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Religion in Mississippi in 1860

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by Margaret DesChamps Moore

The influence of Protestant churches on the South is evident to even the most casual observer, but nowhere is it more strikingly apparent than in Mississippi. Today this state, with one of the highest percentages of white church members and churches in the nation,[1] is the remaining fortress of prohibition and the blue laws. The growth of Mississippi and other Southern states into a Biblical stronghold was a late nineteenth century development which followed the decades of war and reconstruction. Wherever men fought and women prayed in the 1860s, ministers strengthened them by picturing their cause as a battle for the Lord.[2] In the dark days that followed Appomattox, clergymen often comforted their congregations by preaching that Southerners like the Israelites of old were God's chosen people, that their unhappy lot was punishment for past wanderings and sins, and that the Lord would yet lead them into a promised land.[3] Southern religiosity was firmly entrenched by this long period of suffering, anxiety, and waiting, but the machinery for its operation was built by the evangelical churches of the antebellum era.

Organized religion made little headway in Mississippi during the territorial period. Missionaries reported that most people were too interested in amassing fortunes to concern themselves with spiritual matters. When the state entered the union in 1817, not more than one

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[1] Harold F. Kaufman, "Mississippi Churches: A Half Century of Change," *Mississippi Quarterly*, XII (Summer 1959), 105-35.

[2] See James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (Tuscaloosa, 1957).

[3] For example, see Richmond *Christian Observer*, December 27, 1866.

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person in twenty was a church member.[4] The opening of the central area of the state attracted many emigrants interested in churches, but not until the 1830s, when the last cessions of Choctaw and Chickasaw lands brought an influx of eastern settlers into North Mississippi, did religion really begin to flourish. In some cases, notably Presbyterian, ministers migrated with congregations. More often, missionaries came under the sponsorship of denominational and inter-denominational societies. Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians worked chiefly in towns and villages, but Baptists preferred to form their congregations in the country where, according to one of their historians, people were more "correct in their deportment" and not "so advanced" in their ideas.[5] By 1836, these four denominations had formed statewide organizations for their churches in Mississippi.[6]

In spite of financial difficulties, and all churches felt the effects of the panic of 1837, denominations carried on tremendous building programs in the 1840s. Probably seventy-five percent of the 1,441 church edifices in the state reported in the census of 1860 had been erected before 1850. Most of these buildings were in northeast and central Mississippi where the population had rapidly become stable and substantial.[7] The southeastern part of the state, where Sunday was spent fishing, hunting, and visiting, remained so unchurched that the Baptists regarded its inhabitants and those of the Delta as "sitting in the region and shadow of death."[8] No group save the Methodists succeeded in building churches between the Yazoo and the Mississippi, and most of these were merely stations for

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[4] See "Documentary Material Relating to the Early History of the Presbyterian Church in Mississippi," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, XXI (December 1943), 186-208.

[5] Z. T. Leavell and T. J. Bailey, *A Complete History of Mississippi Baptists* (2 vols., Jackson, 1904), I, 672.

[6] For histories of the major denominations in Mississippi in the period of early statehood see: ibid,; John G. Jones, *A Complete History of Methodism* (2 vols., Nashville, 1908), *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi* (Chicago, 1891), 348-83; Frances A. and James A. Cabaniss, "Religion in Ante-Bellum Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History*, VI (October 1944), 191-224; *Southwestern Presbyterian* (New Orleans), October 30, November 6, 13, 1890, January 1, March 19, April 16, May 28, June 18, 1891, January 21, 1892. Also see the following works of Walter B. Posey: *The Development of Methodism in the Old Southwest* (Tuscaloosa, 1933), *The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Lexington, 1957), *The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest* (Richmond, 1952).

[7] *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, 1853), 462-63; *Statistics of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1866), 418-19.

[8] *Minutes of the Fourteenth Anniversary of the Convention of the Baptist Denomination of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, 1850), 20; *Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Session of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention* (Jackson, 1858), 33.

preaching to slaves.[9]

By 1860 probably one white adult out of three belonged to some church. Since the census for that year listed only the number of churches, the seating capacities of the buildings rather than the number of members, and the value of church property, this figure is only an educated guess based on the census and available denominational figures. Three-fourths of the church members belonged to the Methodist and Baptist denominations, with the Methodists holding onto a slight numerical lead which they did not lose to the Baptists until the post-war era. While the Presbyterians exercised an influence far out of proportion to their numbers, they lagged far behind the two leading denominations in membership. Other religious bodies represented by small numbers in the population were Episcopalians, Christians or Campbellites, Cumberland Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics. The last group was only beginning to get a program under way in Mississippi and was not regarded by Protestants as a real threat to their ascendancy.[10]

By the end of the antebellum period church people no longer stood apart from the general population as they had in early days. This change was in part due to the rise of Methodism socially, and was deplored by many of the old pastors who remembered the time when itinerants traveled as a "band of brothers"[11] and Methodists tried to be a people distinct in their tempers, morals, conversation, and dress.[12] But it was also due to the passing of the frontier and the increasing urbanity of village life. One can hardly imagine a citizen of Port Gibson harassing a minister in 1860 as one had Thomas Griffin when he preached from the courthouse thirty years earlier. When Griffin inquired rhetorically in his sermon "How does gambling flourish here?", he was answered by a drunk: "It is doing very well, as a great deal is going on."[13]

In no way was the increasing urbanity of Mississippians more evident than in the clergy of the state. From earliest times the Presbyterian and

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[9] *Statistics of the United States in 1860,* 418-19.

[10] For available statistics see: *Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 462-63; *Statistics of the United States in 1860*, 418-19; Jesse L. Boyd, *A Popular History of the Baptists in Mississippi* (Jackson, 1930), 107; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the Year 1860* (Nashville, 1861), 231-32.

[11] William Winans to W. J. Sasnett, October 14, 1856, in Winans Correspondence, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

[12] William Winans to Joseph McDowell, August 31, 1830, ibid. Also see William Winans to C. K. Marshall, January 11, 1856, ibid.

[13] *Southwestern Presbyterian* (New Orleans), November 13, 1890.

Episcopal ministers, who had excellent educations, were recognized as men of ability whose opinions were highly regarded.[14] But by the late antebellum period, clergymen like J. T. Freeman, editor of the *Mississippi Baptist*, and Ashley Vaughn, first president of the Baptist State Convention, furnished enlightened leadership for their denomination.[15] Methodist preachers, no longer itinerants, were settled in towns and showed great interest in community affairs. C. K. Marshall of Vicksburg played a noted role in commercial conventions;[16] William Winans, perhaps the best known clergyman in the state, stood for Congress;[17] and Richard Abbey, planter and slaveholder, was a leader in the movement for scientific agriculture.[18]

The churches these men served were often adorned with cut glass chandeliers, organs, and rented pews. In some cases, like that of the Episcopal Church in Vicksburg, the building was decorated with wreaths and evergreens for the Christmas season. Congregations held indoor protracted meetings instead of open air camp meetings, and where these remained in the country they became increasingly devoid of the old bodily exercises. Some churches had libraries and most of them with varying success tried to operate Sunday schools. Women, who were the real strength and support of most congregations, had sewing societies and gave fairs to raise money for their mission projects. Men organized temperance societies and children, who comprised half the total white population of the state, belonged to various youth groups.[19]

Churches still suspended or expelled members for major infractions of the moral code, a practice rather vigorously continued until the 1890s,

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[14] *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi*, 348-83. [J. H. Ingraham], *The Southwest by a Yankee* (New York, 1835), 65-72.

[15] *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* (2 vols., Nashville, 1958), II, 881-90.

[16] John G. Van Deusen, *The Ante-Bellum Southern Commercial Conventions* (Durham, 1926), 78-80.

[17] See Winans Correspondence.

[18] John H. Moore, *Agriculture in Ante-Bellum Mississippi* (New York, 1958), 147-51.

[19] For descriptions of late antebellum churches see Diary of Edward R. Welles (typescript), 1854-1856, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; P. B. Bailey to Methodist Quarterly Conference, Crystal Springs Circuit, November 14, 1846, in Crystal Springs Circuit Manuscripts, ibid. *Spirit of Missions*, III (July, 1839), 202-03; *Journal of the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Mississippi, May 2, 1838* (Natchez, 1838), 5-6; Natchez *Free Trader*, March 1, 1845; Pontotoc *Chickasaw Union*, January 4, 1838; Columbus *Democrat*, February 2, 1839.

but by 1850 fewer matters were considered worthy of discipline.[20] In 1856, a Methodist complained that in his denomination "conformity to the world in dress, amusements, pursuits and Spirit, has almost excluded class-meetings and the administration of Discipline for minor offenses."[21] Certainly all churches by the end of the antebellum period tolerated with better grace the member who failed to attend the Sunday service than in earlier days when he was required to account for his absence. Editors of church papers warned Christians of the wrongfulness of card playing, the theatre, the circus, and novel reading, but churches brought few offenders other than dancers to trial for engaging in sinful amusements.[22] Dancers could not escape, for most clergymen shared the opinion expressed by William Winans when he wrote a young woman that if she should die in the ball room "neither I nor any well-informed Christian friend could have a hope upon your tomb."[23] The gradual restriction of church discipline to dancing and those more fundamental matters such as assault and battery, gross intoxication, fraud, and adultery must have contributed to peace, if not purity, in congregations long troubled by men who brought quarrelsome brothers-in-law to trial and women who accused neighbors of malicious gossip.

Attesting to the growth of the religious influence in Mississippi was the large number of educational institutions under church sponsorship, and the support which denominations, especially the Baptists, gave the public school movement. The pioneer Presbyterian minister usually supplemented his salary by operating a small school in conjunction with his church. Gradually as Methodists and Baptists settled their internal quarrels over an educated ministry, they became firm supporters of schools and colleges. The Methodists founded the noted Elizabeth Academy which functioned during most of the antebellum period, and the Baptists

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[20] This conclusion is based on a study of records of Baptist and Presbyterian churches. Since Methodists seem not to have kept minutes of class meetings, records of Methodist discipline cases are not available. The largest collection of Presbyterian session records is in the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Montreat, North Carolina. Baptist records may be located in the archives of the various southern states.

[21] William Winans to W. P. Barton, May 23, 1856, in Winans Correspondence. Also see Joseph Travis, *Autobiography of the Rev. Joseph Travis* (Nashville, 1856), 224.

[22] See Margaret B. DesChamps, "The Presbyterian Church in the South Atlantic States, 1801-1861." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Emory University, 1952. For published examples of discipline cases in Mississippi churches see *Centennial Celebration of the Providence Baptist Church* [n. p., n. d.] and *The History of an Old Church [Philadelphus] and Her People* [n. p., n. d.].

[23] William Winans to Sarah R. Grayson, May 27, 1850, in Winans Correspondence.

established at least fifteen lesser known schools. On the eve of the [Civil] war several denominations operated institutions which they called colleges, and at least two of these, Oakland, founded by the Presbyterians, and Mississippi [College], controlled by the Baptists, were worthy of the name. Another evidence of the maturity of religious institutions was the presence of the Methodist book and tract society at Vicksburg, and the sporadic efforts of the major denominations to maintain and support church periodicals.[24]

Although Baptist and Presbyterian churches in Mississippi experienced internecine struggles in the 1830s, by 1860 unity appeared to reign not within the various denominations, but among them.[25] Theology and church practices varied widely, but certain basic religious beliefs seemed common to all. The finality of heaven and hell, the reality of sin and the atonement of Christ, the literalness of the scriptures, and the omniscience of God rested on Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist consciences alike. Controversies over church government, Arminianism, closed communion, and immersion were less ignorantly and brutally conducted than formerly. When a denominational convention was held, all pulpits in the town might be occupied by ministers attending the meeting,[26] and church schools often employed teachers not of their own religious persuasion.[27] Yet, in spite of surface appearances, rivalry and ill feeling were as often characteristic of inter-denominational relations as were harmony and good will.

Since the Methodist Church was the largest in Mississippi, it naturally became involved in the most controversies, first with Baptists and Presbyterians, and later with Episcopalians. A Methodist writing of Baptist opposition to his zealous preaching near Port Gibson concluded: "It would seem they are determined to put out . . . [my] fire if the cry of water will do it."[28] Typical of the arguments between Methodists and Presbyterians was the one described by a young layman who heard a

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[24] For a discussion of the role of churches in education see *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi*, 300-383, and denominational histories previously cited.

[25] Boyd, *Popular History of the Baptists*, 50-54; Posey, *Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest*, 118-23; Margaret B. DesChamps, "Presbyterians and Others in the South after 1800," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, XXXI (March 1953), 25-40.

[26] For example, see *Minutes of the Fourteenth Anniversary of the Convention of the Baptist Denomination*, 7-10. Editor's note: Arminianism is based on the theological ideas of the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609).

[27] For example, see William Winans to Carolina Hearn, December 28, 1855, in Winans Correspondence.

[28] John Seaton to William Winans, May 29, 1821, ibid.

Presbyterian preach at a Methodist camp meeting. He said the clergyman "preached Calvinism from the start and Indirectly nay directly attacked our Doctrine." Then, when he concluded, a Methodist minister arose and denounced Calvinism. "I hope," commented the writer, "that some good was done [by the meeting] but I expect a Declaration of war has taken place."[29]

By the 1850s the Methodists, then a church of the socially prominent, were quarreling with the Episcopalians. Methodist ministers privately charged Episcopal clergymen with attracting young women to their church through a lenient policy on amusements, especially dancing.[30] But the occasion of their most notorious controversy was the printing of a sermon by William Mercer Green, first Episcopal bishop of Mississippi, on apostolic succession, a matter in which few Methodists would have had either interest or understanding when their church was introduced into the Mississippi territory.[31] Richard Abbey wrote an entire book for the Methodists in reply to the bishop. He attacked the Episcopal Church for having no real piety among its members and for failing to win numbers to its faith. In speaking of the great success of other churches in gaining converts through recent protracted meetings in Jackson, he said: "Why either the Baptist, the Presbyterian, or the Methodist churches could receive your church bodily, and it would scarcely be considered more than a clever *revival*."[32] But the Episcopalians would not let Abbey have the last word, and a clergyman replied anonymously to his charges in *Pamphlets for the People*. After attempting to show that the extent of Methodist piety was overestimated, he remarked that it was pleasing to see in Abbey's book an expression of good feeling toward Presbyterians and Baptists, since they all quarreled constantly in their religious newspapers. He could only conclude: "War with each other, but Union against the Episcopalians, seems to be your motto."[33]

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[29] Samuel Sellars to William Winans, June 20, 1844, ibid.

[30] For example, see William Winans to C. K. Marshall, April 11, 1856, ibid.

[31] See Nash K. Burger, "The Rt. Rev. William Mercer Green, First Episcopal Bishop of Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History*, XXII (January 1950), 3-27.

[32] R[ichard] Abbey, *Letters on Apostolic Succession, addressed to Bishop Green of Mississippi. Occasioned by the Publication of His Recent Sermon on that subject* (Louisville, 1853), 160.

[33] *Pamphlets for the People in Illustration of the Claims of the Church and Methodism* (Philadelphia, 1854), 22.

All denominations of the Old South believed that political matters were not the proper concern of churches.[34] Ministers confined their sermon topics chiefly to theological and ethical questions, church courts warned against neglecting spiritual duties in the interest of campaigns and elections, and the religious press commented with caution on political events. Yet, in spite of the efforts of churches to avoid enmeshment in the affairs of government, political and ecclesiastical realms could not be entirely separated. Long before the Union was dissolved, the slavery controversy divided the Methodist and Baptist churches into northern and southern branches and caused the Presbyterian to exscind its radical abolitionist synods. In the decade before the war southern clergymen became the staunchest defenders of the region's characteristic institution.

A determining factor in the position Southern clergymen took on slavery was the increasing lay control over conferences, presbyteries, and associations of their denomination. In 1835 members of the Methodist Conference, previously silent on slavery, felt compelled to draw up a strong statement denouncing abolitionism. This action was provoked by the refusal of many Methodist planters to allow ministers to preach to their slaves. So angered were they by the antislavery attacks of Northern clergymen that they suspected their own Southern preachers of clandestine abolitionist activities.[35] The records of the Presbyterian churches indicate even more clearly how laymen of that denomination throughout the South silenced clerical opinion unfriendly to an institution they deemed essential.[36]

If the Mississippi Methodist Conference never became pro-slavery, as one of its historians argues, it was certainly anti-abolitionist.[37] In 1860 the Conference expelled a member for "holding insurrectionary and seditious opinions and tampering with the slaves" in his Middle Deer Creek charge.[38] Even earlier, [the] Crystal Springs Circuit had declared that "slavery as it now exists in the South is not a sin."[39] And William Winans, who once supported the colonization movement and was even accused of being an

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[34] See Margaret B. DesChamps, "Union or Division? South Atlantic Presbyterians and Southern Nationalism, 1820-1861," *Journal of Southern History*, XX (November 1954), 484-498.

[35] Jones, *Methodism*, II, 346-47.

[36] See Margaret B. DesChamps, "Antislavery Presbyterians in the Carolina Piedmont," *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association*, 1954 (Columbia, 1955), 6-13.

[37] Jones, *Methodism*, II, 513-14.

[38] Vicksburg, *Tri-Weekly Whig*, December 1, 1860.

[39] Methodist Quarterly Conference, August 17, 1844, Crystal Springs Circuit, in Crystal Springs Circuit Manuscripts.

abolitionist, by the end of the antebellum period was agreeing with his fellow minister, C. K. Marshall, that "Slavery is the most favorable state for Africans *here*."[40]

Strongest support of the institution came from the Presbyterian Church. The leading pro-slavery clergyman of the South Atlantic states was James Henley Thornwell, president of South Carolina College. His position was popularized in the Southwest by his protégé, Benjamin Morgan Palmer of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, and was echoed many times by lesser orators in Mississippi.[41] But Mississippians did not have to go to South Carolina for arguments in defense of their society. While Thornwell was still a theological student in 1833, James Smylie preached a sermon to his congregation in Port Gibson reasoning from Biblical sources that slavery was a positive good. Smylie's arguments that the Bible justified the enslavement of the Hamitic race, that the holiest men of the Old Testament had been connected with slavery, and that the apostles did not find it incompatible with Christ's teachings, are credited with having a tremendous influence on subsequent slavery legislation in the state.[42]

While the editors of the Mississippi *Baptist* on the eve of the war declared themselves to be the "uncompromising friends" of slavery, Baptist action was more concerned with the spiritual welfare of Negroes than with justification of their bondage.[43] Methodists had the more widespread and effective program for preaching to Negroes, but Baptists pioneered in forming separate churches for them. By 1860 many Baptist ministers believed that these Negro churches should control their own membership and form their own conferences.[44] They, with clergymen of other faiths, provided religious services for a sizeable portion of the black population and worked zealously to improve relations between slaves and masters.[45]

The other great public issue with which clergymen could not escape involvement was the movement for Southern independence, but their

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[40] William Winans to C. K. Marshall, December 2, 1856 in Winans Correspondence.

[41] See Margaret B. DesChamps, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Orator-Preacher of the Confederacy," *Southern Speech Journal*, XIX (September 1953), 14-22.

[42] John G. Jones, *A Concise History of the Introduction of Protestantism into Mississippi and the Southwest* (St. Louis, 1866), 239-42.

[43] Percy L. Rainwater, *Mississippi, Storm Center of Secession, 1851-1861* (Baton Rouge, 1938), 175; *A Republication of the Minutes of the Mississippi Baptist Association . . . from 1806 to the Present Time* (New Orleans, 1849), 167-68.

[44] *Minutes of the Fourteenth Anniversary of the Convention of the Baptist Denomination*, 22-23.

[45] For example, see Port Gibson *Correspondent*, April 30, 1836.

support of secession in 1860 was far less unanimous than their defense of slavery. Prior to the election of Lincoln, clergymen throughout the South spoke out against secession and actively supported the Whigs, and later the Know-Nothings [the American Party], because they hoped these parties could preserve the Union. William Winans, the noted Methodist preacher in Wilkinson County, ran on the Whig ticket for Congress in 1848, but he did not conduct an active campaign and lost the election. His correspondence shows that his fellow Methodists did not approve of any minister seeking public office and that neither they nor the prominent Whigs worked in his behalf. Yet letters written to him indicate that Methodists generally supported the Whig party, and when it died, Winans urged every patriot to support the American Party "as the only probable means of bringing our Nation back to a policy founded on principle."[46] A Mississippian wrote the Jackson *Southron* in 1845: "The Presbyterian clergy, [indeed] I believe the great body of clergy of all denominations, are whigs, not because they are aristocrats but because they are opposed to radicalism, and in favor of conservatism."[47]

This conservatism was in large measure responsible for the lack of ministerial enthusiasm for secession in 1850. Winans's reason for seeking public office, he wrote a friend, was to make "one less firebrand, to light up the fire, kindled by Calhoun, to dissolve the ties of our most important Union."[48] In this position he was joined by prominent clergymen in other southern states. Thornwell in South Carolina said in 1850: "The truth is we can see nothing . . . [in secession] but defeat, insecurity to slavery, oppression to ourselves, ruin to the state."[49] A Presbyterian in North Carolina remarked that "The people who are worth consulting look on this agitation as foolish, wicked and abominable."[50] The Baptist State Convention, meeting in Jackson in the fall of 1850, warned its members that "the cry of politics" was "loud with excitement" in Mississippi, and encouraged them to exercise "coolness, deliberation, and firm adherence to truth" in the secession controversy.[51]

The Republican victory in 1860 caused many ministers to believe

[46] William Winans to Wesley P. Winans, November 25, 1855 in Winans Correspondence.

[47] Jackson *Southron*, October 15, 1845.

[48] William Winans to Benjamin M. Drake, February 25, 1850, in Winans Correspondence.

[49] Benjamin M. Palmer, *Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell* (Richmond, 1875), 579.

[50] Robert H. Morrison to James Morrison, April 29, 1850, in Robert H. Morrison Letters, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

[51] *Minutes of the Fourteenth Anniversary of the Convention of the Baptist Denomination*, 11-12.

that the Union they once thought ordained to spread religion across the continent would become an instrument of evil in the hands of wicked men.[52] The dramatic action of these preachers, some of whom after Lincoln's election became secessionists overnight, has often obscured the opposition of Unionist ministers who played their roles with little color and perhaps less support. C. K. Marshall, long an ardent advocate of Southern rights, is remembered as the minister who opened the Mississippi Secession Convention of 1861 with prayer, but the name of the one minister who attended the convention as a delegate and voted Unionist has passed into oblivion.[53] Benjamin M. Palmer's Thanksgiving Day sermon, in which he saw secession as the will of God, was widely published in Mississippi newspapers and was unquestionably more influential than James Lyons's quiet and virtually forgotten stand for union. Yet Lyons remained a Unionist during the war and other Presbyterian ministers of less prestige and reputation in Mississippi were imprisoned for expressing similar views.[54] One of them, with prejudice and bitterness, but not without reason later recalled: "All those southern ministers and professors of religion who were eminent for piety [and from that group he specifically excluded Palmer] opposed Secession till the States passed the secession ordinance."[55]

The extent of Unionist sentiment among Mississippi clergymen on the eve of the war is illustrated in official resolutions passed by the Baptist State Convention and the Methodist Conference. While both secessionist and Unionist sentiments were expressed in the Baptist Convention, resolutions were passed "respectfully requesting the editors of the state to cooperate in furthering ameliorating measures, and not to inflame the public mind in this distressing situation." The convention further pled with Southern Baptists to "make a united, prayerful, honest effort . . . to restore harmony and peace in . . . Zion."[56]

The strength of Union sentiment in the Methodist Church is strikingly revealed in a resolution passed by its annual conference even after the election of Lincoln. Framed by the presiding elders of the Vicksburg

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[52] See DesChamps, "Union or Division," *Journal of Southern History,* XX, 484-98.

[53] *Journal of the State Convention and Ordinance and Resolutions Adopted in January, 1861, with an Appendix* (Jackson, 1861).

[54] See John K. Bettersworth, *Confederate Mississippi* (Baton Rouge, 1943), 253-57.

[55] John H. Aughey, *The Iron Furnace: or, Slavery and Secession* (Philadelphia, 1863), 6, 255-57.

[56] Boyd, *Popular History of the Baptists*, 109. On the surface, these resolutions appear to relate to Baptist internal controversy, but Boyd sees them as a part of the secession controversy.

and Yazoo districts, it suggested that the next General Conference of the church change the name of the denomination from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to simply the Methodist Episcopal Church. The name, South, the Mississippi Conference stated, should be deleted since it was "liable to misrepresentation and . . . likely to embarrass us in many respects."[57] But before the General Conference met, Mississippi seceded, and the resolution was forgotten.

To the Confederacy then formed, Mississippi brought a large group of well-organized churches and affiliated societies, devout church members, and articulate ministers who supported the new nation with an alacrity and vigor not characteristic of their opposition to its formation.

[57] *Minutes of the Forty-Fifth Session of the Mississippi Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, November 21-29, A. D. 1860* (Vicksburg, 1861), 36.