self-controlled African-American institutions, with a considerable freedom to develop their own religious opinions without any interference of white Americans. This is also argued by Hood, as he writes: ‘But God said: "Go forward", and forward he went, and on the other bank the daughters of Ethiopia sang: "The Lord has triumphed gloriously." The Negro was in the wilderness; but he was free, and untrammled, with an open field for development before him.’¹⁸⁷

Self-control, self-respect and pride should follow the creation of the independent African-American churches. Establishing their own African-American churches developed and affirmed their capacity to be self-reliant and self-controlling. As Marrs argued: ‘We never differ in church matters, but work together in unison in anything we think will redound to the church interest.’ According to Marrs, no personal influences were needed in the policies of the church organization. The religious leaders should work in the best interest of their people; make them liable for the American society. Similar to Hood, who stated that the African-American man had no opportunity than what the church gave him. ‘The church was not only his pillar and ground of truth, but it was all he could lay claim to in all this broad land.’ The church became his common school, his lyceum, his college, his municipal council, his legislative hall and his congress. The church would teach everything what was needed in this ‘new’ America, where the slaves had become freed-people. The policy of his church became an educational institution in which he prepared his worshipper for the American Society, learning how to respect the laws and usages of the society and the art of the government.

In fact the independent African-American church became a nation within a nation as

¹⁸⁶ Marrs, *The history*, 90.

¹⁸⁷ Hood, *One hundred years*, 80.

‘Mission and Purpose of the Church’ published in the discipline of the Wesleyan ‘Articles of Religion’, stating that ‘each local church of the AME church shall be engaged in carrying the spirit of the original Free African Society out of which the AME church evolved, that is to seek out and save the lost and serve the needy through a continuing program of: 1. Preaching the gospels, 2. Feeding the hungry, 3. Clothing the naked, 4. Housing the homeless, 5. Cheering the fallen, 6. Providing jobs for the jobless, 7. Administering to the need of those in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, caring for the sick, the shut in, the mentally and socially disturbed, and 8. Encouraging thrift and economic advantage.’¹⁸⁸

Besides a religious place to worship, the independent church became a social center within the African-American society. Love also showed this in his biography. On December 12, 1875, he declared: ‘the man who deals with the spiritual affairs of a people must be most dearly and tenderly related to them. He who teaches the soul of people must enter and live in their souls. His soul should be large enough to take all of his people into his heart of hearts. The pastor is the member of every family circle in his congregation. He is the spiritual overseer of the church of God, and is the adviser of the church in all his concerns.’¹⁸⁹ His statement indicates that the independent church also showed its social character within the African-American society. The church not only supplied spiritual solace; it was also concerned about the social matters within the African-American society. This manifested itself in several areas.

Marrs, who was called to the Gospel Ministry on July 16, 1873, was granted a license to preach in the New Castle Baptist Church.¹⁹⁰ He became very much concerned with the use of alcohol among the African-American Christians. He observed the members of the New Castle Baptist church during his time as a preacher in 1873 and he concluded: ‘Nearly all the Colored People, even professed Christians, are dram drinkers.’¹⁹¹ Marrs became an advocate for the temperance of the African-American people. Likewise, Love, who was known as a Republican activist, supported the temperance as well.

The temperance movement began in Georgia, in the late 1820s. Most of the temperance activists were evangelical Protestants who thought that alcoholic beverages were harmful and sinful to the individual drinker, and to the society at large. It would bring ‘destroyed families, reputation and it would bring poverty, disorder and crime.’¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The black church*, 55.

¹⁸⁹ Love, *The history*, 102.

¹⁹⁰ Marss, *History of the Rev*, 97.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 40.

¹⁹² Marrs, *The history of the Rev*, 102.

Both clergymen turned into active members in the movement to abolish alcohol, in order to enhance the African-American community. In their political point of view, alcohol obstructed the progression of the freed African-Americans in the American society.

In 1878, white Americans requested Marrs, as a colored preacher, to influence his people to sign the petition, which would prohibit alcohol beverages. Marrs was willing to discuss this with the elders. They wanted to support him, but they did not think that Marrs would be successful among his people. Against all odds, Marrs' people responded positively and over five hundred people signed the pledge.¹⁹³ While being a religious leader, he was able to use his influence to direct his people to a certain behavior of political gravity. The works and biographies showed that the church tried to improve the social conditions of the African-Americans by taking a close look at the community itself. Even though, they wanted to try to improve the status of the African-American man in the American society, they also wanted to change the social behaviors within the African-American community.

The Church looked beyond the social condition of alcohol use among its members: they were even committed to the financial conditions of their members. While Heard served the African Methodist Church, he not only increased the membership of the churchgoers, but at the same time was able to reduce the debts of his people. Likewise, E.K Love was able to establish Savannah's first privately owned African-American bank, in 1900.¹⁹⁴ Besides propagate the word of God, the African-American preachers and minister contributed to the social conditions of their people within the African-American communities. They became community figures, which were not only committed to the church, but were also devoted to the social conditions of the African-Americans.

The independent church became an instrument to improve the social and economic condition of the African-Americans. At the same time, these influential religious leaders shaped the independent African-American church as a form of protest against the poor economic and social condition of their race. They united the African-American members under a religious institution in order to rebel against the social order in the American society. The independent church was created as a protest movement against the harsh living conditions of the African-Americans. Therefore, most preachers and ministers were involved in the establishment of publishing houses. In addition they were also often committed to an African-American independent newspaper. For example, in the late 1890s, Love supported

¹⁹³ Marrs, *The history of the Rev.*, 114 -15.

¹⁹⁴ Martin, 'E.K Love 1850-1900', 56.

the establishment of an independent African American Baptist national publishing House, and Marrs became a member of the editorial staff of the *American Citizen*, edited by Hon. Green B. Thomas in Lexington, in 1872.¹⁹⁵ Likewise, Love became the editor for the *Baptist Truth* and the *Centennial Record*.¹⁹⁶ While these preachers and ministers became editors of these newspapers, they were able to share their point of view with an even larger public than just the worshippers of Jesus Christ in their churches. In this way they were able to extend their fight for the equality of men in a broader context.

In the independent churches, African-Americans were consistently exposed to social, political, and economic opportunities, which could be sought and held by all members equally. The church became an organizational site for social and political activities, a center for economic development and growth. The religious leaders provided a safe environment, free of oppression and racism. Even Turner underlined this; his title page read as follows: 'The Barbarous Decision of the United States Supreme Court Declaring the Civil Rights Act Unconstitutional And Denying the Colored Race of All Civil Protection.' Apart from being a religious institution, the independent church became a platform for the development of the African-American race. It contributed to the social and financial condition within the African-American community.

Partly, this platform for development was formed as a reaction to the isolation of their race within the American society. As Hood argued: 'He was shut out from the learned professions; he was shut out from the mechanic arts; he neither had the opportunity to develop nor to exhibit his capacity for development.'¹⁹⁷

Being involved in the expansion of their intellect, the religious leaders found it important that their own people could attain a proper education. As mentioned before, the whites and free African-American Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists took the lead in the establishment of schools and colleges with the objective to help the African-Americans in the development of their religion and morality during the emancipation. For example, the Baptists, who established Shaw University at Raleigh, in 1865.¹⁹⁸ In cooperation with the independent Black churches, agencies like the American Missionary Association, the National Freedmen's Relief Association of New York and the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association sent over a hundred missionaries with a support of almost one million dollars to

¹⁹⁵ Marss, *The history of Rev*, 139.

¹⁹⁶ Love, *History of*, 101.

¹⁹⁷ Hood, *One hundred years*, 63.

¹⁹⁸ Montgomery, *Under their own vine*, 24 -37.

the South, in order to support educational programs among the African-Americans and to establish school and colleges.

After the Civil War, many religious African-American leaders were able to educate their people themselves. As they argued: ‘Learning from significant others.’¹⁹⁹ As argued before, the ministers and preachers were often the only people who had enjoyed some education and were therefore able to educate their own race. They not only offered religious education, but often also established schools and colleges next to the churches. Like Marrs who opened his own college and like Heard who created school buildings near the churches to educate his own people. Heard wrote: ‘In those days we were building schools.’²⁰⁰ In 1870, Hood even had as many as 49,000 African-American children in his schools. Subsequently, he established a department for the deaf, blind and dumb African-Americans and had about sixty inmates under care for instruction at the expense of the state.²⁰¹

Education became an important element in the struggle for freedom and equality. A young African American journalist wrote in 1865: ‘Freedom and schoolbooks go hand in hand, an uneducated person stays a slave, and an educated one is free.’ The young preachers and ministers realized the importance of education, long before the Civil War even started. Heard wrote: ‘At the end of five years freedom came; but there were no teachers in the part of the county in which I lived and no schools for Negroes.’²⁰² They had the ambition to become good educated men, as mentioned before. But that was not their only ambition; the most clergymen committed themselves to the education of the other freedmen in the South. Heard declared: ‘I do desire to help the young people of a race so deprived of educational and material opportunities.’²⁰³

Consequently most religious leaders decided to become teachers in order to give their race better opportunities in the American society. Marrs became a schoolteacher in Simpsonville after he had served the National Army. Subsequently, he was asked to teach the district school by the trustees of School District No. 13, of Jefferson County, Ky, in 1883.²⁰⁴ Heard became a schoolteacher at a public school. Love entered the Augusta Institute in 1872, where he assisted his scholar Dr. Joseph T. Robert and delivered several lectures. He became a beloved teacher. After these preachers received their education, they were prepared to contribute to the education of their people. It was their ambition to develop the African-

¹⁹⁹ Asante and Vandi, *Contemporary black*, 195.

²⁰⁰ Heard, *Sketch of*, 74.

²⁰¹ Hood, *One hundred years*, 60.

²⁰² Heard, *Sketch*, 32.

²⁰³ *Ibidem*, 16.

²⁰⁴ Marrs, *History of the Rev*, 136.

American community. In dedication to his work Marrs wrote: ‘I became an active worker in the church and Sunday school, and did what I could for the development of the minds of the children and older people. In the winter I taught school day and night.’²⁰⁵

The independent church started to serve the poor by building schools, which eventually would shape the forces of ultimate challenge of the racial and gender subordination.

Teaching at the public or Sunday schools formed their basis to challenge the racial and gender subordination. The education of their own people became a platform where ministers and preachers not only developed their race, but improved their political skills as well. Teaching involved certain skills, which eventually became important for the political life of the African-Americans. It functioned as a platform to learn how to speak up, to express important information and to persuade an audience with just simple but really important words. Education became an overall need for the African-Americans in their struggle to acquire equality.

5.8 Uplift of a race

I argue, as does Martin Luther King Jr., that there is a relationship between the intensity of religious belief and practice and the intensity of political activism. ‘Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate the valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice: now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksand’s of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood; now is the time to make justice a reality for all God’s children.’²⁰⁶ Even before Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his speech in 1963, Woodson discussed the relation between religion and politics in his book *The Negro Church*. He stated that some of the African-Americans, who were devoted by the Christian work, were not fitted for such a calling to the political arena. However, he argued that during the reconstruction era, many necessities needed to be supplied to the African-American community. The African-American preachers were often the only ones in the community sufficiently well developed to lead the people. Woodson argued that they had to devote their time not only to the church work, but also to every other matter of concern to uplift the African-American race.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Marrs, *History of the Rev*, 89

²⁰⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., excerpt from “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963 reprinted in James M. Washington, editor, *A statement of hope: the essential writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* 217-18.

²⁰⁷ Woodson, *The history of the Negro church*, 221.

In accordance with Woodson, Love argued that ‘the time had come where the negro needed to make his own history, shape his own destiny, solve his own problems, act well his part in church and state and occupy a prominent place on the stage of progress.’²⁰⁸ Progress within state and church was made possible by the religious leaders of the independent church, as they were committed to challenge the social and financial conditions and to support the education of their race within the African-American society.

In agreement with Love, Hood argued that church organizations were fully qualified for the great work of uplifting and saving souls.²⁰⁹ Also Heard stated: ‘The AME Church is an instrument in this country that has done, and is doing more for the uplift of the Race than any instrument conditioned.’²¹⁰ Marris, for example, formed an Agricultural and Mechanical Association in order to develop his race. ‘Their persuasions induced me to leave the corn-field and enter the school-room to labor for the development of my race.’²¹¹ In order to uplift the African-American race, the independent church became a stage to challenge the racial barriers in the American society. The religious leaders within the independent church became valuable figures to support progress and development within the African-American community. ‘We are living in an age of mental activity; an age of invention and wonderful development; a busy, progressive age; a wonderful century. No century of the past has been so remarkable with results as the nineteenth. The church is the advance guard of civilization.’²¹²

Progress and development were needed to uplift the African-American race within the American society; the most progressive individuals fought for equality within the African-American community. ‘It is essential to just government, we recognize the equality of all men before the law, and hold that it is the duty of government in its dealings with the people to mete out equal and exact justice to all, of whatever nativity, race, color or persuasion, religious or political; and it being the appropriate object of legislation to enact great fundamental principles into law.’²¹³ Love argued that development and progress were needed to uplift the African-American race in order to reach equality.

Contrary to most accepted ideas of religious leaders to uplift the African-American race in America, some progressive individuals shared other opinions.

²⁰⁸ Love, *History of the first African*, page D.

²⁰⁹ Hood, *One hundred years* 186.

²¹⁰ Heard, *From slavery*, 19

²¹¹ Marris *The history of the Rev*, 79.

²¹² Love *History of the first African*, 213

²¹³ Turner, *Babarc*, 5.

By the end of reconstruction more and more African-Americans adopted the idea of a special vocation to evangelize Africa.²¹⁴ A statement to evangelize Africa was confirmed at the General Conference of 1872, in a report of the Church Union: 'We are now more than ever convinced that the AME Church has yet a mission to perform, not only in the elevation and religious training of our long neglected people in the United States, but in the perfect evangelization of Africa and the Islands of the seas.'²¹⁵ Several churches accomplished this mission to evangelize the African-Americans and the men in Africa. Both leading figures, Turner and Heard became the advocates of this political movement.

By 1880 Turner had become one of the leading advocates of the immigration of African-Americans to Liberia. With the support of white businessmen, Turner was able to organize the international Migration Society in order to promote the emigration of African-American men back to Africa.²¹⁶ 'It is known wherever Christianity has planted the Cross of Calvary and civilization has walked upon the earth.' His missionary opinion was that the African-American slaves were brought to America, under God, to be civilized and Christianized for the purpose of returning back to Africa and building a their own civilization over there. As mentioned previously, Turner saw civilization as a continuously growing and developing phenomena.²¹⁷ 'We do not believe that it is possible, from the past of history and the present aspect of affairs, for our people to live in this country peaceably, and educate and elevate their children to that degree which they desire.'²¹⁸ Between 1895 and 1896, Turner organized two voyages by boat to Liberia which carried over five hundred African-Americans.

Turner influenced Heard with his ideas about the immigration of African-Americans to Liberia. Heard wrote: 'I was so impressed with the pictures and historic facts he presented of the race in the past ages, and of the men of the present, that my life is largely what it is because of the impressions made at this meeting.'²¹⁹ Heard also became largely involved in the diplomacy between Africa and the United States. In February 1895, he became the Minister Residents Consul General to Liberia for four years. Like Turner, Heard thought that the African-Americans freedmen could build their futures somewhere else. He stated: 'I do desire to help the young people of a race so deprived of educational and material

²¹⁴ Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, *African-American religion, interpretive essays in history and culture* (New York 1997) 185.

²¹⁵ Charles Smith, *A history of the A.M.E Church II, 1865 -1933* (Philadelphia 1922) 22.

²¹⁶ Angel, 'Henry McNeal Turner', 7.

²¹⁷ Ponton, *Life and times*, 77.

²¹⁸ Litwack, *Been in the storm*, 308.

²¹⁹ Heard, *From slavery*, 90

opportunities. While they are ten times, yea, one hundred times better today than in the past, yet they are not equal to other people.²²⁰ At the end of his life, Heard was able to establish a diplomatic political career. In January 1909, he sailed to the West Coast of Africa to continue his missionary work among the African people. Like Turner, Heard thought that Africa was the grandest field on earth for the labor of civilization and the Christian Church.²²¹ To summarize, at the end of the nineteenth century a division in opinions occurred in that religious leaders wanted to uplift their race, whether America or in Africa.

²²⁰ Heard, *From slavery*, 64.

²²¹ Turner, *African Letters*, 55.

6. The Aftermath of the Reconstruction Era

In the previous chapters I presented the genesis of the independent church and tried to explain why a whole race immediately decided to separate from their white ‘mother’ churches after the Civil War. It seemed to me that the independent African-American church had established itself within the American society at the end of the eighteenth century. But to what extent had this institution established itself stably?

As I previously argued, the church became an independent working organization within its own community and within the American society. African-Americans had come from the degradation of humanity, and worked them selves up to self-respecting and free men and women. The church was a basis for the development of the African-American race. Ministers and preachers became the leading figures in these developments and the independent churches became a platform to achieve this progress. The independent church became the center of the community, where it concerned itself with education, social control and the uplift of its own race.

I argue that the independent church was a self-respecting institution with a solid organization. This institution was recognized by the American society, and was able to stand side by side with the white churches. As is presented in the previous chapters, some whites had been very helpful in the creation of the African-American churches; some donated land and provided buildings in which to worship. Others had reacted outrageously out of fear that the African-Americans would influence political life within the American society. For these reasons I assume that the independent church was established as a solid and recognized institution within the American society.

Simultaneously, the independent church became a platform for political activity, in which the religious charismatic individuals took the lead. They fought against discrimination and separation in the white controlled American society. In the early days the independent African-American churches were established because of the dehumanizing and paternalistic conditions within the white churches. But during the reconstruction days, the African-Americans realized that they had established the church for many more reasons, as mentioned in chapter four. After the emancipation many African-Americans wanted to create a place of their own where they could organize a church in their own manner, without any interference of the white American.

At the end of the eighteenth century, it seemed that the independent African-American church established itself solidly within the African-American society. However, one could also argue that this was disillusionment. Some preachers and ministers thought that they failed in the establishment of their churches. Even though the church was established as an independent institution, they thought that they would never get equal opportunities in the American society. Even after the end of slavery, racial segregation and discrimination manifested itself in the American society. The historian Rayford W. Logan named the century after the Reconstruction the ‘Nadir’ for the African-Americans because of the increasing brutality and decreasing prospect for harmony and justice during this period.²²²

The brutality of the whites against the African-Americans had increased. *The New York Independent* even reported of a burning African-American man in Georgia. The newspaper wrote about the horrible event that happened on a Sunday afternoon: ‘Same Hose, an African-American, was burned on Sunday afternoon in the presence of thousands of people. Before the fire he had been kindled; the mob amused themselves by cutting off the ears, fingers and toes etc., to carry away as mementos. After the burning before the body was cool, it was cut into pieces, the heart and liver being especially cut up and sold. Small pieces of bone bought 25 cent, and a bit of liver, crisply cooked for 10 cent. So eager were the crowd to obtain souvenirs that a rush for the sake was made, and near the body were forced against and had to fight their escape.’²²³

Though many African-Americans remained hopeful for change in America, this period also saw an increasing attention for hopes of racial justice outside of the United States. Between 1877 and 1895, the African-American leaders faced the problem directly; how should they obtain first-class citizenship for the African-American?²²⁴ The African-American religious leaders opened the debate on how to reach this goal. Some leaders advocated physical violence to force concessions from the whites, but the majority suggested that the African-Americans would use peaceful, democratic means to change the unbearable conditions. Some African-Americans encouraged African-Americans to become skilled workers, hoping that if they became indispensable to the prosperity of the South, political and social rights would be granted to them. Others advocated struggle for Civil Rights, specifically the right to vote, on the theory that economic and social rights would follow. A

²²² Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American life and thought: the Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York 1954) 54.

²²³ Edward W. Blyden, ‘The Negro in the United States’, *A.M.E Church Review* 16 (January 1900) 309.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*.

few leaders urged to return back to Africa, like Turner, who advocated for the emigration to Africa, as I mentioned previously.²²⁵

Turner argued: ‘We do not believe that it is possible, from the past of history and the present aspect of affairs, for our people to live in this country peaceably, and educate and elevate their children to that degree which they desire.’²²⁶ Turner saw civilization as a development of the human condition, but during the period after the reconstruction racism and segregation caused many African-Americans to immigrate back to Africa, especially to Liberia. Between 1895 and 1896, Turner organized two ship voyages to Liberia which carried over five hundred African- Americans to Liberia.

Disenfranchisement and Jim Crow laws clouded out any rays of hope that the reconstruction, in which the independent church had a leading role, would bring equality for the African-American race.²²⁷ The African-Americans were shocked by the brutality of the whites, in their experience and tradition no parallel could be found to such hideous barbarities practiced by them, even though they were supposed to be Christians and highly civilized.²²⁸ But for some reasons they were not able to adopt the African-American race as an equal into their communities.

Booker T. Washington argued that the doctrine of economic advancement combined with acceptance of disfranchisement and conciliation with the white South would help the African-Americans in their struggle to racial equality. Washington was the founder and principal of the Tuskegee Institute, an industrial college in Alabama, where he established a program of agricultural and industrial training in combination with the Christian Piety in order to advance the acceptance of the African-Americans in the white society. During a speech at the end of the nineteenth century he called on white America to provide for jobs and industrial education for the African-America. In exchange, African-American would give up demands for social equality and civil rights.²²⁹ Washington’s message to the African-American was that political and social equality were less important as immediate goals than economic respectability and independence. Washington believed that if African-Americans gained an economic foothold, and proved they were useful to the white society, civil rights and social equality would eventually be given to them. African-Americans were urged to

²²⁵ Woodson, *The history of*, 102; Washington, *The story of*, 6; Du Bois, *The soul of*; Ponton, *Life and times*, 3.

²²⁶ Litwack, *Been in the storm*, 308.

²²⁷ Timothy Fulop, *The future golden day of the race, millennialism and black Americans in the Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York 1997) 230.

²²⁸ Blyden, ‘The Negro’, 309.

²²⁹ Louis Harlan and Booker T. Washington, *The making of a black leader 1856-1901* (New York 1972) preface

work as farmers, skilled artisans, domestic servants, and manual laborers to prove to whites that the African-American people were not liars and thieves.²³⁰ Washington argued that the African-American should accept the fact of white supremacy. The white American and the African-American should stay separated in order to mutual progress. Washington advised his own people to stay in the South, obtain a useful education, save money, work hard, and purchase property. Ultimately the African-Americans would earn full citizenship.

The middle class elite had faced the failure of its own progressive ideals in the late nineteenth century, in the aftermath of failed reconstruction and under the gaze of a white America.²³¹ Civil Rights and equality seemed further away than ever.

To change the minified conditions of the African-Americans within the American society, Washington claimed that the African-American should give up at least for the present, three things: first, political power; second, insistence on civil rights; third, higher education of African-American youth. He told his people to concentrate all their energy on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth, and conciliation of the South.²³²

Du Bois argued differently; he said that the South was divided in two separate worlds, 'and separate not simply in the higher realms of social intercourse, but also in church and school, on railway and street-car, in hotels and theatres, in streets and city sections, in books and newspapers, in asylums and jails, in hospitals and graveyards.'²³³ But, argued Du Bois, there is still enough contact for large economic and group cooperation between the African-Americans and the white Americans. Du Bois explained that 'the separation is so thorough and deep, that it absolutely precludes for the present between the races anything like that sympathetic and effective group-training and leadership of the one by the other, such as the American Negro and all backward peoples must have for effectual progress.'²³⁴

A prominent Southern journal voiced this in an editorial. The editorial explained that: 'The experiment that has been made to give the colored students classical training has not been satisfactory. Even though many were able to pursue the course, most of them did so in a parrot-like way, learning what was taught, but not seeming to appropriate the truth and import their instruction, and graduating without sensible aim or valuable occupation for their future.

²³⁰ *Ibidem*.

²³¹ W.E.B Du Bois, *The souls of Black folk* (New York 1999) 17; Like W.E.B Du Bois argued in *The Soul of Black Folk*; The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people, a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people.

²³² Du Bois, *The souls of Blacks*, 40

²³³ *Ibidem*, 50.

²³⁴ *Ibidem*, 111.

The whole scheme has proved a waste of time, efforts, and the money of the state.²³⁵ In other words, the African-Americans needed to regain their self-esteem through their double consciousness, in order to gain equality and Civil rights.

Relating these ideas to the creation of the independent church, I fundamentally argue that the independent African-American church and its charismatic leaders became the most influential educators of self-consciousness and double-consciousness; the independent African-American church became the main institution to educate the African-American race.

Unfortunately at the end of the nineteenth most African-Americans felt that they had failed in their fight to obtain equality and Civil Rights. For these reasons the African-American ministers and preachers also moved away from politics, like H.H Proctor who established the 'Institutional Church'. H.H. Proctor played a central role in creating and sustaining the Institutional Church in Atlanta. His church became the cornerstone of social and spiritual development for the African-Americans.

In 1903, Proctor along with George W. Henderson, President of the Straight University in New Orleans, founded the National Convention of Congregational Workers among the colored people. Proctor was nominated as the first president. The goal of this organization was to help the African-American congregation churches in the south to become self-sufficient, employ more of their own graduated, promote more of their own graduated, and strengthen the theological department of the schools in the American Missionary Association.²³⁶ The Race Riot of 1906 in Atlanta caused Proctor to advocate bringing peace between the races and stopping the remaining tensions. Proctor and Charles T. Hopkins brought twenty white men and twenty African-American together to form the Interracial Committee of Atlanta. Proctor was convinced that part of the cause of the riot and the racial tensions was the lack of recreational activities for the African-Americans in the city. Determined to fill this need, he used the church to provide these recreational activities. He established a library, a kindergarten, an employment bureau, a gymnasium, a ladies' reading parlor and a music room. Counseling helped open the first housing facility for young, employed colored women who had no dwelling.²³⁷

Carter Goodwin Woodson also wrote that H.H. Proctor practically converted his

²³⁶ Rachel Gahaller, 'Henry Huge Proctor' *Blackpast.Org* 2011, <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/proctor-henry-hugh-1868-1933> (June 21, 2013).

²³⁷ *Ibidem*.

church into an organization of such groups as the day nursery, kindergarten, gymnasium, school of music, employment bureau, and Bible school. Woodson argued that ‘the spirituality among the people inclined, but the experience of the church in working with such groups has shown that the church had a better success in making its evangelical appeal to persons under its control than in the case of delivering its message to those who have not been influenced to any great extent by Christian contact.’²³⁸ In other words, Proctor was a strong believer in self-improvement and wanted to give the African-American community of Atlanta the tools for improving their lives. These recreational activities contributed to the life improvement and the development of the African-American Church. The Church became a multi-tasked institution.

In his autobiography between *Black and White*, Proctor describes his dedication to the church: ‘I saw this building rise from the foundation to capstone, and much of my life is built into its very wall.’²³⁹ In other words the church became the heart of the African-American community in which its organization was not only spiritually orientated, but also became a social institution where the African-Americans could expand in education and become self-respecting human beings. The church, he created, became an ‘institutional’ church, where hundreds of young people of the African-American race turned away from places of evil influences and directed their energy into wholesome and uplifting energy.²⁴⁰

In addition, Proctor advocated that the African-Americans were a real part of the American society. The African-Americans should have a voice in the American community. The interests of the African-Americans concerned the American society and should be added to the American policies. ‘We are not Afro-American, but Americans to the manor born. There should be no hyphen in American citizenship.’²⁴¹ Therefore he advocated that the African-Americans should take part in the Spanish war. ‘The attitude of the Negro in this crisis should be that of the loyalty of the Stars and Stripes.’ The African-Americans should go to the front and fight for the flag. It was said that the Spanish war was a white man’s war, but Proctor argued that it was a nation’s war. The representatives, not of the white people, but of all the people, had declared the war. Proctor preached: ‘It is a national war and not a racial war. If you say, this is a white man’s war, and then you are bound to accept the doctrine that this is a white man’s country. If it is a white man’s country then the black man has no place in

²³⁸ Woodson, *The history*, 252.

²³⁹ Henry Huge Proctor, *Between black and white* (Boston 1925) 24.

²⁴⁰ James G. Merrill, *The Bulletin of the Atlanta University*, 179 (1908).

²⁴¹ Henry Hugh Proctor, *A sermon on the war: "the duty of colored citizens to their country" / delivered before the Colored Military Companies of Atlanta, Sunday evening, May 1st, 1898, at the First Congregational Church, Atlanta, Ga.*(Atlanta 1898).

it, and consequently no rights that a white man is bound to respect. This is God's country, and it belongs to the people in it, be they black or white, red or yellow.'²⁴²

To conclude, Proctor was one of the first leading ministers to create an intuitional church, in order to uplift the African-American race. As such African-Americans are part of the American society.

After the reconstruction, the African-Americans became concerned about the destiny of their race. They had been pressed against the wall by American slavery's vast assault upon their humanity. This tragic circumstance compelled them to discover the religion of their white oppressors. Later on, this white Christian faith would enable the African-Americans to reconcile suffering and hope, guilt and forgiveness, tyranny and spiritual freedom, self-hate and self-help.²⁴³ The church enabled the majority of African-Americans to find their strength to throw off their bond and to stand up against their oppressors and become free men, in mind, body and soul. Regarding to the works and biographies of the ministers and preachers, the religious leaders of the independent churches inspired their people to rebellion against the present social order in several ways. The colored people had a strong belief that God was in control of their history and their future, as preached the sermons of H.H Proctor, Turner, Heard and E.K Love. But at the same time, some African-American preachers and ministers were losing their hope in their fight for racial and social equality, which is why many African-American Religious leaders moved away from politics.

Furthermore, at the end of the nineteenth century, criticism emerged among the African-Americans and white people towards the independent African-American church and its ministers and preachers. The independent church was able to establish an independent church, with its own government, but at the same the ministers and preachers lead their people away from religion. Some scholars even argued that the independent African-American church tended to make religion a 'puppet' show.²⁴⁴ The growth of the church was often estimated in amounts of dollars, numbers of churches built and the number of worshippers in a specific church. The ministers and preachers tended to make a 'parade' of religion and show their capabilities within the independent churches, like Proctor did. Some scholars argue that the purpose of religion, church, ministers and preachers was to deepen the spiritual life of their worshippers. The preachers should help the worshippers to feel in harmony with nature, not to

²⁴² *Ibidem.*

²⁴³ Smitch, *Slavery and theology*, 512.

²⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

satisfy the critics and detractors. The foundation of the church must be securely laid before its superstructure is attempted.

With regard to the biographies and works of the preachers and ministers in this thesis, the African-American independent church tended to establish its churches from dissatisfaction with the organization in the whites churches, as is shown in chapter four. Some African-Americans faded away from religion; they had political motives to leave the white controlled churches, as is argued in chapter four.

Faduma, an African-American argued that in rural America paganism had displaced Christianity. He argued that the rural population was confronted with a form of Christianity, which did not civilize them.²⁴⁵ This was caused by the culture of the independent church ministry. Many African-American preachers and ministers created a prejudice towards the higher education of the African-American, like Washington had argued as well.²⁴⁶ However, after researching the autobiographies and works of the leading preachers, the majority of African-American churches were involved in educating and uplifting of their race, contrary to the critics of Faduma and Washington.

Dissatisfaction dominated the policies within the independent churches. Hood, for example, argued that the AME church was too tolerant towards the singing and the spiritual acts of the African-American worshippers. He argued that the white Americans would take the independent church seriously, when the worshiping of African-American was more serious, without the 'old fashioned' religious traditions of the African-Americans.²⁴⁷

At the end of the nineteenth century criticism also rose toward the ministers and preachers within the independent churches. Even though most African-American preachers or ministers had enjoyed an education, Booker T. Washington argued that even most preachers and ministers became immoral, drank too much and saw priesthood as a job to make money, instead of being connected to the word of God.²⁴⁸ Faduma argued that the religious leaders should have been people of a broad culture, wide sympathies and varied interest in people. It was not enough to be able to read the Bible or pass an examination in denominational theology. The modern teacher and preacher should be acquainted with the humanities. If not, he was not a scientist. He must know the 'trends' of scientific thought and its relation to the Bible.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Orishatukeh Faduma, 'The Defect of the Negro Church', *Occasional Papers* 10 (1891) 12.

²⁴⁶ *Ibidem*

²⁴⁷ Hood, *One hundred years*, 152.

²⁴⁸ Washington, *The history of*, 54.

²⁴⁹ Faduma, "*The Defect of*, 12.

Criticism toward the independent African-American church also emerged among the African-American women, such as Anne J Cooper, a former slave, who criticized that the Episcopal Church neglected the education of African-American women. She explained that education was the reason why the church had made little headway in enlightening large numbers of African-Americans. Besides, Cooper argued that all women should have the right to vote. Voting right for women would result in ‘the supremacy of moral forces of reason and justice and love in the government of the nation.’²⁵⁰ In addition, Cooper argued that the institution of segregation damages the nation. She claimed that it not only encouraged poor manners, but it had an adverse effect on American intellectual and artistic life.²⁵¹

To conclude, at the end of the reconstruction criticisms and politics changed among the religious leaders in the independent churches. Some religious leaders felt that they had failed as leaders in the African-American society and for that reason drifted away from politics. Other African-Americans started to criticize the independent churches and its leaders for several reasons, which are discussed above. However, returning to the leading question of this chapter, whether the church was established solidly in the American society at the end of the nineteenth century, I argue that at the basis the independent church was established solidly as a self-controlled institution within the American society. However, after the Civil War, the independent church was partly created in order to uplift the African-American race within the American society. As showed above, the reconstruction period made it hard for the African-American clergymen to uplift their race and obtain first-class citizenship in the American society, as Jim Crow and disenfranchisement laws prevailed. So if it is stated that the independent church partly was created as a platform to obtain racial justice and to uplift a race, it is hard to confirm that the independent church was established solidly as an institution, which had challenged and conquered the social and financial conditions of the African-Americans within America.

²⁵⁰ Anne J. Cooper, *Anne J. Cooper 1854-1964, a voice from the South* (Xenia 1892) 23.

²⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

7. Conclusion

Reasons for the creation of the independent African-American Church

As my research showed the independent church was formed for various reasons, which indicates the complexity of the genesis of the establishment of the several independent African-American churches.

Firstly, the majority of the African-American thought that the enslavement of their race had been part of God's plan. God had brought the African-Americans to America in order to Christianize them and develop their race. The African-Americans were God's chosen people and slavery had been part of God's plan to achieve progress and development of the African-American race.

Secondly, even before the Civil War different opinions developed about the religious practices within the Christian churches. Subsequently, the African-Americans became tired of the restrained and paternalistic whites churches, in which they were dehumanized and minified.

Thirdly, progressive individuals wanted to obtain power, control and respect within the American and African-American communities. The first step in obtaining power, control and respect within the communities was directed towards religion. All ambitious and progressive African-Americans mentioned in this thesis, became active members in the various congregations. Subsequently, they were often called to the ministry of God and became respected preachers and ministers of diverse congregations. The second step in obtaining power, control and respect, led to the acquirement of a basic education, with which self-realization was achieved. The basic education of these individuals led them to the expansion of their ambitions and consequently they entered the universities and colleges to nurture their intellect.

Fourthly, missionary work formed an important pillar in the establishment of the independent church, as it attracted more members towards the churches. The independent church would not have been viable without worshippers with common interests. The colored

U.S. troops and the missionary programs took the lead in the propagation of the word of God. Besides, the missionary programs supported the churches financially.

Fifthly, double consciousness caused an impermeable barrier between the whites and African-Americans. Segregation and racism created a divided American society, where the African-Americans lived isolated in their own communities. They were excluded from the American civic affairs. Self-consciousness became an important concept in the accomplishment of equal rights and self-respect for the African-Americans. Indirectly, the concept of 'self-consciousness' partly formed the basis for the creation of the independent church. Legally, the abolition of slavery was a big improvement towards the establishment of the black churches, as the law now allowed the African-Americans to set up their own institutions. Independent African-American churches arose after the abolition, in reaction to the overall oppression of African-Americans in the American society. Consequently, the independent church took a stance against racial segregation. It formed a platform for political resistance against the racial and unequal subordinations within the American society.

In the sixth place, the establishment of the independent church was partly caused by a sense of ethnic identity. Somewhere deep down, the African-Americans still shared the same roots and cultural traditions. The independent church presented a collective will, in which the African-Americans could escape, first from slavery and later from their social and economic circumstances caused by racism and discrimination.

In the seventh place, after the Civil War the independent church satisfied the needs and demands of the African-American people. The independent church was the only institution in the American society where the African-American could fall back on. After the abolition of slavery the African-Americans became more orientated toward the concept of 'this worldly'. Now that they were freemen, they had the courage to criticize the social order within the American society. The religious leaders started to challenge the position of the African-Americans by providing their race with educational, social and financial support. The independent church became an instrument to improve the social and economic conditions of the African-Americans.

In the eighth place, during the reconstruction era, many necessities needed to be supplied to the African-American community. The African-American religious leaders were often the only ones in the community, who were sufficiently well developed to lead their people. The preachers and ministers of the ministry of God argued that progress and development were needed to uplift the African-American race, in order to reach equality no matter what color or race. At the end of the reconstruction era a division occurred between the

preachers of the independent churches as to how they should obtain equality by uplifting their race. Some preachers argued that they should go on with their policies to educate and be politically active to resolve their minified positions in the American society, as they had done in the years after the Civil War. Others argued that reaching equality in the American society was disillusionment. Even though slavery was abolished, African-American still had not obtained first-class citizenship. The brutality among whites against their race had even increased. Jim Crow and disenfranchisement law clouded out any hopes of obtaining racial justice. In reaction, some clergymen advocated the emigration to Africa, where the African-Americans could truly enjoy their freedom, and develop the Africans by Christianizing them. Some preachers saw this as the only option to accomplish the uplift of their race.

After this research as to why the independent African-American church established itself after the Civil war, new research could be done into the establishment of churches in general, as it mostly challenges the subordination of a group of individuals.

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