Strangers in the Land: the Southern Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South.

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STRANGERS IN THE LAND:
THE SOUTHERN CLERGY AND THE
ECONOMIC MIND OF THE OLD SOUTH

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of History

by
Kenneth Moore Startup
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ABSTRACT

The antebellum southern clergy has often been characterized as narrow-minded and reactionary with little or no social vision and with little or no commitment to social reformation. My study, which is based upon an expansive survey of the sermons and religious writings of protestant slave state ministers, reveals instead an insightful, critical, and outspoken clergy determined to change southern society; principally to turn southerners from materialism and greed to spirituality and altruism. In their attempt to reform southern society, they condemned explicitly what they considered the ostentation, arrogance, and selfishness of the upper classes and called for a more equitable distribution of the South's wealth. They championed the cause of public education and struggled for the reformation of slavery. The clerics were anything but static or narrow minded. Their interests ranged well beyond camp meetings, the mode of baptism, and sectarian sniping.

My study reveals more than a critical and socially aware clergy, however. For in the condemnations and criticisms of the divines one is able to discern a southern mind and character that was fully as commercial, entrepreneurial, and materialistic as the "Yankee mentality." Indeed the image of the Old South presented by the ministers was thoroughly at odds with the South portrayed by notable southern apologists like George Fitzhugh and John C. Cal-
houn. The southern mind, in clerical perspective, was scarcely distinguishable from the northern mind as discussed by northern divines and southern apologists.

The Southern ministers' testimony necessarily carries great weight, as clerics were a pervasive presence in southern society and were intense observers of that society. Recognizing the validity of clerical testimony forces the conclusion that the southern mind was perhaps far less unique or distinct than has often been assumed and argued — particularly in regard to things economic. The idea of dominant agrarian mentality in the Old South is clearly undermined by clerical testimony.
INTRODUCTION

Since the 1830s the antebellum South has generally been regarded as a pastoral culture wedded to an agrarian lifestyle and mentality. Journalists, novelists, politicians, historians have all contributed to the development and maintenance of this view. Antebellum northerners, as William Taylor observed, believed and propounded this view as forcefully as southerners.¹ And what was true of the antebellum era was true for the decades following Appomattox. It is not surprising that such a view of the South should have arisen and been sustained. Certainly the Old South was, in its economic structure, almost entirely agricultural. Staple agriculture was the life's blood of the southern economy. Slavery, the most visible and distinctive feature of the South's economic and cultural landscape, was chiefly an agricultural institution. The slave picking cotton was the most striking symbol of southern society.

Whereas the antebellum North bore the imprint of the burgeoning American industrial revolution, the South, after the advent of the cotton boom in the second decade of the nineteenth century, was all the more committed to staple agriculture. Signs of an emerging industrial establish-

ment — the Tredegar iron works, textile factories in South Carolina and hemp factories in Kentucky — were present in the antebellum South. Though significant, these innovations were still distinctly secondary when compared to the millions of acres in cotton, rice, tobacco, wheat, and corn.

Many of the externals of southern life were marked by the occupations common to rural folk everywhere. Hunting was a favorite pastime; horse racing was common; and, denied easy access to manufactured goods, women gathered for quilting parties. And no doubt men accustomed to the deference of servile laborers and isolated from the frequent interaction with peers, developed "habits of command" and a certain independent bearing. Clearly the agrarian South existed and marked its environs in various ways.

Scholars as well as casual observers have argued, or often simply assumed, that the agricultural lifestyle — which included slavery — not only affected the externals of southern life, but also molded a unique southern character, or mind, which differed sharply from the northern mind and character. Indeed, some historians have argued that the antebellum United States was the home of two entirely divergent cultures which produced two divergent and incompatible mentalities and ideologies. For some the existence of dual cultures was a sufficient explanation for
the outbreak of the Civil War. This perception has proved a resilient idea among modern students, one so powerful that it has frequently spanned a variety of ideological preferences.

In 1927, Charles Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization* was published detailing Beard's belief that the Civil War was a struggle between dramatically different cultures and world views. Arthur Cole, who exulted in the capitalistic muscle of the antebellum North and Midwest, gave his full support to the dual-cultures thesis. His *The Irrepressible Conflict* described carefully the important distinctions he saw between the humanitarian, industrial bustling North and the oligarchic, backward looking South. Writing from a Marxist perspective four decades later, Eugene Genovese represented the North-South conflict as a clash between thoroughly antagonistic class structures and ideologies, capitalists against pre-capitalists.

The idea of dual cultures was, of course, not original with Beard, Cole, Genovese or any modern scholar. No one can say with certainty when the idea first gained currency.

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Some suggest the idea is traceable to the colonial era, others say it first appeared in 1820 as a result of the Missouri Controversy. Certainly it was a prominent concept by the 1830s. John Taylor of Caroline, John C. Calhoun, George Fitzhugh, and other southern apologists propounded this view throughout the antebellum era. These southern apologists pictured northerners as aggressively capitalistic, acquisitive, and materialistic with a predilection for business and commercial pursuits. Southerners were portrayed as a people given to orthodox evangelical religion, courage, honor, and generosity, who were largely disinterested in commercial endeavors and the acquisition and accumulation of money. And whereas social standing in the North was tied directly to economic affluence, the apologists claimed that in the South social standing rested upon more abstract criteria. The apologists' implication here was transparent. Virtue and dignity still counted for something in the South while money alone was the focus of northern society.

In the minds of the apologists and of many who discussed southern life in the years following the Civil War, southern agriculture, far from being a simple economic endeavor, took on an almost metaphysical quality. Southerners, as Wilbur Cash noted, in *Mind of the South*, farmed because it was in their blood. Farming gave meaning to their lives and they derived some sort of emotional --
almost religious -- satisfaction from the possession and tilling of the soil. Margaret Mitchell, who perhaps more than any scholar has influenced the popular conception of the Old South, stressed what she, and many others, took to be the antebellum southerner's peculiar identification with the land. In the second chapter of *Gone With the Wind* she had Gerald O'Hara remark, "Land is the only thing in the world that amounts to anything. . . . 'Tis the only thing worth working for, worth fighting for -- worth dying for." The southern mind was less than precisely defined by the apologists and their spiritual children, but Fitzhugh, Mitchell, Cash, and legions of others were certain that it had once existed.

Not everyone has been convinced of the existence of a profoundly distinct southern mind. David Potter is among those who have questioned the tendency to regard the antebellum North and South as fundamentally different in their social, economic, and political assumptions and outlook. In the opening chapters of *The Impending Crisis* Potter readily conceded that conventional American attitudes had been warped by slavery and its defense and had therefore assumed a rather peculiar tone in the South. But southern thought remained, in his opinion, fundamentally consistent.

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with the social, political, and economic trends apparent in the nation at large. Both sections, Potter contended, were well supplied with "blue bloods" and "backwoods democrats." Both sections were "profoundly commercial" and both professed allegiance to the same Judeo-Christian value system.  

William Taylor also questioned the dual-cultures thesis. His investigation of antebellum literature, *Cavalier* and *Yankee*, revealed an intellectual elite in both regions which identified, lamented, and attempted to correct the same "problems." To Taylor's mind this unity of purpose suggested that both sections were facing essentially the same economic, political and social changes. Taylor's study challenged conventional perceptions of a uniquely distinctive southern mind.

Clearly it is no easy matter to define the southern mind, to delineate its characteristics, or even to say with certainty whether or not it existed. A great many scholars have addressed this topic, but none has ever produced a definitive study or entirely authoritative results. My dissertation is another attempt to shed light upon the elusive southern mind, and to help identify and define its salient characteristics. The following pages also address important questions regarding the distinctiveness of the

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southern mentality.

My study is based upon the sermons and the writings of the antebellum Protestant clergy of the South. The sermons and writings of ministers from every slave state -- with the exception of Delaware -- and from every major denomination have been consulted. The traditional sources such as political pronouncements, newspapers, planters' diaries and the like have given way in my research to the clerical perspective. Intimately associated with every facet of southern life, drawn from every strata of southern society, and a pervasive presence throughout the region, the Protestant clerics are a uniquely useful repository of information, one too often overlooked.

Recent studies have discussed clerical attitudes and beliefs with regard to theology, denominational concerns, and certain social and political issues. These studies have produced important conclusions regarding the clerical mind. Anne C. Loveland's *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order* and E. Brooks Holifield's *Gentlemen Theologians* have been especially valuable in dispelling the traditional view that the southern clerics were cultural ciphers concerned exclusively with bitter denominational wars and a narrow, simplistic evangelicalism. 8 Their

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works have revealed a clergy far more insightful, united, and theologically sophisticated than presented before. Even so, few scholars have used the southern clergy as Perry Miller used the New England divines, as guides who reveal in their commendation and condemnation the heart and mind of their cultures. The ministers were convinced that God dealt with societies as well as individuals, and they were therefore eager to mark the trends in their society, to see how it measured up to Biblical standards. This was a matter of great and urgent import to the clerics, almost on a level with their evangelical labors.

Having examined the clerical testimony, I have no intention of simply dismissing my witnesses. For this study is also an attempt to define further the role of the clergy and the nature of their relationship with their communicants and neighbors. More specifically, I have been careful to note the critical, or "prophetic" content of sermons and clerical writings. It has generally been assumed that clerical criticism was reserved for only the more obvious sins of their cultural environment -- drunkenness and dueling for instance -- which were, in fact, far from being accepted by the society at large. Here again the portrait is of acquiescent clerics who were reluctant to examine critically or to confront their culture. My research suggests, however, that the southern clerics were not at all reluctant to ask provocative questions about their society.
and its most cherished and fundamental assumptions.

To present a comprehensive study of the southern intellectual and cultural environment and the clerical response to the environment is a task well beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, I have concentrated upon the clerical response to the economic culture of the antebellum South. No attempt has been made to analyze the southern economy itself, to determine crop yields or slave productivity, or to ascertain whether the southern economy conforms to a capitalist or pre-capitalist model. I am concerned exclusively with economic attitudes, aspirations and assumptions as perceived and discussed by the ministers. I am confident that such an examination will reveal much about the value system of antebellum southerners and the basis of their social structure. And, of course, I trust my investigations will be equally revealing in regard to clerical preferences and attitudes.

Others have adopted a similar "economic" approach to the antebellum southern mind. Unfortunately, a great many of these have simply reproduced the assertions of the best-known apologists with little effort at rigorous or original investigation or analysis. This flawed approach is especially common to survey texts. In James McPherson's Ordeal by Fire, a recent and generally excellent study of the Civil War and its origins, this respected scholar did little more than list the comments by various apologists
who stigmatized northerners as greedy and lauded the idyllic pastoral South.\(^9\)

Better studies of the economic mind of the Old South are available. Joseph Dorfman's *The Economic Mind in American Society* is a valuable work, though it concentrates almost exclusively on academic economic theory and rarely discusses the conventional economic assumptions and aspirations of most southerners.\(^10\) It was these practical, day-to-day attitudes which most concerned and interested the clerics. I, too, have focused upon the popular mentality. Not simply because it was the object of clerical attention, but because I believe the popular mind is more important in the determination of a society's character than are the more rarified academic and theoretical ideas of a small intellectual elite.

For the sake of clarity, comparisons between northern and southern perspectives have not been discussed in each chapter, but rather this entire topic comprises a separate chapter. Whenever possible I have drawn distinctions between the clerical perspective and the apologists' views. I have not, however, attempted to demonstrate the veracity of the clerical perspective or the fallacy of another per-

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spective. Accepting the clerics as reliable witnesses, I am confident that their unique perspective adds significantly to an understanding of the nature and distinctiveness of the antebellum southern mind.
CHAPTER I
"The Spirit of the Times"

The antebellum era was a difficult time for the Protestant clergy in the South. Engulfed in a sea of political agitation and extremism, harried by internecine warfare within their own denominations and continual sectarian sniping, the ministers were also confronted with changes in their society which compelled them to challenge many of the assumptions and aspirations of their neighbors and communicants. Estranged from many of their brethren in the North owing to their stand on slavery, southern clerics also found themselves isolated from their own congregations on a number of important issues involving the economic life of the South. It is little wonder that the mood of the clergy was largely somber and pessimistic throughout the antebellum era.

There were bright spots for the ministers. Several major revivals swept the nation and the South in the 1830s and 1850s. Yet these intermittent seasons of revival often seemed only to heighten the clergy's sense that something was seriously wrong with their age. The flames of revival oftentimes revealed sinister, towering shadows. Ministers even noted a dark side to the steady increase in the size of congregations and contributions.

The casual observer might have looked at the revivals, the growing congregations, and the steady increase in con-
tributions as an indication that the South was enjoying an age of unprecedented spiritual development. Some ministers took this view, but for many southern clerics, perhaps the majority, the age was not one of burgeoning Christian spirituality, rather it was an age marked by a pernicious and deadly spirit of avarice, covetousness, and materialism which, to them, threatened the very existence of southern society. The commercial spirit, the love of riches, the lust for gain, mammonism, these were the terms and words used by a great many southern ministers to describe the spirit of the times. Speaking in 1840, Reverend August Baldwin Longstreet, reminded his hearers that they dwelt in a land "whose besetting sin is the idolatry of wealth." And in the same year, Reverend G. F. Pierce described his era as a "superficial age -- hasty, enterprising, locomotive in spirit . . . [awash] in the wild schemes of men that make haste to be rich."¹

¹Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, "Inaugural Address of the Honorable Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, President of Emory College, before the Faculty and Students of that Institution, at its Commencement, February 10, 1840," Southern Ladies Book, March 1840, 161; G. F. Pierce, "Education for Women," Southern Ladies Book, January 1840, 5-6; James McChord, Sermons on Important Subjects (Lexington: Thomas T. Skillman, 1822), 128; Southern Churchman, 14 August 1835; "Why is There So Little Practical Religion in Our Churches?", Christian Index, 8 September 1836; Western Banner, 24 November 1836; Christian Index, 13 April 1837; Southern Churchman, 28 August 1840; Watchman of the South, 29 April 1841; John Jones, "Blessed Are the Poor In Spirit," 10 July 1841, manuscript sermons, Jones Papers, University of Georgia Archives, Athens, Georgia; "Dangers of Worldly Prosperity," Christian Index, 20 February 1846; Southern Presbyterian, 18 May 1849; Joseph B.
In every decade of the antebellum era, ministers of every denomination, in every corner of the South, lamented and censured what they perceived to be the South's obsession with money making and acquisition. In 1819, Jesse Mercer, a prominent Baptist minister and editor in Georgia, remarked during his funeral oration for Governor William Rabun, that many of the best minds in the state had sacrificed everything -- family, friends, and faith -- for the "cursed lure of gold." Indeed, according to Mercer, the Governor had been unique in his era and among his class in the restraint he had shown in his lifestyle and economic pursuits.\(^2\) A few years later, at the dedication of Madison College in Kentucky, a popular Methodist evangelist, H. B. Bascom, designated the masses among the lower and higher classes as the "drudges of avarice," who care for nothing but "the miser's gains."\(^3\) In 1839, Asa Candler, writing


\(^3\)H. M. Henkle, The Life of Henry Bidleman Bascom, D.D., LL.D., Late Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 1854), 190.
for the Georgia-based, Baptist Christian Index, commented grimly upon the "busy crowds" which "throng around the throne of Mammon." "The sanctuary," Candler lamented, "is almost forsaken."  

Presbyterian clerics generally shared the perception of their Baptist and Methodist colleagues. In 1841, The Watchman of the South, a major Presbyterian paper, published in New Orleans, printed an anonymous letter in which the writer bemoaned the overpowering and pervasive "love of riches" which was, to his mind, a deadly blight upon the church and society in general. And Joseph Stratton, the long-time pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Natchez, despairingly noted in 1857, that the "multitudes" had abandoned the Kingdom of Christ and were worshipping at the shrines of "ambition and avarice."

Episcopal priests and bishops noticed the same tendencies in southern society and were not shy in confronting the hosts of mammon. In their censorious, sometimes angry, sermons and articles they frequently out-did their less refined peers in the other denominations. In 1828, James Fox, an Episcopal cleric in Mississippi, sternly warned his spiritual charges that their continued appetite for

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4 Christian Index, 8 March 1838.

5 Watchman of the South, 29 April 1841.

6 Stratton, Valedictory, 24.
wealth would doom their souls and destroy the work of the Church in Mississippi. Fox reminded his hearers that simply because everyone else in the community was absorbed in the acquisitive spirit was no justification for professing Christians to join in the degrading hunt for the "riches of this world." The Southern Churchman, the most influential Episcopal publication in the antebellum South, frequently served as the medium through which Episcopal clerics challenged the spirit of the age. In 1853, a writer for the Richmond-based publication asserted that the "love of gain" was the single most powerful idea "currently being impressed upon the youthful countenance of our country . . ." He went on to add, possibly alluding to the mark of the beast in the book of Revelation, that "every countenance bears upon it the mark of speculation and enterprise." 

Mammonism, the obsessive desire for money and property, was certainly nothing new. The southern clergy readily acknowledged that the "false god" had deceived and ensnared men through the ages. What concerned and angered them so

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8 Southern Churchman, 14 August 1835.
deeply about their own day was what they perceived as its unusual pervasiveness and power. 9 "Wealth," one Episcopal priest observed, "is the presiding god" of this land. And in a tone of despondent futility he added, "this country is the temple of mammon, and he who lives here cannot . . . fail to yield to the bewitching sorcery of wealth. . . ." 10 Some ministers expressed shocked indignation that parents were teaching their children to emulate and admire the successful mammonist or "money-seeker." 11 Obsessed with the "accumulation of wealth," many parents were no longer

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teaching their children the precepts of the faith. As a result the young were oblivious to their moral and civic obligations." True to their parents' example they "cared for nothing" other than "traffic and trade" and the money and property they longed to possess. 12

Wherever they turned, the ministers observed men and women, oftentimes professing Christians, rushing about in an iniquitous "scramble for wealth." Toward the end of the antebellum era, Bishop Otey, the aged head of the Episcopal Church in Tennessee, stated that he could scarcely find a "serious" and "quiet" Christian in his diocese, for all were anxiously, frantically filling up the "coffers of mammon." 13

The ministers were convinced that the South had not always been plagued with so rapacious and widespread a spirit of greed and enterprise. They believed that before the cotton boom and the opening of the West, an age of quiet agricultural pursuits had existed in which the faithful led lives of plain and simply piety. 14 In this idealized, bygone age even the wealthy were circumspect in

12Ibid.


their deportment and preoccupied with concerns other than the acquisition of more wealth. Unquestionably there had been "dandys," speculators, and other species of mammonists in this pious and republican age, but such people had been exceptional, certainly not representative of southern culture. But now all that had changed.

Cotton, the bountiful lands in the West, the massive increase in the slave population, and the railroads were fueling a new, "steam-driven spirit" which had ripped southern society from its moorings and cast it adrift upon a "vast ocean of experiment." Acquisition and accumulation had, in the clerical perspective, become the guiding stars for most southerners. Redeemed and unregenerated alike seemed determined to possess a fortune.

The mania for acquisition was driven by a popular belief, a belief shared by most clergymen, that virtually any southerner could indeed acquire a fortune. As a writer for the Southern Churchman observed in 1840, the

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15 "The Church in Danger," Christian Index, 5 December 1845.


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"means for acquisition in a country like ours are abundant and available to all." He went on to remark, "men are growing rich around us. Our brethren and our kindred are amassing hordes of gold." Although this assertion was an overstatement, it nevertheless reflects the clergy's perception that their era and region were replete with economic opportunities. This idea was propounded incessantly by clerics throughout the era, despite the several major economic crises that periodically ravaged the South and the nation. Ministers certainly acknowledged these panics and depressions, citing them as providential interventions. Even so, the antebellum southern divines believed theirs was a uniquely prosperous age and region. Furthermore, the chance for "quick" riches was apparently available to anyone willing to make the necessary compromises with decent, Christian behavior.

The clerical perception of the antebellum South as a land of economic opportunity, if overstated at times, was not at all inaccurate. The cotton boom, stimulated by the invention of the cotton gin and the opening of vast, fertile western lands, did create an economic environment which offered substantial economic rewards to those who could obtain a plot of good land and several field hands. Although only a small percentage of southerners would

Southern Churchman, 28 August 1840.
acquire great wealth in the antebellum era, hundreds of thousands would move from the non-slaveholding to the slaveholding class in an astonishingly short time. In the latter decades of the era, the number of slaveholders increased by seventy percent.\textsuperscript{18} Very few of these individuals would attain the status of great planters, but clearly there was a "good chance for economic advancement" in the antebellum South.\textsuperscript{19} In Arkansas, one of the poorer of the slave states, the number of "planters" more than quadrupled while the population only doubled during the decade of the 1850s. During the same time period the number of men owning more than fifty slaves nearly tripled, and the average farm size rose from 146 acres to 246 acres.\textsuperscript{20} Numerous contemporary accounts from non-clerical sources also supported the clerical perception of the South as a generally prosperous region. It should be noted that when the ministers used terms like riches, wealth, and prosperity they were referring, then as now, to a broad spectrum of economic conditions. Riches denoted the estate of a great planter or the "comfortable" sufficiency


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

of a productive yeoman family. Understanding this feature of clerical usage helps to explain their perception of antebellum South as a prosperous region. The ministers had no quarrel with prosperity per se. Indeed they were pleased to see well-clothed children, the construction of schools and churches, missions founded and supported. However, from the clergy's point of view, the positive and hopeful results of southern prosperity were largely negated by the serious social and individual sins which had accompanied the spread of general prosperity.

The most serious of these sins was the emergence of a powerful spirit of greed and materialism which blinded millions to their true duties to God and man. But more specifically the new spirit of the age had resulted in a marked decline in honesty, justice, republican sentiment, true piety, compassion, and a multitude of other virtues.

The situation was made all the more tragic in clerical minds because they believed that the South had been blessed with all the natural and human resources requisite for the creation of a pastoral Christian commonwealth. If men could only be made aware of the dangers of materialism and greed, if only a remnant of pious men and women, free from the stain of mammonism, could be preserved, then all might yet be well. But the obstacles to such a transformation of popular attitudes and assumptions were formidable. With the allurements of mammon on every hand, it seemed
doubtful that weak and fallen men could be made to raise their eyes to loftier spiritual things. The clergy's task was made doubly difficult because many of the leading spokesmen of the South seemed unaware of the sinister character of the spirit of the times. Indeed, many seemed to exult in the frenzy and enterprise of the new age.

Thomas R. Dew, the talented proponent of slavery and professor at William and Mary, had few of the anxieties so often expressed by the ministers of his and the other southern states. How, he wondered, could anyone question the South's newly discovered prosperity? When he saw grand houses being built, and refined ladies strolling in Richmond's parks, adorned in their silks and laces, he was satisfied that the southern economy was producing all the right results. He saw no reason to carry the issue any further.21

J. D. B. DeBow, the articulate and popular editor of DeBow's Review effusively praised the cotton South and its economic opportunities. In DeBow's view the southern economic system held out the brightest of futures for the strong and industrious. His scenario for the average

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southerner was glowingly optimistic. "Cheap lands, abundant harvest, high prices, give the poor man soon a negro . . . . in a few years his draft for $20,000 becomes a very marketable commodity."22 If DeBow had any doubts about southern economic life and where it was all leading, they were ably concealed in this statement. The clergy correctly perceived that the rather superficial and unquestioning assumptions of men like Dew and DeBow were dominant among the mass of southern citizens.

In an 1839 issue of the Watchman of the South an unnamed writer commented succinctly on the difficulty of the task facing the clergy when he observed that it was all but impossible for most men to "see the truth through . . . one hundred acres of rich land."23 William Winans, a Methodist minister in Mississippi, had no illusions about the aspirations and assumptions of his neighbors. In 1849, he wrote that the "universal passion" among men is the "love of riches."24 Nor, in his opinion, were his neighbors likely to recognize their sin, as all were caught up in the


23 Watchman of the South, 14 March 1839.

frenetic excitement of the commercial spirit. Winans bitterly scorned the "perpetual whirl," his name for the economic excitement in his rural neighborhood, and he sneered at the conventional wisdom which induced everyone to "buy a negro, to make cotton, to get money, to buy more negroes, to make more money," and so forth.  

For some ministers, emigration -- the continual movement of southerners in search of better lands -- was the most graphic and telling reflection of the South's wanton materialism. That thousands of southerners would abandon church and kinsmen, and carry their families into the uncivilized "West," seemed to many ministers the very height of avariciousness. It was conceded that money was to be made in the "new lands," but at a terrible cost. What hope for salvation and spiritual growth could men, women, and

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Ibid. Winans, a large slaveholder, apparently saw no inconsistency in his planter status and his condemnation of the perpetual whirl. The fact that he had not sought planter status, but had achieved it through marriage and the natural increase of his slaves, probably freed him from any sense that he was participant in the scramble for wealth which marked the lives of so many of his neighbors. Certainly nothing suggests that Winans was economically aggressive or eager for the usual trappings of the gentry. Winans neither saved nor invested. He was an outspoken opponent of "hoarding," even with a view to endowing eventually a charitable institution or leaving an inheritance for children. Ray Holder, William Winans, Methodist Leader in Antebellum Mississippi (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 44, 53, 66, 80, 97, 109, 133; Manuscript Census Returns, 1840, Sixth Census (Slave Schedule), Wilkinson County, Mississippi; Manuscript Census Returns, 1850; Seventh Census (Slave Schedule), Wilkinson County, Mississippi.
children find in lands where no settled clergy existed and where every man's consuming passion was making money? These attitudes were reinforced by reports the clergy received from former neighbors, and by articles and letters carried in the religious press. Such a report appeared in the True Witness of New Orleans. Writing from Gastor's Landing, Arkansas in the late 1850s, a "lay brother" observed sorrowfully that he was in a land of moral and spiritual darkness, bereft of any substantial moral or religious aid. "Money making," he had observed, "is the god here." How foolish and sinful, many ministers cried, to move to such a place. Nor were these ministers mollified by protestations that emigration was prompted by necessity. In an address before the annual convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church held in Charlottesville, Virginia in 1841, the Reverend Philip Slaughter stated emphatically that greed, not necessity, had motivated the majority of those who had migrated to the fertile "cotton and sugar


27 "Places Wanting Ministers," True Witness, 2 April 1859.
Such pronouncements, however, had no more effect than Winan's tirade against the "perpetual whirl," and the great migrations continued unabated throughout the era.

Some southern clergymen saw the materialism and greed of their day most clearly represented in the new expanding urban South, just coming into its own in the decades of the 1830s. True some of the eastern coastal cities -- Norfolk, Richmond, Savannah -- experienced considerable decay and decline in the opening years of the century, but staple agriculture, industrialization, and railroads had, by the 1830s, combined to arrest this decline. And, more importantly, cities like Lexington, Louisville, New Orleans, Atlanta and Memphis witnessed remarkable economic and population growth during the last three decades of the era.\(^{29}\) Boom towns appeared throughout the cotton belt. Macon, Georgia, in the south-central part of the state, was typical of such towns. In 1826 the town handled some 7,000 bales of cotton; eleven years later the town stored, processed, or trans-shipped an excess of 100,000 bales and the "Macon merchants were selling several millions of dollars worth of goods to the farmers and planters of the

\(^{28}\) Slaughter, "Evil."

Economic development on this scale was virtually unprecedented in American history.

A network of railroads and rivers connected the cities and towns making them accessible to the majority of the southern population while enhancing their visibility and influence. Many southerners hailed the growth of towns and cities as a necessary and valuable step on the road to greater economic prosperity, but clerics tended toward suspicion and skepticism as they surveyed the urban South. Referring to New Orleans in 1859, Reverend Richard McInnis wrote, "it is a hard field, as all large cities are. Here as a communal center, the forces of iniquity are concentrated." The compactness and pressures of city life seemed to produce an over-abundance of immorality, sabbath breaking, drunkenness, and blasphemy. But these sins, so obvious to the clerics of every denomination, were not at the heart of McInnis' complaint about New Orleans. Cities were evil, he stated, primarily because their environs were "completely absorbed in the world. The great inquiry is, how shall we make money?"31

Clerical references to urban life often involved denunciations of the money-grubbing nature of city

30 James H. Stone, "Economic Conditions in Macon, Georgia in the 1830s," Georgia Historical Quarterly (Summer, 1970), 217.

31 Richard McInnis, True Witness, 16 April 1859.
dwellers. Counting houses, banks, to some ministers the very "temples of Mammon," were regarded as breeding grounds for the most virulent strains of materialism. There were pious men and women in the cities of course, but they were pious in spite of their environment. All too often, the ministers taught, cities lured men and women into a vortex of fashion and acquisition, which drove them to an increasingly frantic struggle for money. But if some clerics perceived the cities as especially dangerous to the spiritual well-being of southerners, they did not evince any sense that the cities were an aberration in southern culture. Rather they seemed to regard the cities as simply the most glaring examples of the South's materialistic mentality. Certainly the ministers were astute enough to recognize that it was the rural hinterland -- and the economic aspirations of the farmers and planters who lived there -- which fueled the hectic mercenary spirit of the cities and boom towns.

As the antebellum era progressed ministers seemed to look increasingly back to an era of contented simplicity. Daniel Hundley was among the relatively small number of

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33 Southern Episcopalian, May 1858.

southerners -- apart from the clergy -- who shared the perception that the South was devolving from a pastoral commonwealth to a competitive, mercenary society. Writing in 1860, he noted a superabundance of those in the South devoting themselves exclusively to the "base pursuit of riches." It was a difficult admission for a proud southerner like Hundley. William Gilmore Simms, perhaps the most popular literary man in the South, also dreamt of a purer, nobler, less mercenary past, one he evoked in many of his novels. And in the pages of the Southern Literary Messenger, Simms occasionally applauded the clergy's struggle against mammon, urging them to intensify their efforts.

Still, Hundley and Simms never entirely reflected the clerical antipathy to -- or anxiety about -- the spirit of acquisitiveness abroad in the South. They tended to view the South's materialism as somehow alien to southern life and culture. For Hundley, at least, it was the engrafting of a "Yankee" failing which, he believed, might ultimately be reconciled with southern culture for the good of that


36 Quoted in the Southern Churchman, 21 August 1851.
Ministers rarely acknowledged, or even hinted at this perspective; for them the South's sin was her own. Satan, much less some amorphous Yankee evil, was scarcely cited by the ministers as the well-spring of the South's materialism and greed. To the contrary, from the clerical perspective, southerners had leapt willingly into the sinful race for property and profits. As for reconciling the idolatrous, frenzied pursuit of riches with southern culture, the clergy doubted that such a reconciliation could safely be made. They would agree with Hundley that the emergence of a race of pious, energetic, and affluent men -- men willing to devote all of their surplus to pious causes -- would prove a great boon to the South, but again they were not at all confident that the development of such a race was possible. Even Christian men who set their hearts on accumulation, however noble their motives, would almost inevitably fall victim, ministers feared, to mammon's deceitful powers and succumb to the idolatrous worship of material success.

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37 This attitude is reflected most clearly in Hundley's chapters, "The Southern Yankee" and "Cotton Snobs," in Hundley, Southern States, 127-190. In his most famous novel, Woodcraft, Simms personified grasping venality in the characters of Bostwick, a rootless squatter, and McKown the Scot. Neither man had any identifiable connection with the South. Simms evidently wished to separate their obsessive money-mindedness from things truly southern.

38 This topic is thoroughly addressed in Chapter Three.
Clearly the southern clergy was struggling against a powerful, rising current of popular thought when they decried the spirit of the times and its manifestations. Most southerners accepted, without any serious questioning, the structure of the southern economy and the results that such a system produced. R. I. Hutchinson, a Baptist minister in Texas, complained that mammonism was a "sin tolerated by decent society. . . ." And as churchmen were, in his view, particularly susceptible to this failing, it had become "the great sin" of the church. It was an especially difficult sin to confront because it usually masqueraded in the guise of caring for one's family. Then too, the "genteel and frugal" aspects of "covetousness" provided a resilient veneer of respectability according to the Texas preacher. 39

Despite the substantial obstacles, southern pulpits resounded with indignant assaults upon the spirit of the times and its impious legacy. Declarations and warnings that God is a jealous God, who will tolerate no rivals for the affections of an individual's heart, were heard throughout the South. Ministers of every denomination asserted repeatedly, consistently that the lover of riches was doomed and that the society composed of, or led by, such

39 R. I. Hutchinson, Reminiscences, Sketches, and Addresses Selected from My Papers during a Ministry of Forty-five Years in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas (Houston: E. H. Cushing, 1874), 139-140.
individuals was similarly doomed. The "prophetic," or critical stance of the clergy set them at odds with their neighbors and communicants, for their criticisms, like the spirit of the age itself, touched virtually every class in southern society. Jacksonians might enjoy hearing their preachers castigate the "fashionable elites" one Sunday, only to be discomfited on the next Sabbath by accusations that their purchase of a few more acres was as unholy and indefensible as the planter's purchase of a silver tea service.

Unlike the temperance campaigns, the struggle for free public education, and the proper care of the insane -- campaigns which generated considerable popular support and involvement -- the war against mammon was almost exclusively a clerical cause. True, some secular observers questioned the economic practicality of the South's attachment to a staple economy, but very few persons outside of the ministry raised questions regarding the ethics of southern economic trends and conventions. Words of encouragement would occasionally come from secular publications, but such expressions were infrequent and muted.

That the southern clergy was willing to take an isolated stand and question a widely accepted set of attitudes and beliefs speaks well of their courage and independence. But then again, in a very real sense the clergy had no choice in the matter. As biblicists -- men convinced of
the veracity and authority of the Bible -- the southern clerics were compelled to confront any actions and attitudes in their communities which they believed were contrary to the explicit teachings of the Scriptures. The numerous references in the Bible to greed, covetousness, and mammonism convinced the clergy that these failings were of particular interest to God and should therefore be opposed with determination and, if need be, the martyr's resolve. Such a stance was also necessary because the ministers believed that the South's continued obsession with acquisition and accumulation would invariably result in the severest of Providential judgments.

For the ministers there was no mistaking God's anger or the reality of impending judgment; clear warnings had been issued in the form of serious economic disasters. These disasters, in 1819, 1837, in the early 1840s, and 1857, had wracked the South, bringing economic ruin to tens of thousands of southerners. Perhaps the severest of these crises was the Panic of 1837. Cotton prices fell from fifteen cents a pound in 1836 to less than eight cents a pound two years later. Businesses closed by the score. Thousands of farms were repossessed or simply abandoned. Banks closed their doors, sinking under a deluge of inflated worthless currency, carrying with them a multitude of helpless depositors. Whigs might blame Democrats for the Panic, pointing to Jackson's destruction of the National Bank and
his specie circular as the fatal errors, and Democrats might attribute the financial collapse to the Bank's dying agonies. The clergy's answer was far simpler and closer at hand. Southerners, the ministers taught, had turned from God to mammon and each economic catastrophe was the awful price exacted for their idolatry.  

From his pulpit in Charleston, Nathaniel Bowen implored his congregation to look upon the depression of the 1840s as a providential visitation sent to recall them from the paths of unrestrained and selfish materialism. Seen in this light, Bowen and other southern divines regarded economic crises as something akin to blessings, painful chastisements necessary to turn the South and the nation toward contented Godliness. Indeed, a note of triumph rings through the pronouncements of some ministers as they interpreted the economic peril of their hour. They believed God might yet mold southern society into a Biblical commonwealth.

The various crises of the antebellum era enhanced the clergy's confidence that they were aptly marking the great and dangerous failures in southern society. These crises represented — to the clergy at least — a vindication of

40 Christian Index, 1 June 1837; Southern Churchman, 16 October 1857; "Evil Effects of Loving Money," Southern Episcopalian, December 1857; Central Presbyterian, 15 May 1858.

41 Bowen, Sermons, 324-325.
their censorious repudiation of the spirit of the times. Moreover, they were heartened by the spiritual awakenings which seemed to spring from the pain and fear occasioned by the panics and depressions. But such benefits proved short lived; they failed to change the clergy's basic perception that theirs was a greedy and unrighteous era. If anything, the economic trials of the period added ultimately to the ministers' pessimism and sense that cataclysmic judgment was coming. Their God, though mercifully patient, was a demanding sovereign. The time for repentance and reformation, the ministers feared, was growing short.

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42 Southern Episcopalian, May 1858.
CHAPTER II
"The Law of Labor"

In the early 1840s, Richard Wilmer, the future bishop of the Episcopal Church in Alabama, was a young priest serving a parish on the upper James River in Virginia. Because his stipend was pitifully small, Wilmer was compelled to chop and haul his own firewood. It was a task that occupied a considerable amount of the youthful pastor's time. Parishioners would often observe their spiritual guide trudging home with an arm-load of firewood just garnered from a nearby thicket. And on any given morning, the passer-by was likely to see Wilmer splitting wood near the backdoor of the parsonage. These sights disconcerted and offended some Episcopal communicants, a number of whom reprimanded the future bishop for stooping to do the work of Negroes and poor whites.¹

More than a thousand miles away, Daniel Baker, the Presbyterian pastor in Austin, Texas and president of a small church-college, faced similar criticisms. Never reluctant to sweep his own porch or chop his own firewood, the Reverend Dr. Baker shocked the sensitive feelings of some of his neighbors. They remonstrated with Baker to "leave such tasks to the servants." It was simply not

proper, Baker's genteel friends asserted, for him to be employed in such menial occupations. Baker did not suffer such advice well, and seemed almost to make a point of being seen in the yard with his broom or axe. And on at least one occasion, he bluntly told his critics to mind their own business.²

The criticisms leveled at Baker and Wilmer for their menial labors did not reflect exclusively the attitudes and prejudices of a few delicate matrons or pampered sophistcates. Many southern ministers feared that the denigration of manual labor, and those engaged in such pursuits, was a widespread, increasingly popular attitude in the south. Speaking in 1840, the Reverend Augustus Baldwin Longstreet observed "that one of the first conceptions of manhood in this country is, that it is disgraceful to labor."³ Longstreet, like so many of his brethren in all denominations, was horrified that such a conception had taken root in the South. No society, Longstreet argued, could long survive where labor and laborers were held in contempt. "The law of labor is imposed upon all," one


³Longstreet, "Inaugural Address of the Honorable Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, President of Emory College, before the Faculty and Students of that Institution at its commencement, February 10, 1840," Southern Ladies Book, February, 1840, 161.
divine wrote, and it would be the height of folly to rebel against the clear will and design of providence."^ Robert Fleming, a Baptist minister in Georgia, asserted that those who "would excuse themselves from the obligation to pursue some honest and useful employment... are wanting in piety, and are at war with the designs of heaven."^ Southern aristocrats were often characterized by the clergy as the chief offenders when it came to craving indolence and snubbing honest labor. Still, clerical statements criticizing the gentry for this failing rarely suggest that the great planters and their ladies were alone in their iniquity. The ministers implied that the gentry was only the apex of the problem -- the most visible manifestation of a pernicious attitude which, they believed, spanned all classes in the South. Most ministers who addressed the problem regarded it as a cultural problem inherently bound up in the materialistic spirit of the times.

^Idleness," Watchman of the South, 6 January 1842.


Typical of statements questioning the "industry" of the upper classes are: H. M. Henkle, The Life of Henry Bidleman Bascom, D.D., LL.D., Late Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 1854), 35; "The Fashionable and Rich are Not Industrious," Nashville Christian Advocate, 14 August 1851; "Fashionable Women," Christian Index, 11 March 1857.
In most clerical minds, the desire for unrestrained acquisition and accumulation was linked inextricably with a desire for illicit and pretentious indolence. George Foster Pierce, a Methodist minister and educator, saw and expounded upon the connection between an aversion to manual labor and the mercenary spirit of the day.

It is a superficial age -- hasty, enterprising, locomotive in spirit. It appears in the adventurous speculations of commerce -- the abandonment of the former slow processes of accumulation -- in the wild schemes of men that make haste to be rich . . . . The world is traveling under an impulse that scorns delay, ridicules the sobriety of steady motion . . . . Idleness expects to reap the rewards of industry, the poor man of today to be the rich man of tomorrow, and fortune is to plant our crops, gather our harvests . . . while we sit 'in otio cum dignitate. . . .' 7

For Pierce, it was a confused society indeed where such attitudes predominated.

It seems paradoxical at first glance that men who believed their age to be one of frantic, ceaseless mercenary activity would also perceive their time as one of indolence and antipathy to industrious labor. This apparent contradiction, however, is resolved when it is understood that the clergy usually made a sharp delineation between "labor"

and "activity" or "enterprise." The former term implied steady, patient, restrained, economic endeavor, a lifestyle in harmony with God's order. On the other hand, in clerical usage, "activity," "enterprise," and "motion" implied a venal, speculative, mercenary lifestyle — a lifestyle largely devoid of true piety and altruism. Certainly there was no lack of active and busy southerners. Describing this class, the clergy used terms like "multitudes" and "throngs." But these frantically preoccupied, aspiring men and women were not, according to clerical observation, in any way representative of a properly ordered, healthy, industrious society. The distinction between "busy" men and "working" men was probably lost on most southerners, but it was very plain and significant to the divines, suggesting two very different attitudes. Most busy southerners, clerics believed, had no appreciation for


labor as ordained by God. The ministers asserted that multitudes of southerners scrambled for riches largely out of a desire to escape the necessities of daily labor, to escape, as it were, from the divine order of things.  

The southern clergy declaimed against this misguided, sinful behavior. They hailed the propriety and desirability of labor and urged southerners to submit to its ennobling disciplines.

Few sermons were actually constructed around this theme — the virtue and desirability of manual labor — but it nevertheless was a distinct feature of antebellum clerical thought. The clergy's attitude in this regard was frequently expressed in sermons and writings which otherwise had little or nothing to do with attitudes toward labor. Southern ministers often communicated their criticisms, observations, and ideals for southern society in this manner; revealing their views in sermons or articles which, on the surface, were conventional evangelical evocations or the recitation of familiar Bible stories. James McChord's sermon, "Biography of Abraham," is representative.

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of this genre of antebellum sermons. Admittedly McChord's sermon may have been somewhat more polished than the average Sunday offering, but in its structure and content it represented the typical discourse. Beginning with the obligatory, and usually brief text, in this instance a few verses from the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, McChord proceeded to describe the important scenes in the life of the patriarch. For the most part, McChord's recitation closely followed the Biblical narrative. Asides were rare and brief, but interjected carefully to call attention to the important lessons which might be derived from Abraham's experiences. Here the patriarch's submissive faithfulness is cited, and a bit later his generosity is explicitly highlighted for the congregation. In recalling Abraham's acquisition of wealth, McChord observed that it was his possessions which brought the patriarch's greatest sorrows:

Let me add one to the long list of warnings, how readily abundance destroys the finer and keener sensibilities of the human heart and renders man less capable of appreciating the only solid and permanent felicity that the universe ever witnessed or eternity will witness. .. .

Near the end of his sermon, McChord again reminded his listeners of the dangers of wealth, this time linking affluence to wicked indolence which would "intoxicate the heart . . . and alienate it from its maker." So it had been for Abraham's nephew, Lot, and so it would be for the
careless and acquisitive in McChord's congregation. The focal point of McChord's sermon, however, was not the dangers of wealth or the sin of indolence. McChord's sermon, like virtually all antebellum southern sermons, was a call to repentance and a saving faith in Christ. Above all, McChord desired that his hearers recognize in Abraham's life a model for a life of intimate faithfulness with God. Even so, clerical teachings on labor and other topics related to the economic mind of the South, were very far from being random and fleeting digressions added to sermons as afterthoughts. To the contrary, these teachings and observations were calculated and conspicuous features of the discourses in which they appeared. They were designed and delivered in a manner intended to give focus and relevance to the Biblical narrative. The southern clergy was determined in its efforts to influence the day-to-day lifestyle of individuals. The ministers were equally determined in their efforts to mold southern society, to shape it in an image which they believed would please God.

If any evidence were required to document the clerical concern for what they perceived as a growing southern disaffection with labor, the manual school movement stands as excellent testimony to clerical ideals and anxieties.

James McChord, Sermons on Important Subjects (Lexington: Thomas Skillman, 1822), 240, 264, 284.
Clerical enthusiasm for this system of education also reflects a determination to recall southerners to a proper appreciation for labor and laborers. An ideal which originated in Europe during the early years of the century, the manual labor school system found a host of eager clerical champions in the antebellum South. Emory, Mercer, Emory and Henry, Erskine, Davidson, Oglethorpe, and Richmond were among the many colleges and academies begun as manual labor institutions. To the founders of these schools, the manual labor system appeared a divinely appointed innovation, one capable of meeting several of the crying needs of southern society. Many ministers hoped that the system would provide the interested denominations with a means whereby men and boys from the lower social orders might obtain a higher education.

Under the manual labor scheme a school would be established in conjunction with a working farm. The students, rather than paying a high rate of tuition, would spend a few hours each day farming school property. By doing so, they would provide their own food, and the surplus of their labors would be sold to pay faculty salaries and purchase the necessary academic accouterments. But beyond the practical considerations, clerics were excited by the prospect of blending mental and physical labor to create a singularly well-rounded Christian citizen. Southern divines were fully convinced that manual labor was an important
factor in the development of a pious and noble character. The Reverend H. M. Henkle, describing the forces which molded evangelist H. B. Bascom's elevated character, cited Bascom's early experience with "ax, wedge, and maul." These early labors, Henkle stressed, instilled in Bascom a resilient spirit of confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, men like the Reverend Longstreet were confident that the manual labor system would "elevate manual labor to its legitimate rank, by blending it with mental endowments which shall command for it respect." The manual labor colleges and academies across the South would stand, their founders prayed, as eloquent, shining monuments to the virtue and beauty of physical labor.

Wake Forest College, a Baptist institution in North Carolina, was among the first manual labor institutions in the South. Founded in 1834, the trustees and faculty of Wake Forest challenged prospective students to come expecting the development of their muscles as well as their intellects. At Wake Forest each student, irrespective of background or predilection, was expected to labor from one to three hours daily in the shop or field. The founding

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12 Henkle, Bascom, 35; "General Rules," Nashville Christian Advocate, 1 December 1848, Christian Index, 3 May 1855.


ministers believed that these labors, aside from supporting the college and developing strong backs, would help to shield impressionable young minds from the evils so rampant in southern society, particularly, "envy" and "selfish ambition."15 This belief was a cornerstone of the clergy's enthusiasm for manual labor -- that it helped to insulate men and women from the temptations associated with the materialism of their day.

The first students who came to Wake Forest accepted the manual labor system with few complaints. Certainly, farm labor was nothing new to most of the students. What the students did resent was the stigmatization they sensed on the part of some in the community who apparently held manual labor in contempt. In 1835, one student felt compelled to write to the state Baptist paper to defend the manual labor scheme and those involved in the program. He rebuked those who denigrated manual labor, asserting that he and his fellows were proud to "engage in everything at the school that an honest farmer is not ashamed to do." He then enumerated the tasks and chores routinely performed by the students at Wake Forest, some of which would certainly have been classed as menial and Negro work. Still, the correspondent asserted, "if we should draw back from anything here that is called work, we should feel that we had disgraced ourselves." He added that at Wake Forest,

15 Ibid., 78.
"blistered hands were considered scars of honor."  

This hymn to manual labor echoed clerical pronouncements heard throughout the era, and certainly it mirrored the attitudes of the men who founded the manual labor schools. Such glowing evocations -- and the powerful sentiments they represented -- were, however, insufficient to save the manual labor plan at Wake Forest and similar institutions. One by one the southern schools which had adopted the plan abandoned it for more reliable means of economic support. The system had proven a complete economic failure. Student farm production invariably failed to provide a sufficient income to sustain the schools. Reverend educators across the South were forced to discard the manual labor plan in an effort to save their schools.

Certainly the death of the manual labor system -- and it was actually a very gradual death spanning several decades -- was no indication that the clergy had lost its enthusiasm for labor or its sense that southern society was increasingly in need of reformation on this point. Ministers retained a bold and clear commitment to manual labor, and especially the labor associated with agriculture. Never denigrating other professions or employments, with the exception of grog selling and acting, the clergy nevertheless held fast to a conviction that, for most men, a

16 *Biblical Recorder*, 1 April 1835.
simple farming lifestyle was the best of all occupations. The routine of daily physical toil kept men and women in tune with God's order of things. Far from being avoided, a life of "rustic" labor was to be desired. No other lifestyle was as productive of spiritual and physical health. In the 1840s, George Foster Pierce asserted that a life of farming should never be rejected because it involved "sweat, and dust, and toil." Indeed, that was the beauty of agricultural labor; it clothed men with the "dignity of labor." It was on the small unpretentious farm that "order, economy and peace" were to be found. The toiling farmer could expect his spirit to be "daily elevated to the author of its blessings and its joy." Patiently working for his daily bread, the farmer was free from "temptations to envy and corrosions of discontent." The seasonal pace,

17 Nor did the clergy disparage mental or spiritual labors. Indeed, there could be no higher calling, in clerical thought, than to labor as a pastor or a missionary. And the pious teacher or writer, laboring to elevate the minds and souls of his fellow creatures, was certainly in harmony with God's ideal.

18 Henkle, Bascom, 35; To Young Men Out of Employment, Christian Index, 30 January 1846.

19 George G. Smith, The Life and Times of George Foster Pierce, D.D. LL.D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, with a Sketch of Lovick Pierce, His Father (Sparta, Georgia: Hancock Publishing Company, 1888), 175, 180.

20 Nathaniel Bowen, Sermons on Christian Doctrines and Duties, 2 vols., 403.

21 Ibid.
planting and harvesting, with little scope for rapid material advancement were the features of farming life that offered men and women their best chance of escaping the snares of mammon. Speaking to the graduating class of the University of Alabama in 1834, the Reverend Alva Woods celebrated agriculture as "the most indispensible, the most healthful and the most independent." Clearly, the southern clergy had a rather idealized view of agriculture. At times their effusive praise of farm life and labor rings more of romance than of realism, despite the fact that the majority of the southern clergy were intimately acquainted with the realities of farm life.

But their romantic allusions to farm life and physical toil did not blind clerics to the reality that even the tillers of the soil -- with all their advantages -- were often the adherents of mammon, ever willing to plunge into debt or speculation in the hope of forsaking a life of labor for one of iniquitous ease. Farming in and of itself was an insufficient protection against materialism and its inherent evils. And conversely the clergy did not

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22 Alva Woods, "Baccalaureate Address, University of Alabama, 11 August 1834," Christian Index, 28 October 1834.

assume that non-agricultural employments were necessarily mammonist or sinful. William Winans warned that a life in business offered special temptations to venality and dishonesty, but these, he added, could be overcome with rigorous moral discipline and a proper perspective on life.24

What was needed, in all occupations, was a restrained, hard-working demeanor, a will to work patiently, not with an eye to ease or riches, but with a desire to provide for one's family and the advancement of the kingdom of God.25 This view of life and labor, firmly held by a majority of the South's ministers, conformed most readily to the image of the yeoman farmer who tilled his own fields, alongside his sons and possibly a few slaves. It was, of course -- if one omits the slaves -- a classic American image, a


25 J. O. Andrew, Miscellanies: Comprising Letters, Essays, and Addresses; to which is Added a Biographical Sketch of Mrs. Ann Amelia Andrew (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 1854), 306; John Matthews, "Reconciliation by the Cross," Presbyterian Preacher, January 1828; "Owe No Man Anything," Southern Religious Telegraph, 9 March 1832; Jesse Mercer, "Speculation," Christian Index, 10 March 1836; Watchman of the South, 14 March 1839; T. M. Slaughter, "Desultory Thoughts," Christian Index, 16 January 1846; "General Rules," Nashville Christian Advocate, 1 December 1848; William Winans, "Right and Wrong Use of Riches," Southern Methodist Pulpit, 257-258; Iverson Brookes, "Conformity to Christ Required of All Disciples," (April 1854) manuscript sermon, University of Alabama Archives, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Southern Churchman, 14 August 1857. This topic is further treated in Chapter Four.
staple of Puritan and Jeffersonian ideology, and it figured prominently in Jacksonian political rhetoric. But the Jacksonian celebration of the hardy yeoman pushing back the frontier was not entirely compatible with the ministers' view, just as it was not entirely compatible with the classical Puritan or Jeffersonian thought.26

In the Jacksonian scheme of things the ultimate reward of diligent labor was economic success, perhaps the grand house and dozens of servants. To make such achievement possible for members of the middle and lower orders, Jacksonian economic and political policy was designed to destroy those political, social and economic institutions which impeded the advancement of the common man. Once liberated, the plowman would progress to planter, the clerk to merchant. In conventional thought this progression was the natural, proper order of things.27 And this sort of scenario occasionally became a part of the clergy's discussion of labor. Most ministers believed and taught that diligent, painstaking labor would result in some measure of


economic success. God might even allow some very few pious, industrious men to achieve wealth. Even so, the clergy as a class never reflected the Jacksonian or conventional view of labor and its rewards. For most southern ministers, labor was largely productive of rather intangible benefits: humility, faith, patience, and self-esteem. That labor might result in economic gain scarcely mattered to most clergymen. Indeed, if one labored with a determination to enrich oneself or to provide for luxury or ease, then labor ceased to be labor and became merely "activity" and "motion," and God's design was negated. If only southerners would fully appreciate the nobility and true objects of labor, then the ministers believed contentment and piety would mark southern society. That the clergy took such a view of labor and its benefits reinforces the portrait of a clergy disinterested in and rather disdainful of economic success and the commercial

28 Cushing Hassell, manuscript memoir (ca. 1840), 34, Southern Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.


30 Jesse Mercer, "Speculation," Christian Index, 10 March 1836; Watchman of the South, 14 March 1839; "Southern and Southeastern Georgia," Southern Presbyterian, 18 May 1849.
aspirations of most southerners.

Given their view of labor and their ambivalence toward material advancement, ministers readily lauded mechanics and other laboring southerners. In doing so the clerics challenged what they perceived as an all too common aversion to manual labor and an inclination on the part of many southerners to hold manual laborers in contempt. Moses D. Hoge, a Presbyterian preacher in Virginia, refuted what he sensed was a widely held opinion when he proclaimed:

How different was thy mind, high-souled Saul of Tarsus, from the multitudes who would deem themselves disgraced by being seen to labor in any humble occupation. And how respectable that hand when wielding the hatchet or stretching the primed line, though contrasted with the soft white hands of those who place one half of their dignity in a release from vulgar offices!³¹

Thirty years later the editor of the Episcopal Southern Churchman also employed St. Paul as an example of the dignity of manual labor. "It is no disgrace to work. Paul was not afraid of losing his social position because he might be called a mechanic . . . . the Apostle did not lower his office by working as a day laborer."³²

³¹Moses D. Hoge, Sermons Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Moses Hoge, D.D. (Richmond: N. Pollard, 1821), 84.
editor went on to state that Paul's labor was all the more praiseworthy because he labored with no desire for material enrichment, but rather simply out of a desire to meet his basic needs and to further the cause of Christ.\textsuperscript{33}

Some ministers expressed a certain incredulity that manual laborers had come to be stigmatized by many in southern society. "There are no men who have less reason to be ashamed of their occupation than mechanics," asserted a contributor to the \textit{Nashville Christian Advocate}.\textsuperscript{34} In an 1851 sermon entitled, "Labor," E. P. Rogers, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia, expressed his dismay that certain young men "in many parts of the country" were "ashamed of following the plough or wielding the scythe." According to Rogers, such attitudes prompted multitudes of young men to forsake the country for the cities and towns where they hoped to find more "honorable," less menial employment. In a querulous tone Rogers stated, "it is surprising that such false views of labor should be current in the community; that labor should be looked upon as degrading and not elevating to man."\textsuperscript{35} The Reverend J.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{33}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{34}] "The Mechanic," \textit{Nashville Christian Advocate}, 11 December 1846.
\item[\textsuperscript{35}] E. P. Rogers, \textit{Earnest Words to Young Men, in a Series of Discourses} (Charleston, South Carolina: Walker and James, 1851), 176-178.
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M. Price wrote that "poor humble, and industrious laborer[s]" merited praise rather than scorn or snubbing, for they were following the divine order and not sinfully pursuing that "which the Lord never designed them to have . . . [and for] not enriching their own purses." Price clearly inferred that these patient and honest laborers were more honorable than the prosperous "thousands and thousands [who were] daily grasping after the honors and riches of this world." Contented, steady labor was more admirable in the clerical ideal than the anxious, if successful, struggle for economic advancement. And the ministers saw no reason for anyone to denigrate or be ashamed of manual labors.

The clergy did not attempt a systematic explanation of southern attitudes toward labor. They assumed that the desire to escape steady, arduous, and disinterested labor was simply another example of man's natural bent to sin and a testimony to the spirit of their materialistic age. Enticed by the chance at rapidly acquired wealth which their era seemed to hold out, men readily succumbed, in the clerical view, to false and dangerous attitudes con-

36 J. M. Price, "And the Poor Have the Gospel Preached to Them," Christian Index, 18 February 1836.

cerning work. The clergy did not go beyond this simple explanation as they attempted to understand the attitudes of their fellow southerners. The ministers were also satisfied that man's sinful nature and the mammonism of the day were sufficient explanations for the tendency, on the part of many southerners to hold manual laborers in contempt. 38

Had the clerical view of labor been adopted by all southerners, it would have revolutionized southern society, something most ministers longed to see. The clergy, with its emphasis on personal, industrious manual labor threatened the ethic upon which the plantation system rested. George Foster Pierce reflected the clergy's mind when he expressed his enthusiasm for the small, neat, well-tended farm. 39 And William Capers, Methodist bishop and missionary to the slaves, found the English countryside, with what he perceived as its clean, ordered farms, a model economic and social environment. 40 Speaking in the 1850s, William Wightman disdained the "landed estates" and the "indolent


39 Smith, Pierce, 180.

40 William Wightman, Life of William Capers, D.D., One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; including an Autobiography (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1858), 270.
repose" of great planters and merchant princes. He re­served his praise for the "humble" and industrious yeoman. There was actually little room in the clerical ideal for the great planter and his gangs of slaves. The clerical model, translated into reality, would have resembled a stylized New England commonwealth of the colonial era.

Certainly Thomas Jefferson would have smiled upon a society which reflected the clerical ideal; a great commonwealth of contented, independent yeomen was also his dream for the South and the nation. But, then again, the clergy in its celebration of manual labor, self-sufficiency, modesty, and independence, was, along with Jefferson, only being faithful to a classical American ideal. As the ideal blended easily with their interpretation of scripture it proved a sturdy pillar of the clergy's social ethic.

Admittedly the southern clergy made its peace with the plantation system and with slavery. But it was an ambiva­lent and uneasy peace with many ministers resentful and concerned that their "more excellent way" had been rejec­ted within the hearts and minds of so many southerners.


42 Rogers, Discourses, 35-36; Willard Preston, Sermons by Willard Preston, D.D., Late Pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia, with a Biograph­ical Sketch of the Author by Samuel K. Talmadge, D.D., President of Oglethorpe University, 2 vols. (Philadel­
Whether or not southerners were genuinely, uniquely inclined to denigrate manual labor and manual laborers -- explicitly or implicitly -- is an intriguing question, and difficult to answer with certainty. Many in the antebellum North believed they knew the answer and contended that manual laborers in the South were often the objects of disdain. David Wilmot, the Pennsylvania congressman, suggested that white working men in the South were stigmatized because slavery had attached an onus to manual labor in the region. Southerners occasionally made the same assertion. Hinton Rowan Helper, the vitriolic and eccentric North Carolina abolitionist, angrily argued that white workers in the South were held in contempt by slaveholders. And Helper further implied that the slaveholders' attitude was gaining a popular currency which impeded the economic and social development of the region.

Daniel Hundley, a rational and intelligent observer of antebellum southern culture, rejected the assertion that

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44 Hinton Rowan Helper, The Impending Crisis of the South and How to Meet It (New York: Burdick Brothers, 1857), 41.
manual labor was a badge of shame in the South. He attributed such contentions to biased "political zeal." Hundley bitterly accused a northern minister of "desecrating the pulpit" when the divine stated that "southern mechanics [were] put upon a level with negroes." "Allow us to inform you," Hundley asserted, "that all such cock and bull stories are the sheerest fabrications, concocted by political tricksters; who seek to inflame the breasts of honest sons of toil in the Free States against the landed proprietors of the South." 45

Hundley's opinion merits serious consideration. But in this instance it may be fair to say that Hundley, a devoted southerner, allowed patriotism to cloud his usually astute vision. From the stridency of language he used in refuting the accusation, it seems apparent that Northern critics of southern culture had touched a sensitive -- and perhaps vulnerable -- point with Hundley. Whatever prompted Hundley's angry refutation of what he labeled a base "falsehood and calumny," his opinion does not obviate or explain the clergy's deep concern that their society was losing its will to work and its appreciation for the dignity of labor.

Many southern ministers genuinely believed that a sub-

stsal number of southerners were disdainful of manual labor and manual laborers. Certainly it was not political trickery that prompted A. B. Longstreet and E. P. Rogers to lament publicly their sense that many southerners regarded manual labor as a degrading occupation. The observations and concerns voiced by Longstreet and Rogers, and so many of their brethren, were based upon a close and fundamentally sympathetic examination of southern life. Even so, the question is far from answered as to whether the southern mind was uniquely disposed to disparage manual laborers. At most, the evidence warrants the conclusion that clerical testimony does suggest the existence of a powerful and influential body of public opinion in the South which did regard manual labor as a debased occupation, and this attitude was sufficiently strong and pronounced to concern the clergy very deeply. The minister's anxieties were evidenced by continual admonitions about the intrinsic value of labor, effusive praise for honest working men, and enthusiasm for the manual labor school movement.

Some of the clergy's anxiety was probably related to the heightened awareness of the "common man" which marked American politics during the first half of the nineteenth century. In a very real sense the "common man" was taking center stage in American political life and thought with the rise of the Jacksonian movement. Rhetorical enthusiasm for the hardy yeoman was stock in trade for most
American politicians after Jackson's triumph in 1828. Surely the political atmosphere helped to focus clerical attention on labor and laborers. But even considering the tone of political life in antebellum America, it would be a gross oversimplification to dismiss clerical concerns as a thin echo of the conventional political mentality. Too many ministers from a variety of denominational and social backgrounds were concerned, even alarmed, simply to disregard their testimony on such grounds. It is more reasonable to assume that these very close observers of southern life had actually observed a tendency among many southerners to link manual labor to a debased social standing. The clergymen genuinely feared that such an attitude, left unchecked, would reduce the South to an erratic, unstable social and economic environment which would ultimately end in disaster. Indeed, the pernicious effects of a disdain for honest toil were already being reflected, many clergymen believed, in the actions and attitudes of the southern gentry.

CHAPTER III
How Dreadful to be Rich

John C. Calhoun was confident that slavery had produced in the South a way of life which rivaled the great civilizations of antiquity. In Calhoun's opinion, and in that of many other prominent southern spokesmen, this fortunate civilization was governed by an aristocracy worthy of classical Athens. The conflicts associated with labor, class, and ownership, which plagued the rest of the civilized world, were largely unknown in the land where patriarchal masters set a proper example for all to see and emulate.¹ Such comparisons and allusions unquestionably reassured the southern gentry as they faced increasingly pointed criticisms from abolitionists and reformers in the decades following the Missouri controversy.

George Fitzhugh, one of the most brilliant of the southern apologists, assured the planters that they were indeed a patriarchal class. In his view the southern elite had risen above the sordid and vulgar adoration of property and profits which so marked the lives of the capitalist classes of the North. The wealth of the southern planter was a blessing which brought rewards to the entire commun-

ity and "contentment" to the individual planters and their charges. In Fitzhugh's estimation, the planters were "lofty and independent in [their] sentiments, generous, affectionate, and brave" in their social and domestic deportment. The planter might be nobly "imperious" but rarely prideful, arrogant, or pretentious. James Henry Hammond concurred. To him, the elite of the South constituted a "class of men remarkably refined" in morality and intellect.

Popular writers of the antebellum South, like the political and academic apologists, portrayed the planter class in complimentary colors. In their works of fiction, men like William Gilmore Simms, James Heath, James Esten Cooke, and John P. Kennedy presented a planter class that was essentially disinterested in material things. Its

\[2\] George Fitzhugh, Sociology for the South or the Failure of a Free Society (Richmond: A Morris, 1854), 226-258, especially pages 234, 244, 253-254. This note applies to all of Fitzhugh's comments and opinions cited here.


obsessions were honor, tradition, and virtue. Venality, pride, arrogance, were foreign to the planters who inhabited the novels of the Old South. If venality was to be found in the works of such writers, it appeared in the form of the "Yankee" overseer or the "sharp" land speculator.

John Leadly Dagg was far less certain that the planter class was the paragon of Christian virtues and republican idealism. Dagg, a Baptist minister and professor at the struggling Mercer College in Penfield, Georgia suggested that the wealthy classes had a distinct tendency toward "boasting" and self-conceit. Nor was this simply a failing he had detected among the "new rich." Those whose wealth rested upon a distinguished lineage were equally given to conceit, a cardinal sin that suggested that an individual thought himself sufficient apart from God.

Dagg's critical observations of the gentry were possibly the result of latent resentments. The son of poor

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6 Taylor, Cavalier, 288-89.

7 J. L. Dagg, "Brief Notes of A Discourse on 1st Corinthians, 13th Chapter," Christian Index, 29 July 1836.

8 Ibid.
and unrefined parents, Dagg had labored to obtain an education. It had been a tremendous struggle. And although his erudition would place him in the first rank of religious educators in the South, he was never able to obtain financial security. His view of the wealthy may also have been prejudiced by their tendency to ignore Mercer College and send their sons to the more respectable schools of the North. But these are only suppositions which may or may not have any bearing on Dagg's attitudes. Certainly it would be a mistake to assume that all clerical criticisms of the upper class were solely motivated by such selfish considerations. And Dagg's views were by no means unique among the southern clergy.

In 1836, the same year that Dagg's article appeared in the Christian Index, an anonymous writer used that publication to chide the well-to-do for their ostentation and proud manners. "How many," he wrote, "who but yesterday were . . . decked in gold and costly array are now food for worms -- companions for the noisome insect, where is the man of wealth? He has left his riches . . . his heaps of sordid dust and claims only . . . his shroud." The writer's primary objective was to warn men not to expect their temporal wealth or social station to protect them in the final judgment; however, the article's almost mocking tone makes it clear that the writer had observed some unpleasant and unChristian traits in the bearing and life-
style of his affluent neighbors. When he spoke of the death of the "man of poverty" his tone was encouraging. In death the poor would find rest and peace, not noisesome insects and hungry worms. ⁹

Nineteen years later the same publication carried an article entitled "Father You Never Told Me," which depicted the death of a rich planter's son. The writer described the dissolute lifestyle of the fashionable young gentlemen and the terrors of his dying moments. The article concluded with the warning, "but it is appointed unto all men to die; and though a man enjoys the luxuries that wealth can purchase . . . he is not exempted from the fatal fevers or maladies any more than the plantation slave." It is difficult to imagine a more humbling comparison than that of the rich, refined young gentleman and one of his father's field hands. ¹⁰

Although the apologists portrayed the southern elite as an entirely harmonious part of their society -- respected by and respectful of their less fortunate neighbors -- Dagg and many of his colleagues detected a sinful and divisive "pridefulness" among the wealthy. Nathaniel Bowen, a Presbyterian minister in South Carolina from the

⁹"Reflections on the Past Year," Christian Index, 14 January 1834.

¹⁰"Father You Never Told Me," Christian Index, 11 January 1855.
1820s to the 1840s, implored the wealthy to be humble and content.  

J. B. Stratton noted the same prideful demeanor in some of the affluent members of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez. He warned these refined gentlemen that they were treading a sinful and dangerous path. A writer who signed his article "X.Y." informed the readers of the *Southern Churchman* that the great majority of the wealthy were proud and foolish. "Whenever therefore you meet with the rich, you will be sure to meet with one who thinks of himself very highly." Such men, the writer stated flatly were "fools" who had no right to assume a haughty attitude. T. M. Slaughter, addressing the economically prosperous who subscribed to the *Christian Index* in the mid-1840s, admonished them to be less concerned with their farming and business interests and less presumptuous in their deportment. Slaughter added that Christ needed fewer economically successful followers

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11 Bowen, *Sermons on Christian Doctrines and Duties* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1842), 391. From a sermon probably preached in the late 1830s.


13 *Southern Churchman*, 27 June 1857. This note applies to all of "X.Y.'s" comments and opinions.
and more who were "humble" and "devoted."  

Some of the ministers whose comments have been cited above were themselves financially secure. Stratton might even be considered affluent. He received a handsome stipend from his church and owned a large house and several slaves. So it would be a mistake to dismiss all strictures against the gentry as simply the jealous carpings of poor preachers. Surely, jealousy and resentment were factors influencing the clergy's perception of the upper class. Many impoverished clerics must have felt they were unjustly denied a reasonable share of the South's wealth. Even so, I am convinced that clerical criticisms of the southern elite were based primarily upon the clergy's conviction that the southern elite was badly in need of reproof and reformation.

That the ministers took great pains to scrutinize the lifestyle of the gentry is not surprising. Believing as they did that theirs was an age of dissolute mammonism, it was quite natural for the clergy to regard those with any marked degree of wealth as probably the servants of the


15 D. Clayton James, Antebellum Natchez (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 245.

16 The topic of clerical resentment, and the reasons for that resentment, are more fully treated in Chapter Five.
false god and entirely deserving of clerical censure. And as the Bible was dotted with passages warning the rich of their spiritual peril, the southern ministers were obliged to carry that warning boldly to the rich in their communities. It was their sacred duty. A writer in the **Southern Presbyterian** challenged ministers to fulfill their scriptural obligations and not be intimidated by the wealthy. In a charge to young ministers delivered in the 1840s, Bishop George Foster Pierce of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, urged his ministers to disdain the "embrace of the rich" lest they compromise their values and the integrity of their sermons.

H. B. Bascom drove home this point with vituperative language. The Methodist evangelist excoriated ministers who cowered before the "tithe-paying bigots" in their congregations, fearful that their preaching might cost them in "caste," "influence," or monetary support. The faithful minister, Bascom asserted, would never compromise

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20 H. B. Bascom, *Sermons from the Pulpit* (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 1852), 83. This note also applies to the preceding sentence.
in this matter even if it meant taking only the "poor of the earth for his clients." Bascom took his own advice. In a sermon entitled "The Lamb of God Seen and Sought," he cautioned the rich that they stood on the "pinnacle of the temple," on the very verge of being cast down to their destruction. Their danger, he warned, increased in direct proportion to the increase in their wealth. In "The Judgement," a sermon delivered in the early 1850s, Bascom informed the wealthy in his congregation that their possessions would avail them nothing at the final bar of judgment. All their "title deeds" and hoarded gold, he cried, would be useless to them in their final confrontation with a righteous God. There is nothing to suggest that Bascom or Pierce were unique in their confrontations with the rich. The majority of southern clerics were quite willing to challenge the assumptions and predilections of the southern elite, and often did so in strident and uncompromising language.

John Stark Ravenscroft, as a young Episcopal priest in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, aggressively confronted the elite of his community. The product of a wealthy home, Ravenscroft delivered a particularly stinging critique. His biographer, John M. Norton, wrote:

21Ibid., 254-57.

22Ibid., 343.
To the rich and worldly minded, especially, to whom he had been so long allied in feeling and practice, he now addressed his most searching appeals, and familiar as he was with all their shifts and evasions he exposed them to themselves with a fidelity and truth of coloring which they could not tolerate. Preaching of this kind . . . they affected to despise, and this faithful minister, though never deterred for a moment from revealing the whole of God's will, was much often grieved at the deadness and coldness of this class of hearers.

Clearly Norton, an Episcopal cleric himself in Lexington, Kentucky, approved of Ravenscroft's youthful conduct. That Norton, writing in the 1850s, praised Ravenscroft's attitude and actions of the 1820s suggests a pronounced consistency of thought among clerics with regard to the danger of wealth and the minister's duty to warn the rich.23

The possession of wealth was so fraught with danger that some ministers asserted that wise men would do well to avoid the accumulation of money and property. An 1836 article in the Southern Churchman quoted Christ's admonition to the rich young ruler, "if thou wilt be perfect go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." The anonymous writer added, "Were the rich persuaded by this, their riches would not prove fatal to them."24  


24Southern Churchman, 8 July 1836.
the southern clergy found great cause for concern as they contemplated the wealthy in their midst. Not only were the wealthy a danger to themselves, but they often had a pernicious effect on society at large, enticing thousands into the unthinking adoration of mammon.

Still, the most direct danger — that addressed most frequently by the ministers — involved the perilous and immediate dangers to the wealthy themselves. The clergy suspected that the prosperity of the affluent, in spite of virtuous affectations, indicated that such people were too devoted to, or encumbered with worldly things to be truly spiritual. In 1833, the Southern Religious Telegraph carried an article in which the writer questioned the spirituality of churchmen who traveled in "gilded equipages" and who consumed meals that would "sustain a starving family."25 Such comfort and self-sufficiency, most ministers believed, invariably blinded individuals to their dependence on God. This, to the clerics, was the most dangerous consequence of wealth.

Insulating the wealthy from the more pressing concerns of life fostered a false security in one's own ability to preserve life and insure happiness and contentment. This feeling of self-sufficiency constituted pride, and in the

minds of all clerics pride was a fatal flaw in any individual's character. Pride, they believed, quite literally preceded destruction. The clergy constantly denounced the ostentation that grew out of the gentry's pride. Their ostentation took many forms, but usually "fashion" and domestic luxury bore the brunt of clerical disdain.

A writer for the Christian Index, speaking in 1836 for ministers across the South, condemned the "dandyism" sweeping the region. The interest in "fine clothes" was sinful and contrary to Christian and republican virtue. Presbyterians were equally distressed by the upper classes' predilection for luxurious clothing and household furnishings. J. B. Stratton challenged his affluent congregation to lay aside the finery they were currently amassing. He encouraged his members to forego those appointments which "the interests of the mind and body do not require." Stratton rejected ostentation in any form. The "extravagant whims and fashions" which continually swept through the Natchez community and the First Presbyterian Church

26 "Young Men," Christian Index, 28 April 1836.


28 Stratton, Valedictory, 230. From a sermon preached in 1853, and 261 which is from a sermon preached in 1857.
were, in his mind, ugly manifestations of the greed and venality of his day.29 And such interests were an obvious indictment of the upper class. Condemning as unChristian and anti-republican all those who adopted such a lifestyle, the Watchman and Observer joined in the campaign against extravagance and luxury.30 Comments of this nature filled antebellum religious papers and sermons. The gentry's extravagance represented a materialism which ministers found incompatible with their interpretation of scripture. Christ and the Apostles, the ministers taught, had been content with food and raiment. The early church likewise had disdained conspicuous consumption and the accumulation of property. To the clergy it seemed only right that society, and especially Christians, adopt the same indifferent attitude toward material possessions. But the southern gentry, much to the sorrow of the ministers, refused, as a class, to follow these scriptural precepts.31 Far from disdaining the trappings of mammon, the southern

29 Ibid.


31 Ibid.; "A Dialogue between Mr. B and Mr. M," Visitor and Telegraph, 8 March 1828; Ray Holder, William Winans, Methodist Leader in Antebellum Mississippi (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 145; John Jones, manuscript sermon, January 1842, Jones Papers, University of Georgia Archives; Bowen, Sermons, 390; "Vanity of Vanities," Southern Churchman, 9 November 1860.
gentry lusted for them, because they wished, according to
the clerics, to exalt themselves and their families above
their fellow citizens. Some few rich men refused to give
into this haughty materialism, but they were the exception
rather than the rule if clerical testimony is to be be-
lieved. There was a strong ascetic tendency in antebellum
southern theology, almost an obsession with simplicity or
"plainness." It was not predicated merely upon some dour
and petulant narrow-mindedness which would have people
live a bland and solemn life. Rather the clerics believed
that ostentation and excessive accumulation were the marks
of a material or carnal mind, a mind closed to spiritual
truths. Nothing could be more sinister in the minds of
antebellum clerics than the South's grasping materialism,
and the gentry were the chief offenders. What is more,
the ostentation of the gentry suggested and encouraged ar-
rogance and pride which was not only unChristian but anti-
republican in the minds of the clerics, "contrary," as one
minister said, to the "genius of our government and insti-
tutions."\(^32\) Such pridefulness could, in the clerical esti-
mation, only provoke dangerous antagonisms between the
various classes in Southern society.\(^33\)

\(^{32}\)"A Fashionable Church," Watchman and Observer, 25 Novem-
ber 1852.

\(^{33}\)Anne C. Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social
Order, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univer-
sity Press, 1980), 126-127; William Henry Ruffner,
Charity and the Clergy Being a Review of the New Themes
Strangely enough, the same ministers who reviled the materialistic, ostentatious gentry, could look back to landed aristocrats like Jefferson and Washington, men who had obviously lived in the "grand manner" themselves, and urge the southern gentry to emulate these venerable patriarchs.

The ministers reconciled this blatant paradox by casting Jefferson and Washington and their compatriots as men who, in the time of testing, had demonstrated the sacrificial disinterestedness. Like Christ, the Founding Fathers had willingly renounced their elevated and affluent circumstances for the good of their fellow men. The patriots of old had proved beyond question that they were dead to the allurements of luxurious security. And always the ministers stressed the humility of the Founding Fathers. Editors of religious newspapers would relate with great relish the tearful recollections of some octogenarian who had once seen Washington defer to a poor farmer in some matter. In 1852 an aged Methodist minister had recalled for the Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate how, when a child, the great general had paused during some urgent business to chat with him and lay an affectionate hand.

on his head. That Washington would deign to speak to a farm boy, to touch his head in a fatherly manner, reassured all who read the old minister's tale that the father of their country was a profoundly humble man.

The clergy's view of the founding fathers was generally in line with the conventional antebellum view of the leaders of the Revolution. Inconsistencies in the lives of Washington and Jefferson were rationalized, idealized, or simply ignored. This tendency to idealize the revolutionary leaders was also evident in the clergy's view of the past generally. Most of the ministers regarded the age of their grandfathers, the years before the War of 1812, as a purer, simpler, more pious era. It is usually the tendency of one generation to look back fondly upon the preceding age as a happier time, when men were more honest and life was less trying. For many in the clergy this myth of the pious past became something akin to an article of faith. Not all of the ministers shared this perception and on rare occasions a dissident would seek to


35 Southern Churchman, 6 March 1835; Bowen, Sermons, 401-403; Thomas Curtis, "God's Sovereignty in the More Important Deaths of Men, delivered on the Occasion of the Death of President Harrison, April 1841," in The Georgia Pulpit, or Ministers' Yearly Offering, Containing Sermons and Essays from Georgia Baptist Ministers.
remind his brethren that the "golden age" they longed for was rife with deism and spiritual declension. In 1852 an anonymous writer submitted just such an article to the Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate. Entitled "To an Aged Croaker," the provocative article criticized pointedly the Methodist clergy for their continual harping on the glorious days of yore. The impatient writer reminded his readers that southern Methodism was far stronger -- at least in numbers -- in 1852 than it had been in 1795, and that more was being done in the fields of education and missions. But, of course, that really was not the point most clerics had in mind when they reminisced longingly for the days of Asbury, Leland, and Whitefield. The antebellum clergy looked to the past as an ordered, placid time, when men lived contented lives in harmony with one another, with God, and with nature. In this happy, pastoral commonwealth the rich had supposedly led unobtrusive and restrained lives. They had deferred to their neighbors and received deference in return. And they had dominated the political life of the commonwealth, not by virtue of their wealth, but through their moral fitness to lead. The antebellum clergy dreamed of a return to this idyllic -- and idealized -- commonwealth, but knew that it would only remain a dream as long as southern society was burdened

36 "To an Aged Croaker," Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, 1852.
with a proud, ostentatious, monied gentry.

The ladies of the upper classes were often the special targets of clerical invective. These women, many ministers believed, were particularly susceptible to the allurements of fashion, luxury, and pretense. A writer in the Christian Index ridiculed the "china doll" matrons of the South who were, to his mind, useless creatures "flattered by fops," idols of "profane adoration," the "source and mirror of vanity."37 An 1828 article in The Visitor and Telegraph sneered at the pretensions of well-to-do ladies who lived for style and demanded all the "proper" household furnishings "down to the hearth brush."38 The same article criticized the ladies' passion for fashionable clothing, as well as the absurdity of spending thirty dollars on a new bonnet when the old one was entirely "decent" and practical. An editorial in the Southern Churchman, in 1860, condemned the upper classes for their selfishness


38 "A Dialogue between Mr. B and Mr. M," Visitor and Telegraph, 8 March 1828.
and pretensions, but reserved special criticisms for the wives and daughters of the gentry who spent all of their time in frivolous travel, running off every summer to fashionable resorts. Later in the year, the Churchman censured "young ladies, and these not the most wealthy," who thought nothing of spending five hundred dollars for a "camel's hair shawl." In addition, "jewelry the most costly, and laces the most elegant" were required adornment for a "Christian young lady." And, as the writer contemptuously observed, such young ladies were not really satisfied unless they could compel their parents to spend "a hundred dollars" on a dinner party for "eight or ten" of their equally fashionable friends. How, the writer asked, could these young ladies, professing Christians, be so thoughtless? "There are so few, who use their wealth and position to do good: and hence the crying evil, is the worldliness and vanity and frivolity of rich persons who are members of the church." 39

There were, of course, a few godly and admirable men and women among the gentry. The ministers believed and taught that a handful of individuals had been arbitrarily chosen by God to possess riches. 40 These individuals were easily distinguished from the majority of the wealthy who

39 "Vanity of Vanities," Southern Churchman, 9 November 1860.

40 Bowen, Sermons, 391, 400.
had earned their riches by obsessive toil, scheming, or other questionable methods. Those whose wealth had been granted by Providence — dispensed through inheritance or as the fruit of prudent and patient labors — were marked by their propensity to lead simply lives devoted to the welfare of their church and community.

In an obituary for Mrs. Mary Page, published in 1836, the Virginia dowager was described as a remarkable woman who had never succumbed to the temptations her inherited wealth afforded. "Familiar in her early days with all the enjoyments that affluence and ease could bestow . . . she was subjected in no ordinary degree to the great moral test of prosperity." Modest, humble, known throughout the state for her liberal "bounty" and "charity," she had proven herself "capable of sustaining her advantages without forgetting God her maker." In the opinion of her eulogist, Mrs. Page represented the long past "golden days" of Virginia's gentry. 41 But for every Mrs. Page, the clergy believed there were a thousand selfish, proud merchants and planters who had forsaken the virtues of the past.

No doubt the writer of Mrs. Page's obituary hoped that rich and poor alike would emulate her virtuous lifestyle, but it was a forlorn hope. As the era progressed, the rich increasingly gave themselves to materialism and the "vain

41 Southern Churchman, 6 March 1835. This note applies to the entire paragraph.
things of life." The lower orders, disdaining the example of Mrs. Page, did everything, the clergy lamented, to imitate the fashions and pretensions of the elite. The plain piety which had marked the Baptist and Methodist congregations during the days of the Revolution and the Great Revival was giving way to envy and a slavish aping of the worldly upper class.

The clergy knew that most southerners longed to join the ranks of the gentry and would risk their spiritual well-being for a chance at the comfort, status, and contentment which the upper classes supposedly possessed. Many clergymen, in an attempt to dissuade the masses from aspiring to wealth, or out of a desire to chastise the wealthy, emphatically denied that the affluent were happy or content. It was an interesting line of assault because it contradicted pointedly the apologists' contention that the South was a land of placid peacefulness controlled by a satisfied and stable gentry.

In 1840, the Watchman of the South carried an article entitled the "Vanity of the World." In it, the writer contended that the rich were thoroughly discontented, wracked with insecurity. "The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. . . . If he owns many ships, he fears


they will be lost at sea, If he owns houses, he fears lest fire or tempest will destroy them." The writer observed many wealthy men taking out insurance policies, but even this precaution brought no peace as the insurance offices were often liable to insolvency. Indeed, the rich could not even die in peace for fear that his lands and slaves would be squandered away in lawsuits.44

In the late thirties, an article in the Christian Index stated that the rich man should not consider himself fortunate. He might, in fact, be especially cursed. Even the leisure time which the rich enjoyed was to be shunned, according to the Index article. The writer contended that the leisure and relaxation afforded by riches constituted "idleness," a type of idleness which "debases the soul."45 The tone of this article, like that of so many other clerical statements concerning the rich, was almost mocking, seeking not so much to inspire but rather to humiliate. No doubt many ministers imagined that by denigrating or humbling the gentry they were actually helping to awaken them from a stagnant and deadly spiritual sleep. But it was not a peaceful sleep, for, as already noted, the ministers regarded the wealthy as particularly dissatisfied.

44 "The Vanity of This World," Watchman of the South 9 July 1840. This note applies to the entire paragraph.

45 Christian Index, 27 April 1837.
Bascom asserted that the wealthy man's possessions, far from making him contented or inspiring in him a sense of gratitude to God, only made him more of a mammonist with an ever greater appetite for accumulation.  

J. O. Andrew, a Methodist itinerant, observed this same tendency among the wealthy during his tours of the Southwest in the 1830s and 40s. As he traveled about his broad preaching circuit, he carefully noted the prosperity of many of his hosts and often commented upon the productivity of their plantations. He was impressed to learn that some farmers in the regions were "producing ten bags of cotton to the hand, besides making an abundance of provision." But instead of being satisfied with this bounty, Andrew noted that most of the planters, even "so called" Christians, were giving free reign to their carnal "appetites" and devoting themselves entirely to the expansion of their estates. William Winans had made the same observations regarding his affluent neighbors in Mississippi. No matter how wealthy the local nabobs became, they were ever interested in making more money, in buying more slaves, and with no salutary object in mind. It was

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47 J. O. Andrew, Miscellanies; Comprising Letters, Essays and Addresses to Which is Added a Biographical Sketch of Mrs. Amelia Ann Andrew (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 1854), 193, 306.

48 William Winans, "Right and Wrong Use of Riches," Southern
just accumulation for its own sake — or accumulation to provide "fine" clothes for wives and daughters or to purchase gilt mirrors and mahogany furniture, or to leave a "princely" inheritance. Some ministers suggested that the obsessive concern with more money stemmed from a desire for power and prestige. All such motivations were liable to clerical censure. Of course, the ministers believed that the heart of the problem was man's inherent bent to sin and selfishness which had free reign in the confused, grasping society they described.

According to the ministers, selfishness, like pride was an all too prominent feature in the lives of most affluent southerners. Near the end of the antebellum era,


50 "Why There Is So Little Practical Religion In Our Churches," Christian Index, 8 September 1836; Southern Churchman, 28 August 1840.

51 Southern Churchman, 16 October 1857; "A Word About Money," Southern Presbyterian, n.d. (1856?); Richard H. Wilmer, A Sermon in Commemoration of the Life and Labors of the Right Reverend Stephen Elliott, D.D. (Mobile: Farrow and Dennett, 1867), 6, 15. Though delivered after the Civil War, this sermon makes frequent references to attitudes and events of the antebellum era and is a viable source of information on that era.
a writer for the Southern Churchman lashed out at the gentry for their stinginess, lamenting that a "man's liberality" did not increase in proportion to the increase in his income. That an Episcopal publication would carry such a rebuke of the upper classes is not surprising.

Since the Episcopal church had strong ties to the wealthier classes, its clerics were particularly pained by the paucity of financial support for the denomination's missions and charities. The Episcopal clerics were sometimes distressed that the denominations of the poorer classes were often more amply funded in their missionary and educational projects than theirs. This state of affairs was enough to make some Episcopal ministers regret their association with the better classes.

Richard Channing Moore, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Virginia from 1818 to 1840, continually pleaded with the laity to give enough to sustain the work of the church. Though Bishop Moore was never caustic in his admonitions, his correspondence and sermons reflected a considerable resentment and exasperation at his having to beg from the

52 Southern Churchman, 7 September 1860.
53 Wilmer, Sermon, 4; Southern Episcopalian, November 1855.
Bishop James Otey of Tennessee complained that the gentry in his state were quite willing to spend "hundreds of dollars" to obtain some political office, but were reluctant to give "five dollars" to the cause of Christ. Other Episcopal dioceses were so hard-pressed for funds that they adopted the time honored expedient of publishing the names of contributors. This practice, it was hoped, would shame the tight-fisted into giving to the church.

Philip Slaughter, the Episcopal priest in Upperville, Virginia, was far less polite than either Bishop Moore or Bishop Otey when it came to the selfishness of the gentry. From the pulpit and on the printed page he castigated the "gentlemen" of the Episcopal Church. Their selfishness, he asserted, had stifled the church's missionary endeavors and therefore they were responsible for the eternal doom of uncounted millions. Such selfishness caused Slaughter to wonder if any among the "gentlemen" were truly redeemed.

Speaking before the annual state convention of the church in Virginia, in 1841, he challenged the assembled lay leaders of the church to forsake their lust for fine houses and clothes and to give sacrificially as true Christians should give. Slaughter called upon the gentlemen to be

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56 G. T. Chapman, Sermons Upon the Ministry, Worship, and Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church (Boston: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1867), 17. This work was originally published in 1828.
content with "food and raiment" and to devote all of their surplus to the relief of the poor and the spreading of the Gospel. It was a plaintive, angry message which closed with Slaughter lamenting, "my dear friends, how dreadful it is to be rich."\(^{57}\)

The portrait of the upper classes painted by the clergy was certainly not the one drawn by southern apologists. The selfish, ostentatious, and prideful men and women revealed in the sermons and religious press were more like the apologists' portrait of the "grasping" northern factory owners and merchants. In fact, the clerics' most bitter criticisms of the southern elite often pointed at precisely the chief sins that the apologists attributed to the northern elite. If the northern factory owners were oppressive and cruel, according to the apologists, the southern elite, according to the clergy, also had its share of harsh and repressive masters and employers. In 1836, the Southern Churchman endorsed laws mandating the observance of the Sabbath. The editors believed that such laws, aside from improving the moral tone of society, would help protect the "poorer and working classes" from exploitation by their employers.\(^{58}\) Three years later the same

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\(^{57}\) Phillip Slaughter, "Root of All Evil," Southern Churchman, 30 April 1840. This note applies to all of Slaughter's comments and opinions cited in this paragraph.

\(^{58}\) Southern Churchman, 16 September 1836.
publication, in a "copied article," warned employers that they would have to answer to God for scrimping on wages for their employees.59

As more and more women entered the southern workforce, the clergy found new reason to censure the upper class. In 1853, an anonymous writer for the Watchman and Observer asked, "would any Christian deny these poor women a living wage? Would any Christian grind the faces of the poor?"60 The implication was clear: people who considered themselves Christians were exploiting the working women in the southern cities. The ladies of Richmond were chastised for precisely this failing in 1857 in a blunt essay in the Southern Churchman. The article, which might have been written by a budding socialist, censured the good ladies of Richmond for their "oppressions" of poor working women. To the writer's mind, the ladies' exploitation of their "poor neighbors" was "unChristian" and "unhuman." The poor women were so maltreated that they were compelled to "cry up to heaven against their oppressors." The angry writer was certain that such prayers "would not go unanswered."61

Sewing women were not the only class of exploited and

59 Southern Churchman, 8 November 1839.

60 "The Poor, Are Their Temporal Wants Provided For?" Watchman and Observer, 3 March 1853.

61 Southern Churchman, 3 April 1857. This note applies to the entire paragraph.
oppressed workers identified and championed by the clergy. A great many ministers found slavery to be the most glaring example of oppression and exploitation in the antebellum South. They challenged the gentry to acknowledge and correct the serious flaws within the institution, flaws, the clergy believed, that were largely the result of the excessive and illicit economic aspirations of the gentry.

Slavery had long been a burden to the southern clergy, a particularly heavy cross to bear. In the colonial and revolutionary eras there had been pronounced clerical opposition to the institution, particularly among Methodists who regarded slavery as cruel and contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. By the 1820s, however, most southern clerics had reconciled themselves to the institution, accepting the view that slavery was Biblically sanctioned and would be used by God to christianize and civilize the black race. In spite of this rationalization, the southern clergy was never entirely comfortable with slavery. They often wondered whether southern slavery reflected God's plan or merely man's economic aspirations. To the

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clerical mind, the institution was only justifiable insofar as it christianized the slaves. If southerners failed to accomplish this divine purpose then there could be no sure defense of southern slavery. The frequent clerical admonitions for the humane treatment and the spiritual elevation of the blacks indicates that many clergymen feared that the southern masters were failing in their responsibilities to the slaves. Throughout the antebellum era the ministers called continually, if obliquely at times, for the gentry to treat their slaves not merely as tools or brutes designed for the economic advancement of whites, but as men and women entitled to certain rights. The standard to which ministers believed all masters should aspire was that of the Old Testament Hebrew patriarchs who had regarded their servants as family members to be protected and educated as devotedly — in spiritual matters — as beloved children. By adopting such a model, masters would bring their black charges into a "covenant" relationship with God and they would gain great favor for themselves and their society. Failure to adopt such an ethic would only provoke God's wrath. Herein lay the great problem for the clergy. Very few masters, the ministers

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63 For an excellent discussion of the patriarchal concept espoused by the clergy see: Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 136-184; The Presbytery of Tombeckbee to the Churches and the People under Its Care: The Religious Instruction of Our Colored Population, (1859), 5-10.
feared, were genuinely patriarchal; all too many it seemed were concerned only with the profitableness of slavery.

According to clerical testimony, the problem was greatest among the upper classes. It was on the plantation that ministers found the worst abuses of the institution, or, at least, the plantation was usually the focus of their criticism. It is not surprising that the ministers found plantation slavery more flawed than slavery on the small farm. Living a rather detached life from his field hands, often employing overseers or relying on slave drivers, the planter easily lost sight of spiritual as well as the temporal needs of his chattels. The farmer who owned two or three slaves, who probably lived in the master's house themselves, was less likely to forget the humanity of his slaves. And if the farmer were a devoted Christian, the ministers could reasonably hope that his few slaves would be included in family devotions and religious instruction. But the plantations, where William Capers found a separate, "stinking," and neglected quarters was a different matter altogether.64 The clergy lamented that slaves in such circumstances were rarely included in the religious life of the master, and were usually considered only as the necessary adjuncts to economic prosperity.65

64 William Capers quoted in Loveland, Evangelicals, 231.
65 Charles Colcock Jones, The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States (Savannah, Georgia: T. Purse, 1842), 182; "The Neglect of the Religious Training
The perceived dearth of patriarchal sentiment among the gentry did not go unchallenged by the clergy. The ministers were not at all reluctant to expose the abuses they found in the system, abuses which were not only spiritual, but often physical as well. Iverson Brookes, a Baptist minister in eastern Georgia in the 1830s and 1840s, expressed serious misgiving about the propriety of slavery in his community. More than anything else, he was repulsed by the "mercenary" foundation of the institution. Brookes asserted that the worst abuses of the system resulted from the unchecked greed of the masters. In his estimation, the lash was seldom used as a tool of instruction or correction, rather it was usually employed in the service of avarice, wielded by hands anxious for excessive profit. And Episcopal pastor, Richard Hooker Wilmer, future Bishop of Alabama, rebuked the planters in his Virginia congregation for their willingness to put profits above the well-being of their servants and the sanctity of the Sabbath. Wilmer angrily asserted, "for a few more pounds of tobacco you will work your slaves too hard or make them work on Sunday." Other ministers also sug-

- of Negroes, the Great Sin of the Southern Church," Central Presbyterian, 5 March 1859.

66Iverson Brookes, manuscript sermon, ca. 1835, University of Alabama Archives, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

gested that slaves were innocent victims in an ungodly scramble for profits. In 1856, Reverend William Platt, a Baptist minister in Lexington, Kentucky, expressed his disgust over the venality of the system in his community when he confided to his diary that profits, and not morality, were the foundation upon which the institution rested. Venality and greed, the ministers believed, fostered cruelty and injustice within the slave system; these injustices took a variety of forms, not simply physical, but also moral and psychological.

The violating of marriage and familial ties among slaves was, to the clerics, a blatant manifestation of the venality of the institution. For many clergymen, the severing of these most elemental ties stood as a monument of their day and region. Invariably the slave family was

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68 Loveland, Evangelicals, 209; The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1903; C. C. Jones to Mary Jones, 8 September 1829, Charles Colcock Jones Papers, Tulane University; Christian Index, 3 August 1837; "To Masters Who Are Professed Christians," Ibid., 7 February 1856; "A Jaunt to South-Western Georgia," Ibid., 8 April 1857; T. L Boswell, "Salvation and Its Individual Relations," Methodist Pulpit, South, 227; Loveland, Evangelicals, 209.


violated for economic reasons. To make money, to pay debts, to cut losses, or to satisfy the grasping heirs of an estate; it was for these mercenary considerations that masters wilfully trampled sacred precepts by dividing slave families. Reflecting upon this feature of southern slavery, a writer for the Biblical Recorder of North Carolina felt compelled to admit that the institution represented an "evil of great magnitude." The sundering of slave families was a horrifying spectacle to all southern ministers. It was a situation for which there could be no sure defense. The ministers knew that such an evil could only exist in a society where mammon held sway — where economics dictated behavior. It was a thought sufficient to disturb the conscience of even the most enthusiastic clerical boosters of southern culture. This aspect of the slave system drove home, more clearly than any other sin of the master class, the unrighteous, indefensible tendency of many slaveholders to regard slaves as tools, machines, beasts, not fully human and deserving of certain basic rights.

It was obvious to the clergy that slavery was marred by a considerable amount of physical and moral brutality.

71 Biblical Recorder, 9 November 1844.

72 Dwyn M. Mounger, "History as Interpreted by Stephen Elliott," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 44 (September 1975), 297.
That in and of itself was disquieting to the clerics and was also distressing to sensitive non-clerical observers like Alabama attorney and author, Daniel Hundley. But what was worse, most southerners seemed prepared to accept such cruelty as a natural part of the system. In 1855, a writer for the Christian Index related that certain members of the community, known to be cruel masters, were still regarded by most fellow citizens as good Christians. The writer was enraged that masters such as these, who deserved only universal contempt, could be held in esteem by the great majority of their neighbors.

Most southern ministers believed that a "great reformation" was needed to make the peculiar institution Biblically sound, to bring it into line with the patriarchal model. Even clerics who reported that most slaves were content invariably qualified their pronouncements by noting that the system was nevertheless far from being the institution which God had intended. By the late 1850s, how-

75 Ibid.
76 Christian Index, 3 August 1837. This qualified appreciation of slavery is also discussed in Mathews, Religion, 136-184; Loveland, Evangelicals, 186-256; Hayden, "Conversion and Control," 144-168.
ever, some ministers were expressing doubts as to whether the needed reformation could be accomplished before an angry providence intervened. A letter to the Christian Index in 1857, urged the rapid education of the southern mind. Masters must be awakened to their imperative, divinely ordained duties to slaves. The correspondent proclaimed, "it is worse than futile for us to expect the civilized and Christian world to listen to our defense of slavery until we understand and bring ourselves under its political and religious responsibilities." He then succinctly articulated the awful dilemma confronting southern clerics as they contemplated the operation of slavery within their communities. "It is either a cruel and wicked outrage of human rights, and its disciplines a barbarous infliction of unmerited punishments, or else it is under the providence of God." In other words slavery was either a brutal economic system or a patriarchal system. Evidently believing the former was the case the correspondent concluded his statement with a warning that if masters failed to do their "whole duty" to their slaves, God's scourge would fall upon them and their society.77

The "whole duty" to which the anonymous writer referred certainly included the humane treatment of slaves with regard to their physical comfort. But providing adequate food, shelter, and clothing was only the first and obvious obligation for the truly patriarchal master. Even after this initial obligation had been met the ministers required -- as they fully believed God required -- that masters assume responsibility for the religious and moral condition of their slaves. Masters were to teach moral and religious precepts to their slaves and guide them in a devotional life which would prepare them for Heaven. There were patriarchal masters who were attempting to live up to this demanding standard, but as John Broadus remarked in 1856, slaves were generally a "sadly neglected part of the community." Rarely were the slaves objects of proper parental solicitude.

This failure on the part of the masters to fulfill their obligations to be patriarchs compelled the clergy to assume much of the burden for the religious instruction of the slaves. As early as 1830, the Methodists, under the leadership of J. O. Andrew and William Capers, had organ-

ized a society to promote the evangelization of the slaves. Presbyterians followed the Methodist example by establishing an official society to convert and minister to the slaves. Baptist work among the slaves was extensive, though far less organized. These efforts succeeded in bringing tens of thousands of slaves into the church, but they also brought ministers into direct contact with the venality of the system. As a result, clerical apprehensions that masters were not genuinely interested in the spiritual well-being of their slaves dramatically increased. Indeed, the conviction that the system was failing to accomplish God's purposes acted as a driving force behind the ministerial efforts to evangelize the slaves, an effort perhaps to appease God.79

Some evangelists to the slaves obviously felt alienated from the mercenary masters. Probably they would have agreed with Marx's evaluation of southern slavery. He wrote in 1852 that as southern agriculture became more commercial the patriarchal characteristics of the system diminished, making it simply a "calculating system" of labor.80 Some ministers said as much. Writing in the


1840s, an evangelist observed that some masters only supported the moral or spiritual elevation of their slaves because they believed such a program would increase the monetary value of their chattels. A few years earlier the Presbyterian minister, Charles C. Jones, had reached a similar conclusion about the institution. A missionary to slaves, Jones had served in the early 1830s on a board established by the Synods of Georgia and South Carolina which examined the spiritual condition of the slaves within the two synods. The author of the committee report, Jones wrote that the system was failing to produce the desired moral and spiritual elevation of the slaves. In Jones' opinion, this failure stemmed from the mercenary and exploitive nature of the institution. Jones concluded:

The principle which regulates duty in slavery on the part of the master has been thus defined: 'Get all you can, and give back as little as you can;' and on the part of servants the reverse, 'Give as little as you can, and get back all you can.' When we remember what human nature is, and when we observe the conduct of masters and servants, we fear that there is too much truth as to the existence of this principle... Religion will tell the

81 Loveland, Evangelicals, 249. If economic consideration sometimes encouraged masters to support the evangelization of their slaves, economic considerations could also interfere with the religious instruction of the slaves. Loveland, Evangelicals, 250-251; Hayden, "Conversion and Control," 164; Norton, "The Role of a Religious Newspaper in Georgia, 137.
master that his servants are his fellow creatures, and that he has a Master in heaven to whom he shall account for his treatment of them. The master will be led to inquiries of this sort: In what kind of houses do I permit them to live? What clothes do I give them to wear? What food to eat, what privileges enjoy? In what temper and manner and proportion to crimes are they punished?

A year later Jones presented his second report which restated the findings of the previous year. In his second report, Jones stated that "vast room for improvement" remained. Again he suggested the slaves were being exploited: "They are entitled to a far greater portion of the avails of their labor than they have hitherto been accustomed to receive." 82

It was apparent to most southern ministers that the institution was in dire need of reformation. This reformation would have to begin with the gentry. The heart of this reformation would necessarily be the acknowledgment that slaves were more than a means of production, that they were men and women entitled to just and humane treatment. It could be no other way because God demanded such treatment. But the obstacles to such a reformation were great. There was little room for humanity and paternalism in the "perpetual whirl" described by William Winans. In a land

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obsessed with acquisition and accumulation, slavery obviously had, in the minds of most southerners, one primary purpose, and clearly it was not the spiritual or temporal elevation and well-being of the slaves. "O! How long," one minister asked in 1855, "shall this momentous subject [the just treatment of slaves] lie obscured in the rubbish of covetousness and inhumanity." Here the matter was explicitly stated: greed, covetousness, avarice, the commercial spirit, were turning the institution from the path of paternalism toward the path of brutality and "inhumanity."

Ministers charged the gentry to begin the great reformation of the slave system. It was the slaveholders themselves who must lead the campaign to recognize and secure proper treatment for the blacks in the South. Yet in the minds of most clerics the gentry was not shouldering this onerous responsibility. Even the most conservative of southern clerics, men devoutly committed to slavery, recognized the failings of the gentry to fully emulate the patriarchs of old. The reasons for the gentry's failure were not always discussed by the clergymen who exposed their faults. But when reasons were offered, they usually

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83 "To Masters Who Are Professed Christians," Christian Index, 7 February 1856.

84 J. L. Kirkpatrick, "Introduction," in A. F. Dickson, Plantation Sermons, or Plain and Familiar Discourses for the Instruction of the Unlearned (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1856), vi-viii.
revolved around the venality of masters and the mammonist spirit of the times. In fact, the silence of many ministers, when it came to identifying the basis of the problems within the slave system, may have stemmed from their assumption that everyone knew the heart of the problem to be greed. The upper classes' use of the institution only reinforced their belief that the southern gentry, as a class, was selfish, prideful, ostentatious, and money-obsessed. Mammon held sway over the gentry, that was appallingly clear to most clerics. It was equally apparent to the ministers that the upper class was leading the masses, and southern society, to destruction.

There were non-clerical observers who lent credence

85 This link between slavery and materialism is clearly evidenced in much of the research compiled by James Oakes. He often notes that masters were troubled by their participation in the system and its abuses, but felt economically compelled to indulge in the system. There can be little doubt that much of their guilt stemmed from precepts taught from the pulpit; indeed, Oakes makes this point. James Oakes, Ruling Race, 96-122; Clark, Cotton Kingdom, 339-40; Iverson Brookes, manuscript sermon, ca. 1835, University of Alabama Archives; "To Masters Who are Professed Christians," Christian Index, 7 February 1856; Christian Index, 3 August 1837; Hayden, "Conversion and Control," 164; Slaughter, "Evil;" Loveland, Evangelicals, 248-250. Loveland notes that missionaries to the slaves often found their efforts hampered by a plantation regimen designed to assure economic stability and progress, with little consideration of the spiritual needs of slaves. Tyner, "Mission to the Slaves," 372-373; Norton, "Boykin," 137.

86 Why Is There So Little Practical Religion In Our Churches," Christian Index, 8 September 1836; "Fashion," Christian Index, 1 December 1836; Slaughter, "Evil."
to the clergy's critical assessment of the gentry. Henry Watson of New England and the Briton Charles Lyell, both of whom toured the South in the 1830s, commented on the money-mindedness of the southern gentry. Similarly, Daniel Hundley wrote, in the 50s, that many among the upper class were unrestrained "mammonists."

And to a great extent Jacksonian spokesmen also echoed clerical opinions about the upper class. Even so the clergy and the Jacksonians were far from being entirely compatible in their views even though their rhetoric suggested a close affinity. The motivations which prompted some homespun candidate to vilify the local gentry was considerably different from the motivation which prompted the clerical criticisms of the same class. As it turned out the homespun orator, as often as not, simply envied the lifestyle of the gentry, while the clergy genuinely disdained such a lifestyle. Certainly there were very few who shared the clergy's deep-seated revulsion to materialism which marked the lifestyle of the southern elite. The gentry on the other hand found many champions for their

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87 Oakes, Ruling Race, 272.

88 Hundley, Social Relations, 130-131.

way of life among politicians, journalists and novelists. These apologists were confident that the southern elite, the planters and successful merchants, were guiding their society to new prosperity and security. In the view of the apologists, leaving the South to its own devices would usher in a new golden age. If hypocritical and venal northerners would but leave the South and its institutions alone, they reasoned, all would be well. The clergy, however, had no confidence in the ability of the upper class to inaugurate a new golden age. For a great many ministers, probably the majority, the gentry represented graphically all of the evils of their avaricious society. 90

The Reverend John Jones of Georgia was typical of his brother ministers when he asserted in the early 1840s that wealthy southerners had given themselves to the idolatrous "master spirit of the day," repudiating the virtues and noble aspirations which marked the lives of "true Christians." According to Jones, the gentry had exchanged piety and Heaven for sordid "worldly things." 91


91 John Jones, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit," manuscript
The Gospel is freely available to "prince" and "beggar," "philosopher," or "peasant." This brief and simple concept stood as an especially prominent pillar of ante-bellum theology. Coupled with the clergy's low opinion of the moral and spiritual state of the upper class this theological premise mitigated against any determined clerical support of a deferential society. The clergy adamantly contended that wealth, and its inherent social status, was in and of itself, an insufficient criteria for the community's respect and deference. As on most other issues involving wealth, the ministers knew their's was a minority opinion. Throughout the South, it was wealth, often times wealth alone, which brought social and political prominence. Economic success was a certain path to social elevation. The editor of the Southern Churchman declared in 1837 that wealth was "a ready and almost certain means of acquiring social respectability." The successful

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93 "The Vanity of This World," Watchman of the South, 9 July 1840; Southern Churchman, 28 August 1840; Southern Churchman, 27 June 1856.

moneymaker was universally admired, or so it seemed to the clergy. And this admiration, they believed, came in spite of the sinful means through which the rich man may have acquired his fortune.95

Business skills — successful management of a railroad, commercial establishment, or a plantation — were lightly esteemed by the clergy. Such skills merited commendation only if the economically successful individual dedicated a very large part of his material resources to pious causes and was restrained and humble in his bearing and lifestyle.96 No doubt some of the clergy's criticism of the upper classes stemmed from its resentment over its rather isolated position in southern society. Like academicians, many clerics sensed they were more of an embellishment, in their irreligious and mercenary communities, than a vital and directing force. Speaking before the Presbyterian Synod of Alabama in 1853, J. L. Kirkpatrick grieved over the lack of candidates for the ministry. In Kirkpatrick's view, young men rejected a ministerial career because the "office" lacked public approbation and respect. "In our country, and in these days,"

95 "Worldliness in the Church," Southern Episcopalian, September 1857.

96 Jeter, Recollections, 188, 190-91; Iverson Brookes, "Encouragement to Benevolent Action," manuscript sermon, University of Alabama Archives, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; "Extracts from the Memoir of Nathaniel Ripley Cobb," Christian Index, 2 September 1834.
Kirkpatrick mourned, "our office is held in too low, and a still declining estimation . . . . we have almost forgotten that the Bible is from God, and the minister . . . . holds his commission from God." Some divines clearly resented the popular admiration lavished on men whose only "attribute" was their success in economic affairs. Men who "robbed" the church and squandered their wealth on "camel hair shawls" and plush carriages were hardly deserving of social deference.

Certain sermons and clerical writings were almost childish in their sniping denigration of economic success. Assertions that money-making required little intelligence were occasionally made without qualification. Any "drudge," "miser," or "charlatan" would make money according to the ministers, and thereby join the elite who set the tone for


98"National Materialism," Central Presbyterian, 3 July 1858.

southern society. The ministers might influence a man's opinion as to the proper mode of baptism or the efficacy of intercessory prayer, but it was the finely dressed planter, the fashionable merchant, and their snobbish wives who defined the average southerner's temporal aspirations and shaped the social and political views of society.

Many clerics feared that they had been relegated to a secondary status, pushed aside by the new priesthood which promised temporal riches and pleasures. This new priesthood was composed of "fops," "dandys," pretentious and arrogant planters and merchants, individuals whose only "recommendation" was their wealth and affectations. Again, it would be a mistake to regard the clergy's criticisms of the upper classes as simply a matter of jealousy, although resentment and jealousy certainly marked and influenced clerical attitudes toward the gentry. There is no question, however, that the ministers genuinely believed southern society was headed for catastrophe. They were equally convinced that the aristocracy was leading the willing masses to some unspecified destruction. Their statements about the failings of the rich were sincere efforts to avert disaster.

Henkle, Bascom, 190; "Inconsistency of Professors," Christian Index, 15 December 1836; Watchman of the South, 29 April 1841; Bascom, Sermons, 151-152; Southern Churchman, 21 June 1856; Ibid., 14 August 1857.
Nor was the clergy's critique of the upper classes simply a matter of "class" antagonisms, for many of the most strident criticisms came from affluent ministers. Then too the clerics were never reluctant to praise those of the elite -- new or old -- who had devoted themselves to something other than money making. Indeed, the clergy found it quite easy to praise the business skills of those who devoted their resources to charitable and Christian causes. They would even overlook a certain amount of "fashion" in an individual's lifestyle if the individual were making a serious effort to improve the church and community. But wealth itself, and the ability to get it, never earned their approbation and deference.

Certainly, there were those clergymen who catered to the rich and refined in their communities and emulated their fashionable tastes. To do so, however, violated prominent tenents of clerical thought which dictated that ministers show no partiality to the wealthy and avoid imi-

101 Iverson Brookes, "Encouragement to Benevolent Action," manuscript sermon, Brookes Papers, University of Alabama Archives, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; "Extracts from the Memoir of Nathaniel Ripley Cobb," Christian Index, 2 September 1834.

tation of the gentry's ostentatious lifestyle. Henry Bascom, a brilliant young evangelist in the 1820s, even saw his career threatened when his peers determined that he was too stylish in his dress and too cordial with the fashionable set. Most southern clerics believed it was best to keep the upper classes at arms length. It was feared that intimate contact with the rich would compromise the minister's ability to confront their very obvious worldliness, and perhaps even lure the unwary preacher into mammon's fold.

Henry Holley, the Unitarian minister who presided over Transylvania College in Kentucky for twenty years, was condemned for many things during his stormy tenure at the college. Not only did his religious views antagonize many of

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104 Henkle, Bascom, 64; Holder, Winans, 101.

his fellow ministers in the area, but many were equally
disgusted by Holley's close relationship with the rich in
the Lexington community. Holley, some ministers argued,
had made Transylvania an elitist preserve where rich young
men were taught not only liberal and heretical religion,
but snobbishness and dandyism. These accusations which
began in the early 1820s reached full force by the end of
the decade. The pressure to remove Holley became so great
that he finally resigned and was replaced by a more circum­spect Baptist minister from Rhode Island.\(^{106}\)

Reverend Phillip Slaughter once stated that it was "dreadful to be
rich."\(^{107}\) The experience of Holley makes it clear that at
times it was dreadful merely to be the friend of the rich.

Individual churches, like individual ministers, which
appeared too "fashionable" or were too closely identified
with the upper classes, were obvious targets for clerical
censure.\(^{108}\) The expenditure of large sums on the church

\(^{106}\) Charles Caldwell, A Discourse on the Genius and Charac­
ter of the Reverend Horace Holley, LL.D., Late President
of Transylvania University, with an Appendix Containing
Copious Notes Biographical and Illustrative (Boston:
Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins, 1828), 254-255;
Jennings, Transylvania, 131, 152. This note applies to
the entire paragraph.

\(^{107}\) Slaughter, "Evil."

\(^{108}\) J. B. Jeter, Recollections of a Long Life (Richmond:
The Religious Herald Company, 1891), 191; "A Fashionable
Church," Watchman and Observer, 25 November 1852; Parson,
"Divinity," 54. When Daniel Baker was called to the
Presbyterian Church in Savannah in the late 1820s he was
a bit apprehensive as to the spiritual vitality of his
new station, for he had heard that the church was full
structure and furnishings often prompted criticism.\textsuperscript{109} Pew
rents were also regarded by many ministers as an unChristian
expedient to be avoided even when a local congregation faced
serious economic difficulties. Rents, it was argued, gave
the rich a preferred place in the sanctuary and were there­
fore contrary to the spirit of true Christianity.\textsuperscript{110} The
pious rich were, of course, welcome in any church, but most
clerics saw no reason for giving them a preferred position.
The scripture made no distinction between the rich and the
poor and their place in the church. God, the ministers as­
serted repeatedly, was no respecter of persons.\textsuperscript{111}

Certainly, the wealthy played an important role in the
life of the antebellum church. In every denomination they
predominated on important and influential mission and edu­
cation boards. The prominent role played by affluent lay­
ment in church affairs does not indicate, however, clerical
acquiescence in secular attitudes. The clergy supported

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{109} Parsons, "Divinity," 54.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{110} William M. Green, "Bishop's Journal and Address," in
\textit{Journal of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual
Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the
Diocese of Mississippi} (Natchez: Natchez Courier Book
and Job Office, 1852), 21; \textit{True Witness}, September 1859.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., "Of A Truth I Perceive God Is No Respec ter of
About Money," \textit{Southern Presbyterian}, n.d., Bowen,
\textit{Duties}, 171-72, 390-95.
\end{quote}
the placement of those individuals in positions of responsibility whom they believed could best further the pious causes to which they were devoted. Practicality demanded a preponderance of well-to-do on the boards. Few others in southern society were able to devote the time required by board work. Voluminous correspondence, mission tours, supervision of schools made enormous demands on board members' time. Nothing suggests that the clergy desired affluent lay leadership because they still adhered to the old Calvinistic equation of piety and profits. Such an idea was untenable to men who were prone to regard wealth as a threat to the very existence of their society. There was simply too much clerical suspicion of the wealthy to allow the old equation to determine ecclesiastical policy.  

Even the most conservative and wealthy of southern clerics, like Episcopal Bishop Leonidas Polk -- one of the few ministers who clung to the old equation of piety and profits -- had by the 1850s become very suspicious of the "aristocracy of wealth" that dominated southern society. Polk regarded the aristocracy as a dangerous class, as much

112 John Jones, "Blessed Are the Poor In Spirit," manuscript sermon, 10 July 1841, University of Georgia Archives, Athens, Georgia; Bowen, Sermons, 390-91, 400-03; Preston, Sermons, 428; J. C. Granberry, "Christianity Reasonable in Doctrines and Demands," Methodist Pulpit, South (Washington, D.C.: William T. Smithson, 1858), 294; Bascom, Sermons, 127-28. This note applies to the entire paragraph.
a threat to social harmony and stability as a government based upon mob rule.\textsuperscript{113} Polk's conviction had undoubtedly been strengthened by his experiences as a Louisiana sugar planter. His disastrous agricultural venture cost him his wife's inherited fortune. Worst of all, however, Polk had seen his neighbors prosper despite their openly violating the Sabbath by compelling their slaves to work on the Lord's day during harvest time. Polk, who had refused to profane the Sabbath, lost everything.\textsuperscript{114}

Like his fellow clerics in every denomination, Polk was ill-disposed to defer to the monied aristocracy. Like the others, he dreamed of a return to the old social and political structure, a return to the peaceful, pastoral society benignly controlled by a pious and educated elite. Polk believed that the dream -- of course it was only a dream -- could be realized, but only after the mercantile gentry had been replaced by an aristocracy of virtue. Young men of promise would be trained, in schools like his University of the South, to assume the place and duties of


\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 181-85. This note refers to all comments relating to Polk's agricultural endeavors in Louisiana.
a virtuous ruling elite in southern society. Their charm, piety, and grace would enable these virtuous young men to supplant the venal and decadent gentry who threatened to destroy southern culture. Polk truly believed that this change could be made painlessly. In this belief he was virtually alone. Few among the southern clergy believed the ideal commonwealth could be restored. Fewer still believed that the restoration could be accomplished without the intervention of an angry God. Even so the southern clergymen were compelled, by their sense of duty and their understanding of scripture, to struggle for the reformation of southern society.

Southern chauvinism has often been cited as the primary motivation in the founding of the University of the South. Certainly this was a factor, but its importance has perhaps been overstated. If the founders expressed strong sectionalist tendencies they also expressed, effusively at times, a virulent nationalism. Leonidas Polk, "A Letter to the Right Reverend Bishops of Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, Mississippi, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina, from the Bishop of Louisiana," (New Orleans: B. M. Norman, 1856), 5-14; "Proceedings of a Convention of the Trustees of a Proposed University for the Southern States, Under the Auspices of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Together with a Narrative, and The Address of the Right Reverend James H. Otey, D.D., Bishop of Tennessee, Prepared under the Order of the Convention, by the Secretary," (Atlanta: C. R. Hanleiter, 1857), both in Reprints of the Documents and Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the University of the South, Prior to 1860, ed. by Telfair Hodgson (Sewanee: University of the South Press, 1888). The reason for the founding of the University of the South and other church colleges is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER IV
Blessed Are the Poor

Richard Furman was the most prominent Baptist minister in South Carolina during the early decades of the antebellum era. Indeed, he had few peers in the entire region. With a refined and powerful intellect and a forceful bearing, he was a commanding figure. A determined patriot, he had been a leading fomenter of revolutionary zeal in colonial South Carolina. In the decades following independence, Furman devoted himself to evangelistic labors and to the establishment of Baptist missionary and educational projects. It was only natural that Furman should be chosen to deliver the keynote address of the first annual convention of South Carolina Baptists in 1822.

Furman spoke to a combined group of clerics and laymen from across the state. Few of his listeners were prosperous merchants and planters; the majority would have been classed as farmers, some substantial, others subsistence. Most of the ministers present were pastors of rural congregations who earned their livings by teaching or farming. It was extremely rare, in 1822, to find a Baptist minister in South Carolina, or anywhere in the South, supported by a local congregation. Few of those attending the convention had anything approaching Furman's education or social standing. But if Furman was unique in
his erudition and status, he was decidedly conventional in his theology and world view. Not surprisingly, his address to the convention was an orthodox restatement of traditional Baptist theology. His address could well have been delivered by the least educated and least refined minister in attendance. Furman's rather unremarkable address is cited here only because it contains a brief digression in which the eminent preacher attempted to explain the origins of poverty. In the booming, volatile southern economy, the poor and poverty were topics which ministers addressed frequently in a variety of contexts and for a variety of reasons. The reform spirit and the money-mindedness of the age had made clergymen particularly sensitive to the economic gradations in southern society. And surely the increasing demands for more economic and political equality -- eventually distilled into the Jacksonian ethic -- also helped to call attention to the disparities between the various economic classes in the South.

In his brief discussion of poverty, Furman asserted that men were poor because Adam had sinned. Poverty, like sickness and death, had befallen mankind because of Adam's original violation of God's law. Poverty, to Furman, was simply a part of man's mortal inheritance. It was a blight dispensed by an impartial Providence and was therefore a condition largely beyond the control of an individual. Furman admitted that poverty might be the result of
personal sinfulness, just as sickness and premature death might follow in the wake of an ungodly lifestyle; but, as a general rule, men and women were poor because Adam had sinned and God had forever closed the gates of Eden.¹

Far from stigmatizing the poor as lazy or sinful, Furman largely absolved them of complicity in their poverty. He suggested that poverty might actually be a blessing. The poor, he reasoned, were more inclined than the affluent to rely upon God for their daily subsistence -- a condition which was to him productive of prayer, faith, and spiritual maturity.

Precisely why Furman felt compelled to embark on such a discussion is unclear. Most probably he was hoping to encourage charitable giving for the education and relief of the poor. If he could absolve the poor of responsibility for their condition, their prospective benefactors would be more inclined to give them assistance. Then, too, in a denomination composed largely of poor men and guided by a poor clergy, it was both politically wise and polite to make a deferential nod to the piety of the poor. A refined, well-to-do man, with refined and rich friends, Furman was in a delicate position. Most of his ministerial colleagues -- the men he had to influence if his grand

¹Richard Furman, "Exposition of the Views of Baptists," 24 December 1822, Furman Papers, Furman University Archives. This note applies to all of Furman's comments in this chapter.
missionary and educational schemes were to survive — were deeply suspicious of both wealth and refinement; clearly, it was in Furman's interest and the interest of his projects, to conciliate his less affluent listeners. I am not suggesting that Furman was somehow false or deceptive in his remarks about poverty, or that he was playing some petty machiavellian game with his poorer colleagues and brothers in Christ. Indeed, he certainly believed what he said. His charities and objectives in life are testimony to his conviction that the poor should be assisted and encouraged, not reviled.  

Whatever Furman's precise motivation, he was not alone in his assessment of the origins of poverty and in his reluctance to characterize the poor as lazy and sinful. His attitude toward poverty and the poor was a commonly-held notion, one articulated frequently throughout the era by ministers of every denomination.  

2H. T. Cook, A Biography of Richard Furman (Greenville: Baptist Courier, 1913) is a dated, but still useful overview of Furman's life.  

at large shared the clerical perspective on poverty is another matter. A great many agreed with the ministers' appraisal. But the ministers' frequent restatement of their view regarding the origins of poverty, indicates that the popular mind was unconvinced. In the entrepreneurial frenzy of the antebellum years, many adopted the dictum that the poor were poor through their own laziness or ignorance. Even some ministers agreed with this view.

In many respects it seemed entirely reasonable to blame the poor for their own condition. After all, even the clergy -- particularly the clergy -- believed that the South was rife with economic opportunities. Any individual willing to devote himself wholeheartedly to the pursuit of money would, the ministers believed, enjoy some degree of success. But to follow such a course was to trade poverty for idolatry, a disastrous bargain in the ministers' opinion. So the clerics usually counseled patience and submission and disdained the entrepreneurialism of the day, which urged all men to seek their fortunes and implicitly or explicitly villified those that refused to join

the hunt.  

But it was more than just the entrepreneurial spirit which the clerics challenged with their notion of the Adamic origins of poverty. They also refuted the old, lingering Calvinistic equation of piety and prosperity. If God indiscriminately saddled some with poverty and others with riches, who was to say that the rich were more spiritual or more entitled to ecclesiastical and social deference? Speaking in the 1850s, the Methodist minister, J. C. Granberry, bluntly observed that it was "fallacious" to judge a person's spirituality by external circumstances. "You will find them [the righteous] in mean hovels and at heavy toil."

Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, most southern clerics were disposed to doubt the spirituality of the rich.

To some extent, the clerical view of the origins of poverty hampered any concerted effort on their part to elevate the poor economically. Believing as they did that a large class of poor people would, by divine decree, exist

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4 Bowen, Sermons, 172, 390-395, 400-403; J. M. Price, "And the Poor Have the Gospel Preached to Them," The Christian Index, 18 February 1836; The Christian Index, 27 April 1837; Slaughter, "Evil," Southern Churchman, 28 August 1840; John Jones, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit," Jones Family Papers, University of Georgia Archives, Athens, Georgia; Wightman, "Treasures in Heaven, Methodist Pulpit, South, 10-11.

in any society, they regarded any governmental or social campaign to enrich the poor as a futile and dangerous tampering with the divine order of things. Just as they rejected the entrepreneurialism of their day, so too they would also have rejected any prototype of a modern welfare state. But it is a great mistake to regard the southern clergy as insensitive or unresponsive to the needs of the poor. The clergy led a concerted campaign to provide material, spiritual, and educational assistance to the poor. They did so out of simple humanity and a firm conviction that Scripture commanded them to do as much. But clerical concern for the poor was manifested in ways other than the traditional forms of benevolence. From the perspective of many ministers, certain features of the southern economy caused needless physical and psychological pain for the lower classes. Consequently, they attempted to introduce some fundamental reforms into southern economic thought and practice by awakening southerners to the need for such changes.

One of the reforms most desired by the clergy involved the rampant speculation in the southern economy. Actually reform is too mild a term, for most clerics wished to see speculation eradicated. The ministers regarded speculation -- which to them simply meant buying anything with a view toward earning a large profit from a rapid resale -- as a great destabilizing force in the southern economy. They
believed that the system added significantly and unnecessarily to the sufferings of the poor southerners. It was sin on a massive scale, for speculation, according to clerical testimony, was an intricate part of southern economic life, with hundreds of thousands of eager participants. Undaunted by its widespread popular acceptance, the clergy condemned speculation throughout the antebellum era as an illicit economic enterprise which fueled inflation and thus placed unnatural and excessive burdens upon the poor. By increasing the prices of land, slaves, and commodities, speculators forced up the prices for most necessities. This in turn forced the poor to adopt coarser food, clothing, and housing, or to do without many necessities altogether. Certainly, speculation and its inflationary wake prevented a poor man from providing an education for his children or even supplying them with a few suitable books or similar amenities.6

The ministers tended to view the entire speculative process -- the "speculative mania," as one cleric put

it — as a form of robbery which deprived the poor for the benefit of the upper classes. In 1857, during a severe depression, a writer for The Southern Episcopalian blamed the nation's financial illness on speculation. His tirade against speculation was not rooted in a conviction that speculation was inherently evil — although most clerics believed as much — but rather because speculation amounted to extortion of the poor. For such a crime, an angry Providence was blighting the South and the nation.  

Similar assertions appeared throughout the era and were propounded by ministers of every major denomination.

Southern economic thought was also flawed, some ministers argued, in that it tolerated usury. Occasional references were made to the practice of charging exorbitant interest rates to the poor. It was a situation which, in ministerial opinion, went hand-in-hand with speculation. As speculation fueled inflation, the working poor were often compelled to borrow in order to survive. In 1834 the Christian Index carried an article condemning the popular practice of "speculating" in the misery of the poor, that is, charging rates of interest which would only render the poor more destitute.  

In 1848, a writer for the Nashville Christian Advocate called upon the state government

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7 "Advice for the Times, Southern Episcopalian, December 1857.  

8 Christian Index, 1 April 1834.
to enforce usury laws "to protect the poor against oppressive exactions on the part of the rich. . . . It is . . . merciful and just in the government to interpose its authority in protecting the poor against the oppression of rich and . . . true Christians should take side with the government."9

The clerics also observed that the plight of the southern working poor was worsened by the stinginess of some employers. The exploitation of the poor laborers was most common in urban areas but it was not unknown in the countryside.10 And clerical complaints about the exploitation of workers frequently encompassed even the poorest of the poor, the slaves. The clergy did not believe such problems were inherent in the southern labor system itself, free or slave. The oppression and exploitation of the poor were the result of the amorphous, pervasive spirit of the times which tolerated the abuse of one's fellow men for the sake of economic advancement. Unlike Hinton Rowan Helper and a few other dissidents who castigated the slavery system as the source of all the South's social and economic woes, the ministers laid the blame on the mammonist spirit of the times, not on the institution of slavery itself.


10 See notes 66 through 72 in Chapter Three.
The clerics clearly regarded the poor as victims: of Adam's sin, of the spirit of the times, of their own poverty. Even the class of "vicious" poor, those who lived in squalor and immorality, were characterized by some ministers as victims, driven to their evil deeds by the awful and debased circumstances in which they lived. Writing in 1840, Lovick Pierce mourned the deprivations and sinister influence of poverty on the young noting, "the chilling winds of poverty . . . driving them [poor children] out into the gulf of despair to perish unless the hearts and hands of strangers should take them up and bear them to a safe harbor." Pierce, along with many other southern divines, recognized a cycle of poverty which could only be broken by the intervention of godly men and women. Characterizing the poor as victims -- involving the idea of a vicious cycle -- just like attributing the origins of poverty to Adam's sin, made it easier for the clergy to solicit aid for the poor. Far from being levelers or socialists, the clerics nevertheless believed that the wealthier economic classes had a divinely man-

11 Bowen, Sermons, 390-391; Southern Churchman, 13 March 1835; "Religious Instruction of Seamen," Southern Churchman, n.d.; Southern Churchman, 6 January 1853; Central Presbyterian, 14 February 1857.

dated responsibility to ease the burdens of the poor. Widows and orphans, they asserted, merited direct economic assistance in the form of food, clothing, and housing. The working poor, they believed, were to benefit from the community's wealth in a less direct manner, through the creation of schools, chapels, and hospitals. Again, the clerics did not believe that society had any obligation to elevate the poor into the middle class. They assumed that despite the assistance they received, the poor would remain poor, but that their condition would be somewhat more sufficient and "genteel." Gradually, some few among the poor might be allowed by God to work their way -- with prayer and patient industry -- into a higher economic class, but the clergy tended to discourage such aspirations which they feared would lead poor men and women to mammon's altar.

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14 Loveland discusses the various types of relief organizations founded and supported by the clergy in her chapter, "Benevolence and Reform," more specifically pages 165-175.

In counseling the poor to be content with their lot in life, the clergy attempted to insure the spiritual well-being of the poor and encourage social tranquillity in the South. Aware of antagonisms between the various economic classes in their communities, the ministers did what they could to restrict and diffuse the tensions. They pled with the rich to be humble and generous and they asked the lower orders to be content and patient. Not that the ministers envisioned class warfare or revolution, but they did believe that strife between classes inhibited the growth of their missionary and educational projects and weakened their churches and denominations. Class strife also added to the political and social problems facing the region and the nation by making them more difficult to resolve. And then, of course, the scripture taught that peace and good will were ever to be preferred to contention.

16 Loveland, Evangelicals, 169.

17 Literally hundreds of antebellum sermons and religious writings intimate serious class antagonisms. The constant tirades against pride and ostentation, frequent admonitions to the poor imploring them to put aside envy and bitterness - all such statements imply resentment between the economic classes.

18 In a review of thousands of sermons and religious writings I have only found a very few intimations by clerics that violent class conflict was a real threat. This leads me to conclude that the clergy did not perceive this manifestation of class antagonisms as an imminent or probable occurrence.
and discord. In short, the antipathy between rich and poor prohibited the establishment of a stable and exemplary Christian commonwealth, the dream of most southern clerics.

Interestingly, the tensions between the economic orders were not evident or noteworthy to everyone. Sectional apologists tended to ignore or deny the existence of such tensions. George Fitzhugh found nothing approaching serious class rivalry as he examined southern culture. 19 Such a revelation must surely have shocked many ministers who knew very well that they personally resented their economic betters for their snobbishness and their unwillingness to provide ministers with an adequate living. 20 They also knew that their frustration was not an isolated phenomenon. J. B. Stratton, though himself a contented man, had seen bitter antagonisms surface in the First Presbyterian Church in Natchez; this situation prompted him to plead with his communicants to be humble and content. 21

19 George Fitzhugh, Sociology for the South or the Failure of a Free Society (Richmond: A. Morris, 1854), 226-258.


21 In his work, Natchez, 139, James relates an incident which occurred in Stratton's church in 1848. One Sunday a young man of the lower orders attempted to introduce himself to the daughter of a local magnate. Her father responded by threatening to beat the would-be suitor if
The angry murmurings which Fitzhugh could hear only in the North, were equally audible, at least to some clergymen, in the South. It seems remarkable that Fitzhugh, sitting in his study in Richmond in the 1850s, failed to observe the anger and frustration of the city's poor while a writer for the Richmond-based Southern Churchman had heard the impoverished working women of the city crying out to God for vengeance against their oppressors.22 Indeed, words like oppression, exploitation, and extortion only entered the apologists' vocabulary as they discussed things northern, whereas southern clergy often found use for such terms when discussing life in their own communities.23

In fact, many apologists were reluctant even to concede the existence of poverty within the South. It was largely left to the ministers to reveal the darker side of

he ever acted with such impudence again. It was this sort of class consciousness which bred bitter antagonisms between the rich and the poor in Natchez and forced Stratton to sprinkle his sermons with admonitions against pride and arrogance.

22Southern Churchman, 3 April 1857.

23Bowen, Sermons, 403-405; J. M. Price, "And the Poor Have the Gospel Preached to Them," Christian Index, 18 February 1836; Southern Churchman, 8 November 1839; "General Rules," Nashville Christian Advocate, 14 July 1848; "The Poor, Are Their Temporal Wants Provided For?" Watchman and Observer, 3 March 1853; "Love of Mammon, Root of All Evil," The Christian Index, 21 February 1856; Southern Churchman, 3 April 1857.
southern life. For the apologists, men like Calhoun and Fitzhugh all presented a portrait of southern society which was colored so as to emphasize the positive features of their region and institutions. Perhaps the apologists were not willingly deceptive. The heat of political conflict, their fierce sense of tradition, their very real anxieties about the security of their cherished lifestyle compelled them to concentrate upon certain aspects of southern society while ignoring others. They were playing the role of advocates. They presented the best possible case for a defense of southern culture by marshalling support for combat with the forces of abolition and northern extremism. The clerics assumed the role of prosecutor. They were less concerned ultimately with what northerners -- or southerners -- thought, far more concerned with their evaluation before the heavenly tribunal. Their pressures were different from those felt by the apologists and so their perspective was different. Certainly their audience was different than that addressed by the apologists who frequently

spoke to a national or regional audience. The ministers addressed essentially local congregations, people well acquainted with the realities of southern life. Most southerners would have been perplexed by false and romantic apologies from the pulpit. And to what end would these apologies have been made?

If Yankee propagandists and abolitionist fanatics harangued the South, that was far from the primary concern of most clerics. These dishonest men and women, after all, could do no violence to the South or southern institutions, the ministers believed, so long as southerners complied with God's laws. Of course, some clergymen challenged the more egregious charges leveled by abolitionists, but for most ministers -- indeed even those who confronted the abolitionists -- the problem was much closer to home and far more dangerous than the rantings of wild-eyed northern demagogues. The clergy preached the truth as they perceived it, and that truth was that their congregations and communities desperately needed reformation. The South must be rescued from greed and materialism. No one would benefit, the clergy believed, from concealing southern sins or pretending that southerners were somehow a unique people, isolated from the snares and temptations of modern life. It was far better, in the clerical perspective, to confront sin, to repent, and to beg God to stay his vengeance.

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It was not difficult for most clergymen to appreciate the darker side of the southern economy because most of them lived on the darker side at some level of impoverishment. Religious publications frequently carried articles describing the poverty of the clergy and pleading for more consistent and substantial support from the laity. Some clerics evidenced a deep-seated bitterness at their economic insecurity. The majority, however, patiently attempted to inform the public of their situation. None suggested that the clergy be given stipends which would allow them to advance to a higher economic class. Instead they hoped for a livelihood which would allow them to devote their time and energies to their pastoral responsibilities and would provide them with a pittance for old age and possibly the means to educate their children. Nevertheless, lay opposition to supporting a full-time, professional clergy remained strong throughout the ante-bellum era. The issue was not finally settled in the ministers' favor until the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Although usually borne with meekness, the impoverishment of the southern clergy hardly disposed them to look with favor upon their economic environment. And at least part of the clerical antagonism toward the upper classes and the economic spirit of the times may be attributed to their own depressed circumstances. Then too, the financial
debility of the clergy helps to explain their predilection to defend the poor and advocate their relief. Still, it was not only poor clerics who defended the poor. Bishop Moore of Virginia, Richard Furman of South Carolina, Joseph Stratton of Natchez, all comfortably established ministers, expressed the same attitudes held by their poorer brethren in the ministry. Frequently in close contact with their poor brethren, these more affluent ministers naturally felt a kinship with the sufferings of their impoverished brothers and this contributed to their generally sympathetic view of the poor laity.

Then too, the clerics found a certain romance in taking the part of the poor, in easing their temporal burdens and ministering to their spiritual needs. That Christ himself was poor, reared in the home of a humble "mechanic," and that he spent much of his earthly career ministering to the poor deeply impressed the Southern clergy. Ministers like William Duval, an Episcopal priest who devoted most of his short career to working among the poorest classes in Richmond, were accorded lavish sentimental praise from their peers, the sort later reserved for the young heroes of the Confederacy. A tearful eulogy for a young Presbyterian minister focused upon the theme that

"no hut was too mean, no condition too low, for him to attend to. In this he imitated a high example; and imitated it successfully." To give oneself wholeheartedly to the care and relief of the poor was truly a hallowed calling in the eyes of most southern clerics.

Caring for the poor meant much more to the clergy than simply requesting aid from the rich or criticizing speculators and the spirit of the times. In a society where, it seemed to them, money was the measure of respectability, the ministers attempted to give the poor a degree of respectability, which they believed was only proper and just.

An important part of this campaign was the clergy's frequent allusion to the pious poor. The ministers recognized several economic and spiritual gradations among the poor for which they employed various terms. The pious poor, like the genteel or vicious poor, were a distinct sub-set of the larger category. Significantly the clerics

26 William Hill, "The Improvement Which Ought to be Made of the Death of a Minister of the Gospel," The Presbyterian Preacher of Virginia and North Carolina, February 1829.

apparently regarded the pious poor as a large class of men and women, a class substantially larger than the vicious and immoral poor. The fortitude and the saintliness of the pious poor was a favorite theme among the clergy of every denomination. In 1820, Methodist Bishop William McKendree commented to a friend that most good and righteous men were poor men. The idea surely found its way into the Bishop's sermons, as it certainly did in the case of a host of other ministers. The natural corollary of this view, that most good men were poor men, was the belief that poverty was in and of itself a virtuous state. Bishop Capers, also a Methodist cleric, was indoctrinated with this view upon his entry into the ministry in the 1820s.

28 Bowen, Sermons, 390-391; Jeter, Recollections, 111; J. P. K. Henshaw, Memoirs of the Right Reverend Richard Channing Moore, D.D., Late Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia, Accompanied by a Selection from the Sermons of the Late Bishop (Philadelphia: William Stavely, 1843), 334; "Sketch of Mr. Seth Hern," The Christian Index, 14 April 1845; P. Tinker, "Thoughts on the Use of Property," Nashville Christian Advocate, 16 July 1847; "What One Poor Man Can Do," Nashville Christian Advocate, 24 November 1848; The Christian Index, 9 September 1857. This note applies to the entire paragraph.


This concept was by no means exclusively Methodist, but rather a traditional Christian teaching which marked every branch of southern Protestantism. During the latter decades of the era, the belief in the inherent value of poverty faded, but its corollary remained strong. To the very end of the era, a powerful current of clerical opinion linked poverty with true spirituality.

Occasionally the poor were identified with republican virtue by portraying poor farmers as the last remnant of the noble republicanism of the Revolutionary age. To some clerics, it seemed that the rustic poor were the only ones who had not sold their spiritual and republican inheritance for a chance at riches and luxury. As a rule, the clergy were not as confident about the virtue and piety of the urban poor. Despite their expressed anxiety over the spiritual condition of this class, the clergy cer-

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31 For a brief discussion of this topic see: Harvey G. Cox, "The 'New Breed' in American Churches: Sources of Social Activism in American Religion," Religion in America, eds. William G. McGloughlin and Robert N. Bellah (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 375-380. Cox is, of course, careful to make the point that this teaching -- the inherent spiritual value of poverty -- has often been eclipsed by another tradition which argues that material prosperity is the mark of God's favor and poverty the mark of sin. Evidence that most southern clergymen were influenced by the former precept is to be found in their fear of riches (treated in Chapter Three), and in their tendency to see poverty as more conducive to spirituality than affluence.

32 Bowen, Sermons, 403.

33 Ibid.
tainly did not denigrate them. They usually expressed pity or despondency over the spiritual and physical plight of the urban poor rather than disdain or revulsion.  

The clergy were sensitive to the snubbing or villification of the poor by their economic betters. To counteract such affronts to the poor, the ministers often went out of their way to humble the well-to-do. Angry sermons warned the rich that their pride would bring their destruction and that God was no respecter of persons. The poor, the clergy taught, had the same access to God's grace as the wealthiest king. To drive the point home, ministers would often employ as their text the sixteenth chapter of Luke. The portrait of a rich man in a searing hell, begging water from a poor man in heaven was a telling weapon in the hands of clerics who were anxious to elevate the poor in the eyes of the community. An equally formidable rhetorical device, one frequently employed, was the inference or explicit assertion that rich men were effeminate drones. References to the "soft white hands" of the

34 Southern Churchman, 13 March 1835; J. O. Andrew, "Our Duty to the Poor and Neglected of the Populous Cities," Nashville Christian Advocate, 6 August 1847.

gentlemen of the upper class or to the delicate constitution of planters' sons were particularly stinging insults in a society which placed great emphasis on robust, courageous manhood. Such comments, and there were many, provided a convenient means of humbling the rich and venting lower class frustration and anger. And these comments no doubt also represent the clergy's general view of the upper classes.  

In the clerical campaign to humble those who would disdain the poor, deeds often spoke louder than words. When a delegation of state legislators came to call on William Capers with an invitation to address the "houses," the impoverished minister, without apology, seated his distinguished visitors on the rudest piece of furniture in his humble house. Capers seemed to relish the consternation of the gentlemen as they gingerly brought their finely tailored trousers to rest upon the rough pine bench. The incident which occurred in the early 1820s was recorded gleefully by Capers ten years later as he prepared his

autobiography. In the 1840s, Henry Bascom, who as a young minister had been stigmatized by his colleagues for his fraternization with the rich, demonstrated his thorough change of heart. When surrounded by a group of admiring "magnates" after one of his sermons, Bascom abruptly left their company to greet a poor couple whom he had known years before. A bit of theatre perhaps, but still intended to convey a message that the poor were as deserving of attention and deference as the planter elite.

Ministers who had risen from the lower economic orders to lucrative educational or pastoral positions frequently recalled their humble origins and challenged Southerners to emulate the virtue and piety of the poor saints of former days. Biographers of notable ministers, who were usually ministers themselves, often went to considerable lengths to apprise readers of the youthful poverty of their subjects. And frequently the biographers noted with some pride that their subjects had died in poverty.

37 Wightman, Capers, 201-203. When Bishop Dehon visited the parishes in his diocese he usually made it a rule to avoid the homes of the wealthy and share the humble lodgings of a poor brother. John N. Norton, Life of the Right Reverend Theodore Dehon, D.D., Bishop of South Carolina (New York: Church Book Society, 1857), 105.

38 Henkle, Bascom, 339.

39 If the subject of the biography were born to wealth, the biographer often made it a point to mark his pious subject's descent in penury. Henkle, Bascom, 325; Norton, Ravenscroft, 61.
did such works contain anything approaching a "Horatio Alger" philosophy. Hard work, good deeds, a pious lifestyle were not usually rewarded, in ministerial biographies, with affluence. Nor would the aspiring entrepreneur find much encouragement in the pages of religious newspapers. "Algerisms," though not unknown, were rare in such publications. God rarely rewarded the pious poor in a material sense; instead their reward was usually enhanced spirituality and inner peace. Even when the ministers spoke of temporal or material rewards, they referred almost invariably only to the basic necessities of life, plain food and a little cottage. With such the poor were to be content, willing to leave mansion and fine carriages to worldlings and effeminate dandies.

On occasion the clerical perspective on poverty and

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41 Ibid.
the poor elicited an angry public response. In 1851, C. K. Marshall, in a letter to the *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, excoriated the Methodist clergy for catering to the poor. In Marshall's estimation the clergy -- at least most Methodist ministers -- had given themselves to a pernicious "leveling, religious agrarianism" which encouraged class antagonisms. Marshall, a Methodist minister who had married into one of the wealthiest families in Mississippi, was indignant that so many of his brethren routinely proclaimed wealth a "species of crime" and poverty a positive virtue. Such a view, Marshall argued, was hopelessly out of date, an embarrassment to modern Methodism. The poor were not to be denigrated or denied, of course, but neither were they to be championed so aggressively.

The clergy had touched a raw nerve. They had angered and alienated some among the higher orders. Marshall's letter makes that much clear. But it is impossible to conclude with any certainty whether their struggle to ameliorate the physical and psychological sufferings of the poor had done very much. Clearly, the benevolent projects sponsored by the clergy had assisted individuals. And sermons and writings which reassured the poor of their equal

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standing before God must have helped, to some degree, to lessen the humiliation attached to poverty. But nothing suggests that a great reformation occurred in the physical condition of the poor or in the way they were perceived by the higher orders in southern society. The tendency among the upper classes was still to regard them as responsible for their own condition and more or less outside the pale of respectable society. At most it may be stated with certainty that the clergy, as a class, was consistent in its efforts on behalf of the poor. And unquestionably they helped to lay the foundations for social and political movements of the antebellum era and succeeding eras.

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It is tempting to make good Jacksonians of the southern clergy. Their antagonism toward the gentry and their emphasis on individual competency, these features of clerical thought fit neatly into the Jacksonian mold and surely helped to reinforce the Jacksonian movement. So too, the clergy's outspoken concern for the lower orders blended easily with Jacksonian enthusiasm for the economic and political elevation of the "common man;" a broad designation which encompassed the middling and poor classes.43

It was a proud boast of the Jacksonians that the "hero of New Orleans" was himself the son of grinding poverty and obscurity. And in his rise to wealth and fame, Jacksonians found a ready model for other poor men. But for all the apparent similarities between Jacksonian ideology and clerical thought, there were major divergences in the two systems. That these divergences existed and were obvious to most clergymen is made clear by the continual despondency and pessimism of ministers throughout the antebellum era, even in the decades after the Jacksonian revolution had apparently succeeded.

It is significant that the clergy never shared the Jacksonians' confidence in the "individual will." Far from seeing "will" as the positive, productive driving force in man's nature, they regarded individual will as badly flawed and usually productive of sin, particularly greed and materialism. Indeed, the clerics could trace most of the South's problems to the rampaging of debauched mammonist individual will. While the ministers stressed contentment and patience, Jacksonian ideology exulted in the exploits of acquisitive, combative will power. In the

44 Perhaps the best examination of the Jacksonian mind is John William Ward's Andrew Jackson, Symbol for an Age (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 171-172. My discussion of the Jacksonian movement is based primarily upon Ward's study.

45 Ward, Symbol, 76, 153-180.
ideal Christian commonwealth envisioned by many ministers, there was surely very little room for the sort of eager, aggressive will celebrated by Jacksonians.

John William Ward, in his study of the Jacksonian mind, was careful to make the point that Jacksonian ideology included a recognition that the individual will was subject to the will of God. Certainly the ministers taught and believed that God was the ultimate disposer of man's fate, individually and collectively. And they urged men to submit patiently to the will of God, recognizing the individual will -- properly understood -- should be subordinate to the divine will. Despite the superficial similarities, this view diverged markedly from the Jacksonian concept which, in popular usage, approximated the time worn dictum, "God helps those who help themselves." The idea of a smiling deity, blessing the deeds of the willful, aggressive, and successful was repulsive to most southern clergymen. It was a reversal of God's order, a dangerous rationalization. In the clerical mind, the ideal was to follow God's will, as revealed in scripture, and not to strike out on some bold, questionable course confident of God's blessing and the support of divine will. Here was the subtle, but profound divergence not simply with Jacksonian thought, but with the conventional economic phil-

\[\text{Ibid., 101-132.}\]
osophy of antebellum America. This philosophy, which lauded the propriety and desirability of personal economic achievement, was given a forceful political framework by the Jacksonians. For their part, southern clerics refused to admit that economic success was intrinsically virtuous or desirable. They refused to make icons of capitalism and economic success. It galled clergymen to see self-made, affluent men smugly confident that their economic success was in keeping with divine precept and will, who seemed to think their possessions were evidence of God's pleasure. Such a view verged on equating piety with prosperity, a heretical presumption to most southern divines, one they abhorred. Responding to this impious presumption, a writer for the Southern Presbyterian asserted, "a godly covetous man is just such a monster as a religious sot and a very pious whoremonger, and as likely to get to Heaven." And Reverend Nathaniel Bowen, speaking in 1842, chided some of the well-to-do in his congregation who had apparently come to regard their possessions as


special marks of divine favor. He questioned their presumption that their affluence was a mark of divine approbation by asserting, "abundance can never be designed by heaven for the maintenance of sloth, the equipment of vanity, or the pampering of luxury . . . that you may revel in superfluity . . . while others are suffering all the wretchedness of hunger and cold." Bowen was clearly trying to make the point that wealth consumed on the individual's own "lower" desires was not a product of God's will or design or a mark of his favor, but simply the product of an illicit desire for "ease," "luxury," and "exaltation." 49

An equally significant and revealing divergence from Jacksonian thought was the clergy's inability to share in the vibrant optimism which seemed to animate the minions of Old Hickory. Certainly the Jacksonians had good reason to be optimistic. They had elected the "champion" of the common man; on every hand the suffrage had been extended; the west was opening to waves of self-reliant pioneers;

49 Bowen, Sermons, 390-391. The same sentiments expressed by Bowen were reflected in scores of sermons throughout the era. Many of these sermons and writings have been cited in the previous chapter.

To my mind, the clergy's repeated evocations of the pious poor, discussed in this chapter, coupled with their tendency to regard the gentry as a class of dubious spirituality, treated in the previous chapter, is ample proof that the southern clergy had little feeling for any attempt to equate piety and prosperity. If anything, they tended to equate piety and poverty ever mindful that Christ and the apostles had been poor.
the bank was destroyed; the old aristocracy was crumbling; a new age of egalitarianism seemed to be dawning. So powerful and pervasive was the "revolution" that even Jackson's enemies adopted his tenets or at least his rhetoric. After 1840 one would have been hard pressed to find any political leader of any party who espoused something other than the tried and true slogans which had propelled Jackson to power. So truly there was good reason for the Jacksonians to rejoice. Only the slavery controversy clouded the otherwise bright American and southern horizons. But even this deadly blight could not negate the robust optimism of the day.

The euphoria enjoyed by Jacksonians was lost to the southern clergy. Admittedly the haughty and materialistic nabobs of Natchez and Charleston had seen their political power diminished, their tastes and influence in other areas, however, were simply adopted by the new rulers. It was apparent very soon after the Jacksonian revolution began that the new elite was hardly less selfish, ostentatious, or mammonist than the old elite. If the Jacksonian revolution had brought some new political principles to the fore, it did very little, from the clerical perspective, to restrain the dangerous commercial whirl evident in the South since the opening decades of the century. The lower orders, far from being placated or contented by Jackson's accession to power, seemed all the more bent on grasping
the main chance for wealth and ease. Indeed, the Jacksonian movement thrived on the economic excitement of the day and on what the clergy regarded as the illicit popular passion for acquisition and accumulation. Jacksonians, it turned out, were unabashedly materialistic in their world view. 50

So whatever affinities existed between the clerical and Jacksonian perspectives, and clearly there were some, there was nothing approaching complete harmony between the two perspectives. Jacksonian and clerical thought were largely irreconcilable. The clergy could therefore take little comfort in the Jacksonian triumph. They did not -- could not -- see the age of Jackson as the harbinger of a new golden age. On the contrary, the final three decades of the antebellum era were, to them, as furiously mammonist as any era in southern history.

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The southern clergy did not frequently encourage individual southerners to improve their economic status. But on those infrequent occasions when they did so, the ministers were careful to prescribe strict limits to economic advancement. Though they were grateful for wealthy

50 Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion, 92-107; Pessen, Jacksonian America, 28-38.
Christian men and women, and desired more of that class, they did not as a rule suggest that men should aspire to riches. There were very few corollaries in antebellum sermonology to Wesley's old dictum, "get all you can, the best way you can, give all you can." The antebellum clergy were entirely too skeptical of riches to endorse so free-wheeling an admonition. They preferred to set much clearer limits to personal economic ambition. Men would do well, they taught, to strive -- if they must strive -- for nothing more than "competency." Precise definition of such a term is difficult, but it apparently described the contented yeoman, the pious mechanic or shop keeper with income sufficient to feed and clothe his family in healthful comfort and provide a few good books and journals. "Competency" also suggested that one had sufficient resources to provide an education for children and small savings for old age. Anything above the amount required to meet these basic needs the ministers expected to go to the church and benevolence.


52 Lovick Pierce, "The Education of the Poor," Southern Ladies Book, April 1840. The following chapter contains fuller discussion and documentation of this view.
This situation was described by John S. Capers, a Methodist minister in Charleston, as a state of "happy mediocrity." He went on to explain that such a circumstance was "most propitious to the advancement of religion," because individuals in this condition were "free from the distractions of riches" and the "oppression of pecuniary concerns." Presumably they could therefore devote themselves exclusively to the nobler things of life: religion, family, and intellect.

The clergy's enthusiasm for economic mediocrity reinforces my perception of the southern clerics as men thoroughly disenchanted with the entrepreneurial and commercial attitudes which marked their region and era. For most clergymen it seemed unChristian that men could desire more than a comfortable existence. Charles Colcock Jones, writing in the late 1840s, was incredulous that anyone would prefer "gold, or pearls or costly array" to "Christian simplicity and neatness of dress." A writer for the Nashville Christian Advocate argued in 1847 that "competency, food and raiment" should be the limit of a Christian's economic aspirations. Leroy Lee also scorned


"dainty foods" and "purple and fine linen" and decreed that all excess resources should be devoted to the relief of "him that needeth." 56

The ministers knew they were asking a great deal of their communicants. They were asking them to reject the prevailing assumptions of their culture. As historian James Oakes has observed, in the Old South "pressure to succeed was brought to bear from every direction," and emphasis was "less on economic stability than on material advancement." 57 The clerics were asking, imploring southerners to reject those very formidable pressures which prated that the highest object in life was to be a successful planter in a fine house with a large slave force. Some few southerners heeded the counsel of their spiritual leaders and withstood the siren-like call of the world. One southwestern slaveholder, convicted of his iniquitous ambitions, decided to free all his slaves, "choosing poverty with a good conscience in preference to all the treasures of the world." 58 But, of course, poverty was not the clerical requirement. They would have been satisfied to see most southerners contented upon "neat" and


57 Oakes, Ruling Race, 72.

58 Ibid., 104.
efficient farms, dressed in plain, simple garb, perhaps served by a few slaves, who in turn would be ministered to by their masters. If white southerners would but adopt this vision of southern society the ministers were confident that God would pour out his spiritual blessings upon individual southerners and the region as well. If "mediocrity," "simplicity," and "plainness" were embraced by southerners as their economic watchwords, then the South would blossom with missions, churches and schools, and the clergy's dream of a bountiful Christian commonwealth would become a reality.

CHAPTER V

God's Storehouse

The South and southerners were prospering as never before. The clergy and most non-clerical observers took this view of the antebellum years. Staple agriculture had provided the South with an erratic but lucrative source of income. Even small farmers could earn a few dollars with a little patch of cotton or tobacco. The clergy, so strident in their condemnation of materialism, were not displeased to see a general rise in southern prosperity during the antebellum era. They were always glad to observe neat, well manicured farms and tidy, efficient shops and factories. They were gratified that cotton had given the South a substantial economic base. Of course, they had serious misgivings about the South's prosperity, particularly because they believed it was feeding a materialistic mentality. But still, the ministers found some ground for rejoicing; southern wealth, they believed had the potential to do great things for the advancement of God's kingdom. As one Episcopal cleric wrote in the late 1850s, the

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wealth of rich southerners, rightly considered and used, was a "storehouse for the poor." This sentiment was echoed by the majority of clergymen in the antebellum South, who regarded the region's wealth as a potential means for the establishment of a Christian commonwealth in the South and evangelization of the world. As Anne Loveland has demonstrated, this grandiose dream was not simply an irrational, millenial vision of the clerics; but rather they regarded its realization as a possible, if improbable, objective. They believed the greatest obstacle to building the Christian commonwealth and converting the world was the materialism of southerners.

To combat this great evil, the clergy devoted much of their time to the condemnation of materialism. The direct line of assault, however, was not the only approach taken by the ministers. They also labored to instruct southerners in the proper uses of their money, by awakening in them a consciousness that their material resources were, after all, only "God's storehouse." If the ministers could challenge and inspire southerners to give liberally, even sacrificially of their wealth to the furthering of God's kingdom then, they believed, Mammon's power would be

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2 Southern Episcopalian, January 1858.

broken in the region and piety re-established. And, of course, the proper use of the southern wealth would in a concrete and tangible way establish a new Christian commonwealth. So the southern clergy actively and aggressively instructed southerners, rich and poor, in the use of their material resources.

Indeed, the use and misuse of money were consistent themes throughout the era. Addressing this topic, the ministers of every denomination were supremely confident that they knew best how southerners should spend their money. The clergy generally despised and condemned conspicuous consumption. Grand houses, thick carpets, silver plates, elegant and expensive clothes struck most ministers as a shameful and impious waste of money. Joseph Stratton of Natchez censured certain environs of his city for their "unreasonable," "extravagant," and "vainglorious" domestic appointments. According to Stratton, these excesses only reflected a "fondness for display [a] craving for preeminence. . . . [and a] spirit of competition, or envy, or arrogance."4 Luxurious affectations, southern divines argued, could only engender class antagonisms and petty neighborhood rivalries while diverting financial resources

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from the cause of Christ.\footnote{Ibid.; and see notes 25 through 31 in Chapter Three.}

Nor did southerners have to wonder just what particular causes of Christ were worthy of their economic support, for the ministers provided explicit guidance. Far from seeing their teachings on the use of money as an unwarranted intrusion into the lives of southern Christians — and non-Christians, in some cases — the ministers regarded their guidance in money matters as fully in keeping with their proper role as the caretakers of the community's conscience.

This role of caretaker, which seems so obvious from even a cursory examination of the thought and teachings of the antebellum clergy, has not always been recognized by scholars. All too often the ministers have been dismissed as a class preoccupied with denominational rivalry and a simplistic and narrow evangelicalism.\footnote{Samuel S. Hill, Jr. is among the number of distinguished scholars who have pointedly asserted that the southern clergy was one-dimensional in its thought and world view -- obsessed with individual salvation to the exclusion of any genuine social awareness. Samuel S. Hill, Jr., "The South's Two Cultures," in Samuel S. Hill, Jr. (ed.), Religion and the Solid South (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 48-49.} Although this view has been discounted in recent years by the works of several historians, it bears repeating that the southern clergy was deeply interested in and committed to molding
every facet of community life in the South. So it was entirely natural for the clergy to not only question the manner in which southerners spent their money, but attempt to direct them in the proper uses of that money.

Of the many causes championed by the clergy, none, apart from their evangelical labors, was more important to them than the care of the poor. When William S. White, a young Presbyterian cleric, began his pastoral labors in Nottoway, Virginia, in 1827, his mentor, Reverend John R. Rice, admonished him to attend first of all to the needs of the poor in his community. Such a course, Rice asserted, would assure White of God's approbation and guidance. Rice was typical of the southern clergy in his concern for the poor -- typical in his belief that meeting the basic physical needs of the poor was an integral part of the clergy's ministry. Not surprisingly references to passages like Matthew 19:21 were common in the sermonology of the era.


8"Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." This and other verses were frequently quoted to elicit assistance for the poor. Another popular verse was Luke 16:20 which details the insensitivity of a rich man toward a beggar at his gate, and the consequent punishment of the rich man. Occasionally reference was made to 2 Corinthians 8:14 in which Paul expresses his desire for equality.
passages or dismiss them as special instructions for believers of the apostolic age. Tending toward a literal interpretation of the Bible, the southern clergy accepted such passages at face value and held them up as the proper standard of contemporary Christian behavior. Ministers sometimes reinforced Biblical admonitions with more contemporary and homely illustrations. In 1846 the Nashville Christian Advocate carried a brief story in which a pious father instructed his daughter in the proper use of money.
Observing a fine carriage, the little girl expressed sorrow that her father was not rich like "Col. so and so." The father assured his daughter that he had no desire to be like the Colonel, "because he is a hard, unfeeling man. He has no heart to sympathize with the poor or the afflicted; and according to the Bible . . . he is one of those who has fallen into a snare . . . it is said that he once cheated some orphans out of their whole estate." The patient and pious father went on to declare that most rich people were proud, lazy, and haughty, whose cruel unconcern for the poor was a manifestation of their deadened souls. According to the father, the truly happy and truly spiritual were those who lived modestly and gave liberally to relief of the less fortunate.9

The clergy's concern for the poor went well beyond a desire to see their physical needs met. Their concern also entailed a defense of the integrity and dignity of the lower orders and a commitment to see to the spiritual needs of the poor.10 But the ministers were never unmindful of

9 "Who is Happy?" Nashville Christian Advocate, 30 October 1846.

10 This commitment to the spiritual needs of the poor usually entailed the creation of special missions for the urban poor. These missions are fully treated in Loveland, Evangelicals, 170-171. As Loveland points out this objective -- the spiritual elevation of the poor -- was accomplished by establishing poor chapels, seamens missions, Sunday Schools, churches without pew rents and the like. It might also be added that many ministers, rather than supporting special and separate missions for the poor -- which they considered contrary to the spirit
the more mundane needs of poorer southerners. The ante-
bellum southern clergy possessed a well developed and bal-
anced social consciousness and they stressed continually
the need for a more equitable distribution of southern
wealth through the medium of serious and consistent Chris-
tian charity. In the clerical mind only the most vicious
among the poor were undeserving of a larger portion of the
community's wealth. Not that the clergy desired a literal
or imposed redistribution of property. They were fully
committed to the sanctity of private property. Rather
they pled for a generous, sacrificial economic assistance
for the South's indigents. The clergy of every denomina-
tion emphasized this theme. In 1840, a writer in the
Christian Index pointedly expressed this view when he de-
clared that the wealth of the affluent was given them as
a "trust for the poor." Jesse Mercer stated emphatically
that Christians who failed to give liberally to the relief
of the poor had no right to communion for they had violated
Christ's precept of sacrificial brotherly love. In 1852,
a Methodist minister wrote that it was the unavoidable

of the New Testament -- worked to see the abolition or
dramatic reduction of pew rents in old and established
churches.

11 Christian Index.

12 Jesse Mercer, "The Lord's Supper, Analogy between It and
the Passover," Georgia Pulpit, 61.
obligation of the community to see that the poor were provided with food and shelter.\textsuperscript{13} The Presbyterian and Episcopal clergy were no less committed to the physical care of the poor.\textsuperscript{14} None of these ministers advocated the elevation of the poor into a higher economic class, but none was disposed to allow the community -- particularly the Christian community -- to shirk its responsibility to meet the basic needs of the poor.

There was really only one point of divergence between the clergymen in regard to relieving the physical suffering of the poor. Some few ministers expressed misgivings over organized reform movements -- the founding of benevolent agencies and societies. They feared that these "apparent charities" dangerously altered New Testament precedents.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13}"The Poor," Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, 6 February 1852.

\textsuperscript{14}A number of Presbyterian and Episcopal sources are cited in footnote seven which indicates that the ministers of the more affluent denomination shared the concern for the poor evidenced by Baptists and Methodist ministers. Other examples of their concern are to be found in: R. R. Gurley, Life and Eloquence of Reverend Sylvester Larned, First Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1844), 134, 300-304; Southern Churchman, 8 November 1839; Watchman of the South, 29 April 1849; "How Shall We Improve the Poor of Our State?" Southern Episcopalian, May 1855.

\textsuperscript{15}Southern Churchman, 28 October 1836; "The Divine Method of Reform," Christian Index, 1 May 1856; "Deceit and Falsehood in Regard to Christian Benevolence," Southern Churchman, 28 December 1860.
These clergymen, however, had no doubts about the desirability of benevolence, but merely believed that Biblical precept was more fully and safely followed when charity was dispensed quietly from neighbor to neighbor. Such a system, they believed freed the giver from the temptations of pride and false piety and protected the recipient from social humiliation. Appearances were very important to southern clergymen; many were repulsed by the thought of poor people being singled out and herded together in almshouses. How could people under these circumstances retain their dignity?16 This suspicion of institutional and organized benevolence -- because of what some ministers believed to be its humiliating and fashionable aspects -- helped to retard the development of organized benevolence in the South, with the result that it developed a bit more slowly there than in the North.

However, by the late 1830s organized benevolence was a prominent feature of antebellum southern life. At the end of the era one would have been hard pressed to find any city or town which lacked a ladies' association for

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the care of indigents or a merchants' fund for the relief of the poor.\textsuperscript{17} And if some ministers had doubts about the propriety of such organizations, many more championed them in the pulpit and on the printed page.\textsuperscript{18} Although ministers were not directly responsible for the creation of all the various relief organizations, they nevertheless played the crucial role in inspiring the benevolence movement in the South. Their rhetorical chastisement of the materially minded southerners and their clear pronouncement that those who failed to give to benevolences had no part of Christ's kingdom were in the early nineteenth century powerful thunderbolts. Certainly, they could not change the basic materialistic outlook of southern society, but they nevertheless possessed the power to make southerners feel guilty enough to contribute to the support of widows and orphans and other indigent southerners.

While organized benevolence grew more slowly in the South than in the North -- only blossoming in the late 1830s -- the ministerial commitment to benevolence had nevertheless been very much alive in the early nineteenth

\textsuperscript{17}In her chapter on "Benevolence and Reform" (\textit{Evangelicals}, 159-185), Loveland provides a clear appreciation of the growth and expansiveness of the benevolence movement in the South as expressed in the creation of organizations and societies to promote benevolent objectives.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}
century. Benevolence had always been an important function of the local church. Care of the poor within the local congregation had long been an established tenent of Christian ethics and was a responsibility recognized and accepted by the southern clergy.\(^{19}\) The benevolence movement in the South was not simply the product of similar movements in the North and in Great Britain. To be sure, such movements had an effect on clerical thinking. They reinforced the southern clergy's commitment to benevolence and helped shape its approach to the problems of ignorance and poverty. But the southern clergy's sense of responsibility stemmed primarily from their own convictions — convictions rooted in their own theology, their heritage, and their own personal and social circumstances.

The most obvious and powerful motivation which led ministers to stress the necessity of benevolence toward the poor was their conviction that the Bible mandated a concern for the physical needs of the poor. Some scholars have discounted the Biblical impetus for antebellum reform and benevolence, concentrating instead upon the wedding of a sort of evangelical transcendentalism with Thomas Paine-like enlightened "reason."\(^{20}\) Perhaps this is be-

\(^{19}\) The citations in footnote eight are illustrative of this fact.

cause research into the antebellum reform movement has usually focused on the North where such a motivation may have been influential. If, in fact, the reform movement in the North was the product of the ideological hybrid described above, then certainly there were profound differences between the northern and southern clergy and the forces which guided them. For there can be no doubt that the southern clergy was governed by a determined belief that the Bible mandated their various social campaigns and ideals. Hundreds of passages in the Scriptures called upon the righteous to open their hearts and purses to indigents. As Biblicists, the southern clergy could not ignore these teachings. To have ignored such clear Biblical injunctions would have marked the ministers, in their own minds, as false prophets. It was not for them to pick and choose which portions of the Gospel they would proclaim. When Henry Bascom published his sermons in 1852 he included the discourse, "The Pulpit, Its Institutions and Functions." In this sermon Bascom demanded that ministers proclaim the whole of the Gospel. He asserted, the minister "is not at liberty to alter, augment or mutilate his message in any form, or to any extent. He is to guard and dispense, with the most sacred and uncompromising jealousy, the heavenly treasures of wisdom . . . committed to him in trust, for the reformation of his kind." The evangelist continued, "any serious departure from this
degrades his character, [and] cancels his mission." Beyond this commitment to proclaim faithfully the whole Gospel, the southern ministers preached benevolence because they regarded it as a useful weapon to combat the raging materialism of the day. If men could be inspired, or compelled, to part with their riches and to give substantially to the relief of the poor, then society might be turned away from Mammon and back to God. With benevolence clerics hoped to substitute a good for an evil. An additional reason behind the clergy's support of the benevolence movements was its conviction that social harmony was promoted by such a program. As Loveland has stated, "The benevolent relationship [the ministers assumed] was one expression of the mutual dependence of men. It fostered brotherhood by strengthening feelings of compassion and sympathy in the giver and the gratitude and humility of the


recipients."  

William Henry Ruffner, a respected Presbyterian minister and theologian in Virginia, son of the long-time president of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University), gave forceful expression to this view when he wrote in 1853:

The rights of property are never so insecure as when there are large masses of neglected and dissatisfied men . . . . It is astonishing that the wealthy classes do not perceive the growing discontent of the moneyless millions . . . who naturally feel themselves to be oppressed.

To Ruffner's mind the antidote for this social discontent was a form of "Christian socialism." Brushing aside objections to his use of the word "socialism," Ruffner asserted that Christianity teaches "socialism from beginning to end . . . . If 'love thy neighbor as thyself' is not socialism, we have no conception of what the real meaning of the term is." Ruffner chided those who shrank from his interpretation of Matthew 19:19. "Face the text . . . like a man," he commanded, "and accept its teaching." Ruffner saw no reason for Christians to be frightened by his view. Indeed, he reasoned that it was only proper and natural for believers to give their surplus to relieve their less

23 Loveland, Evangelicals, 169.

24 Ruffner, Charity, 130-131.
affluent neighbors.

Though Ruffner's use of the term "socialism" was unique, the ideal he cherished was not. Benevolence, more specifically the employment of all surplus for the benefit of the lower orders, found a host of proponents among the clergy. Most southern clerics wondered at a man's desire to possess anything above "competency." Philip Slaughter, an Episcopal rector in Virginia, asserted the "standard is contentment with food and raiment, and a distribution of the surplus to works of charity and mercy." Failure to adopt this standard was, to Slaughter's mind, a violation of God's will. Slaughter's view was precisely the same as that expressed by Ruffner a decade later.\(^{25}\) The ministers were particularly incredulous that Christians acquainted with the divine revelations regarding the blessedness of giving would be so reluctant to part with their "redundant means."\(^{26}\)

\(^{25}\) Slaughter, "Evil."

The ministers also regarded the education of the poor as a vitally important facet of Christian charity. This desire to see the poor provided with a rudimentary education acted as a driving force in the Sunday school movement, a movement which gained popularity in the second decade of the century.

The Sunday schools were to be open to children from all ranks in society. The clergy tended, however, to regard them as a special blessing to the poor. Not merely designed to impart spiritual truths, the Sunday schools were also to provide pupils with the basic skills of reading and writing. The founders of the Richmond Sunday School Union concisely stated their objective as teaching the pupils "to read and . . . to fear and love God." The objective was the same for the other leaders in the movement. Though the Sunday school was a relatively inexpensive form of education -- one only needed a few students, a Bible and teacher -- the proponents of the Sunday school movement realized that the effect and efficiency of the schools would be enhanced by the development and distribution of literature appropriate to beginning readers,

27 Southern Churchman, 13 March 1835; "Holiness," Christian Index, 7 April 1836.

28 Sadie Bell, The Church, the State and Education in Virginia (Philadelphia: Science Press, 1930), 247.

29 Ibid., 246.
especially children. The production and distribution of suitable literature entailed considerable expense and the southern clerics frequently appealed to their constituents for the necessary funds. To facilitate raising these funds and overseeing their proper use, some denominations organized special boards and agencies to receive donations and publish and distribute the literature. These agencies included local and interdenominational organizations like the Richmond Sunday School Union which was founded by concerned Presbyterians and Methodists in 1819. The Orange County Sunday School Union in North Carolina, another local organization, was founded to provide spiritual and educational guidance to the "young and ignorant children of the indigent, and others indiscriminantly." Baptists in the South derived much of their Sunday school literature from the Baptist General Tract Society of Philadelphia which had been established in 1824. Indeed southern Baptists provided most of the financial resources needed to keep the Tract Society solvent.

For those ministers who supported the Sunday school movement, the overriding goal was the evangelism of the lower orders. Their secondary objective — and it was a rather close second — was the education of the poor. The clergy believed that for the poor to take their proper

30 Thompson, Presbyterian, 238.
place in society as useful and active citizens education was essential. Here again the ministers seem not to have envisioned a precipitous material advancement of the poor — or to have thought such an advancement would necessarily benefit the poor or the community generally. What they did desire was a class of responsible and pious poor and common folk who would reinforce, presumably by their prayers and cumulative "will," the republican and Christian institutions which to the clergy seemed increasingly weak and liable to all manner of perversions. These educated commoners, it was hoped, would resist aristocratic domination and mobbism alike. It was a dream of a placid well ordered commonwealth — a Christian commonwealth.31

After witnessing a parade of Sunday school pupils during the Fourth of July celebrations in Raleigh, in 1845, Thomas Meredith, a Baptist minister, praised the Sunday school and implicitly lauded the marriage of evangelism and education.

To witness the happy faces of such a group of young immortals, many, and perhaps most of whom, but for the benevolent institution of Sunday schools, would never had been lighted with a single ray of intelligence, and who never would have imbibed a perception of moral and religious duties, was sufficient to excite and stimulate the sympathies of the most

31 Longstreet, "Inaugural Address," Southern Ladies Book, March 1840; Pierce, "Education of the Poor," Ibid., April 1840.
insensible.\(^\text{32}\)

Not surprisingly, ministers like Meredith felt entirely justified in soliciting financial support for Sunday schools even though scripture did not explicitly require or sanction such educational innovations.

Southern society was not disposed, by tradition or natural circumstances, to provide education for the poor, or for anyone who could not pay the requisite expenses. Well-to-do southerners tended, as a class, to regard education as a perogative of the upper classes, something to be purchased like any other commodity. This position had some support even among the clergy. And many poor southerners shared this view. Indeed, many among the lower orders were initially reluctant to send their children to free schools out of a fear that in doing so they would be marked as mendicants. Additionally, many southerners from every class looked upon education as a superfluous endeavor.\(^\text{33}\)

Despite such obstacles, the southern clerics fought zealously for Sunday schools and rapidly expanded their campaign to include support of free public education of the lower orders. No other group in the antebellum South was

\(^{32}\) Thomas Meredith, "Fourth of July," Biblical Records, 12 July 1845.

so wedded to the idea of public education and no other was so willing to demand its financial support as a right.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1842, Henry Ruffner, president of Washington College and a Presbyterian pastor in Lexington, Virginia, put forward a proposal to tax wealthy landowners in Virginia to provide an educational system for the poor children of the state.\textsuperscript{35} Ruffner's proposal, radical indeed for antebellum Virginia, was dismissed by the legislature.\textsuperscript{36} A decade later, Reverend Calvin H. Wiley, the leader of the movement for free public education in North Carolina, expressed his gratitude for the contributions of the clergy of "all denominations," in his successful campaign for public education. Though Wiley mentioned the aid of others, "professional men" and college professors, he seemed to give first place to the ministers.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34}Earnest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), 212-244, 471-487; Southern Churchman, 13 March 1835; "The Public School," Nashville Christian Advocate, 13 October 1848; "Care, Deceit, and Vanity," Ibid., 5 April 1855; "A Christian Life," Christian Index, 1 December 1858.


\textsuperscript{36}Bell, The Church, the State and Education, 351.

\textsuperscript{37}Thompson, Presbyterians, 474.
Joseph Stratton, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Natchez, was typical of many other ministers who championed the cause of public education in the South. In 1845, he challenged the citizens of Natchez to support the new Natchez Institute, a free public elementary school that was to draw its financial support from a special tax levied by the city council. From the first, the school faced much "distrust and opposition," from "wealthy persons," but Stratton's forceful leadership drove the project forward. The school thrived throughout the antebellum era with an enrollment of more than five hundred students.\(^{38}\) What Stratton did on the local level, many other clerics attempted on the state level. In Kentucky the Presbyterian Synod charged its preachers to use their pulpits as a medium to advance the cause of free public education in the state.\(^{39}\) In 1836, the legislature responded by setting aside all revenues from the sale of public lands for the funding of a free public school system. Nine of the first ten superintendents of this system were ministers, additional evidence of the clergy's central role in the campaign for free public education.\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) D. Clayton James, Antebellum Natchez (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 220. This note applies to the entire discussion of the Natchez Institution.

\(^{39}\) Minutes, Synod of Kentucky, 1833, 88-90.

\(^{40}\) Thompson, Presbyterians, 244.
The ministers were not able to create a strong system of public education in the South. Throughout the antebellum era, public education remained a pitifully weak feature of southern cultural life. Some towns, like Natchez, and the states of North Carolina and Kentucky, were able to establish and maintain a viable system of public education, but most southerners did not have the benefit of such a system.\footnote{Eaton, \textit{History of the South}, 116-117.} Still, the ministers made a useful beginning and had helped to lay important groundwork. And the ministers' failure to rally most southerners to the cause of free elementary education did not affect their Sunday school campaign. It was an enormous success, creating across the region thousands of Sunday Schools that dispensed a desperately needed rudimentary education. The clergy also successfully established a structure for the financial support of the Sunday school movement which expanded and grew stronger even after the early popular zeal for the movement had abated. Education was unquestionably a priority for the clergy. It was linked closely, in the clerical mind, with the commitment to benevolence and the commonwealth ideal. Consequently they taught that education merited deep drafts on the resources of God's storehouse. The commitment to education was not only manifested in their desire for Sunday schools and elemen-
tary public schools, but also in their passion for higher education.

During the antebellum era, particularly after the mid-1820s, the clergy labored to establish hundreds of church-related academies, colleges, and seminaries. The movement had as its champions many clerics of the highest distinction. Richard Furman, William Wightman, John L. Dagg, and Henry B. Bascom were among those whose popularity and rhetorical skills helped launch and sustain the campaign for church-sponsored higher education. But these avatars, as important as they were, received indispensable support from a host of largely anonymous clerics and laymen. True, not all southern clerics immediately rushed to the standard of higher education, for some feared that too much education would presage a decline in primitive and vital spirituality. But such opposition, which dissipated steadily throughout the era, was never sufficiently strong to destroy or impede seriously the campaign for "church schools." Other obstacles, however, were more formidable. Tradition, simple inertia, a scattered and mobile populace, and the spirit of materialism which discounted the value of liberal and advanced education, all conspired to stifle the movement. Still, the campaign went forward, driven most conspicuously and aggressively by a clergy which has occasionally been characterized by historians as passive, narrowly conservative, and almost obsessively
committed to the status quo. The struggle for denominational higher education -- like so many of the clergy's campaigns and ideals -- was far from being a conservative effort primarily designed to maintain the existing social order.

A variety of motivations inspired the clergy in its quest for higher education, most notably the desire to provide an educated clergy whom they believed would more effectively evangelize and reform the South. The ante-bellum southern clergy was ever concerned about the souls of men and women. Virtually every cause championed by the ministers had, as an underlying motive, the conversion of the lost. To fully understand the southern clerics it is imperative to appreciate their zeal for evangelism. But acknowledging the clergy's commitment to "winning the lost," recognizing this important aspect of their world view, should not obscure the other, powerful influences which guided the ministers as they endeavored to direct and shape southern society. And any view which focuses exclusively upon the evangelicalism of the southern clergy will present an unbalanced portrait of these men. The ministers themselves knew there was more to the Christian ethic than evangelism and they attempted to live up to what they perceived as the whole of God's will. Evangelism was,

therefore, only one -- albeit the most influential -- of several ideals which inspired the clergy's campaign for church colleges and universities.

Some have suggested that enthusiasm for the creation of denominational schools in the South was a response to sectional tensions. In this view southerners were so fearful of "yankee" influence over their children who attended northern schools that they gladly established schools in the South which would indoctrinate their sons and daughters with a conservative cultural gospel. This contention has some validity. Many southerners, particularly in the latter decades of the era, were concerned about exposing their children to the "ultraism" which seemed to dominate northern clerical and intellectual circles. But such sectional prejudice represented little more than an incidental rationale for the church school movement. It was rarely referred to -- even obliquely -- by the clergymen who led the movement for church schools. References were made to the southern churches' responsibility to found schools which would benefit the community, but these statements can hardly be construed as evocations of southern nationalism. In arguing for southern nationalism as the primary motivation behind the church school movement Professor John McCardell cites a speech made by

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⁴³Godbold, Church College, 60.
William Wightman in 1851. In his inaugural address as president of Wofford College in South Carolina, Wightman stated that no denominational test would be imposed on "any of the South of this country who apply for admission . . . ." Far from being a bold assertion of southern nationalism this strikes me as a clear renunciation of dogmatic sectarianism, the point Wightman was at pains to make. I regard the allusion to the "South" as a rhetorical device. In his address delivered at the laying of the school's cornerstone Wightman eliminated the reference to the South and simply stated that no denominational test would be required "of any of the youth of this country." Wightman added that he regarded Wofford as the noble fulfillment of "patriotic desire." He closed his address with a prayer that the school would bring "greatness and glory . . . [to the] nation." There is virtually nothing in the cornerstone address to suggest that Wightman or any of his listeners were interested in seeing Wofford College serve as a bastion of southern nationalism. Wightman's first desire, and theirs, was to see the school provide a sound "liberal education" which, when wedded to sound religious training, would produce "good" men who would cherish and

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Reverend Benjamin Wofford, the college's great benefactor, had begun seriously to consider founding a college in the mid-forties. Wofford was a convinced follower of Calhoun, but David D. Wallace, long-time professor at the College and the school's historian, did not regard Wofford's political philosophy as the reason for his endowment. Wallace believed that Wofford acted out of a spirit of benevolence which was instilled in Wofford by his youthful association with Reverend Lew Meyers, a saintly man who devoted himself to the relief of widows and orphans. Wofford was also motivated, according to Wallace, by his relationship with Reverend George Dougherty, a devoted champion of education. The influence of these mentors, coupled with Wofford's own sense of "stewardship," would seem an adequate explanation of his endowment. That a very few ministers, like Bishop Polk, regarded church schools as a means to further southern nationalism hardly proves that sectionalism was a primary force in the


46 My analysis of Wofford's motivation is based on Wallace's study, pages 17-39.
Indeed, it would be hard to find a minister less typical of the southern clergy in terms of wealth and education than the bishop who became a general.

Certainly, more typical of the southern clergy was Bishop James H. Otey. He, like Polk, was a moving force in the founding of the University of the South. Otey explicitly disavowed any sectionalist motivation in founding the university. In 1857, he asked, "Why should this enterprise be deemed sectional, rather than national? Is it because we have used the name of 'University of the South'? The name is one of convenient description; it is no sectional pass word. All such interpretations we [the southern bishops of the Episcopal Church] utterly disclaim."

Otey and his brother bishops, with the possible exception of Polk, were clearly displeased that certain individuals in the North and South had misinterpreted their intentions. To correct any possible misunderstanding of the Bishops' motives, Otey drove the point home: "our aim is eminently national and patriotic . . . . We contemplate no strife, save a generous rivalry with our brethren, as to who shall furnish to this great republic the truest of men, the truest Christians, and the truest patriots." 

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47 Polk's efforts to establish the University of the South represent a major element in McCardell's argument for southern nationalism as a crucial force in the church school movement. McCardell, The Idea of a Southern Nation, 216-222.

48 James H. Otey, "Address of the Right Reverend James H. Otey, D.D., Bishop of Tennessee, on the Subject of a Pro-
Certainly, J. D. B. DeBow and other southern nationalists longed for the creation of a purely southern university. But again, their sectional enthusiasm was scarcely reflected in ministerial pronouncements on higher education. It might be argued that the sectional dynamic was simply understood and therefore needed no public expression. This contention is questionable because the antebellum clerics were not prone to assume anything. Indeed, in citing the reasons for encouraging the establishment of church schools, the ministers went to considerable lengths to recapitulate even the most obvious benefits of education. If southern nationalism had been a major impetus for the church school movement, it would have been proclaimed as such by the men who led the movement.

A truly powerful, even crucial, impetus for the church school movement was the clergy's belief that the lower orders deserved the benefits of higher education. William Winans confidently asserted that there were very few causes "equally important with the establishment and endowment of schools and colleges, and such other acts of munificence as will place the poor within reach of instruc-

__49__ McCardell, _Idea of a Southern Nation_, 203.
tion. In prompting the higher education of the lower orders, the clergy was consistent with the general trend among southern ministers to take the part of the poor, to see that they shared in the fruits of southern prosperity. Few clerics were confident that the state institutions would provide the lower classes with the opportunity for an advanced education. The state schools were regarded by many clerics, particularly Baptists and Methodists, as bastions of aristocratic privilege, which discouraged by their "fashionableness" and high tuitions the matriculation of poorer southerners. Presbyterians were somewhat less inclined to criticize the state schools as some of their brethren Presbyterians were concerned about the aristocratic nature of the state schools. For instance, in Georgia, Presbyterians organized two manual labor academies one of which soon evolved into Oglethorpe College. These schools were not founded in response to heretical teaching at the University of Georgia, which, at that time, was staffed almost entirely by Presbyterian clergy. It seems apparent therefore that the manual labor schools were founded to provide a low-cost education for the middle and


lower orders. As for the Episcopal clergy, they were far less concerned about higher education than their brethren in other denominations. Perhaps the Episcopal clergy succumbed to a spirit of futility on this point, for their communicants were few and dispersed. Then too, it was hard enough for the Episcopal clergy to secure adequate funds for the maintenance of the church and its missions, let alone raise endowments for colleges. And, as the majority of the southern Episcopalians were in the upper economic class and could afford state institutions, there was little immediate or direct pressure on the church's clergy to involve themselves in the founding of less expensive church schools. In this regard the Episcopal clergy diverged from the general trend among southern clerics in the other denominations.

Accusations that state schools were aristocratic strongholds angered and embarrassed the administrators and trustees of some state institutions. The trustees of the University of North Carolina aggressively refuted the charges that Chapel Hill was excessively aristocratic. In a lengthy article, reproduced in a number of religious journals in the mid-1830s, the trustees argued that their school would welcome any indigent North Carolinian who could demonstrate a "suitable aptitude and good deportment."

52 Thompson, Presbyterians, 264.
The article closed with an italicized sentence, "We hope that hereafter, we shall never hear repeated the unfounded and senseless clamor, that the University is a 'school for rich mens' sons only!'"  

Examinations of the economic backgrounds of the ante-bellum alumni of the state schools demonstrates that criticisms regarding the aristocratic nature of these institutions were far from "senseless." That some of the state schools began, in the thirties, to offer a few scholarships specifically for indigents also indicates that the criticism of their elitism was not entirely "unfounded." Obviously, some influential men within the state system realized the validity of their critics' assertions. But a few scholarships did not mollify the critics who knew that much more must be done before the inequities in southern higher education were corrected. 

In a prosperous society like the South the ministers saw no reason why the revenues of the region should not be employed to introduce the lower orders to secondary and collegiate education. Providing academies and colleges for the education of the lower orders seemed to many


54 Godbold, Church College, 149-150; E. Merton Coulter, College Life in the Old South (Athens: University of Georgia Press, ), 171-172.

55 Godbold, Church College, 149-150.
clerics an ideal use of the South's burgeoning wealth. As they traversed the South raising money for the church schools or took part in effusive commencement exercises, the reverend educators often described a dream in which their efforts would prove a special blessing to the "common" and poor, those who had for too long been unjustly denied the blessings of an advanced education. Such discourses occasionally mixed a concern for the poor with a disdain for the aristocrats who, many ministers believed, regarded education as simply another luxury reserved for the exclusive use of those who could pay the price. These sentiments were given forceful expression by the Reverend W. S. Chaffin in his 1855 commencement address at Normal College (later Duke University). Chaffin asserted that "although penury may cramp the rising aspirations of the young heart . . . and haughty wealth may laugh to scorn some poor boy in his sublime efforts, yet here [at Normal] he may defy the galling chains of poverty . . . and bid the wealthy scorners be still and know that these chains and fetters can never bind an intellect struggling to dis-

enthral itself from the oppressive tyranny of ignorance." Chaffin exulted, "Here may the son of the poor man take his stand beside the sons of the wealthy and make them feel that the aristocracy of education is gone out to the four winds of heaven; and that it is not the bulk of the purse, but the well cultivated mind and heart which makes the man." Explicitly and implicitly this theme was consistently propounded by the many southern clerics who championed church-sponsored higher education. They truly hoped to throw the aristocracy of education to the wind.

As it turned out, many of the students in the church schools came from affluent families, but the majority of students apparently came from middle and lower class homes. Consequently, stringent proscriptions were laid down by church school administrators in regard to the personal property students were allowed to bring to the campus. At Mercer, the founders decreed that all students dress only in plain, homespun garments in an attempt to obviate differences between rich and poor students. Clearly, the founders and administrators of the church schools hoped to eliminate badges of class within their classrooms

57 Chaffin, Trinity, 114.
58 Godbold, Church College, 110.
and chapels.

In 1853, the Hesperian Society of Normal College (now Duke University) debated the question, "Which does most to make men great, poverty or wealth?" The society determined that poverty was more productive of greatness. Perhaps the students reached their conclusion simply because much of the popular opinion of their day was infused with the Jacksonian ideology. However, the debate's outcome may also have reflected the economic background of the debaters and their audience. George F. Pierce, a leading figure in the church school movement in Georgia, boasted in the 1850s that the denominational schools in the state had "brought education down from the upper walks of life to the humble and needy," and as a consequence had made their influence felt in virtually every county in the state. Of course, the fact that most of the students in the church schools were drawn from the lower orders was consistent with the stated objective of many leaders in the church school movement.

The conviction that the lower classes should have access to higher education was really a radical departure from conventional thought in the first half of the nine-

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60 Chaffin, Trinity, 126.

61 Godbold, Church College, 59. The desire of the founders to keep church college tuitions low usually saddled their schools with serious, often fatal, indebtedness.
teenth century. For if most people were convinced that elementary education was a perogative of those who could afford it, the vast majority believed that higher education was without question the special prerogative of the upper classes. Breaking the correlation between wealth and higher education proved to be an arduous and expensive task. Often starting from nothing, the clerical educators had to procure land, buildings, faculty, obtain charters, and recruit students. The financial requirements were substantial even for beginning a small academy. Various schemes were employed to provide the necessary funds. Bonds were sold and state subsidies were sought, though rarely granted. The manual school movement provided another alternative. This latter plan -- extremely popular with ministers -- envisioned the students farming the school's property, producing their own food and a cash crop which would help to pay for the institution's operations. The plan was uniformly unsuccessful, as the school's expenses always seemed to exceed by far the production of the students. Even if the manual labor plan had succeeded in the schools where it was tried, the initial cost in such an undertaking -- the purchase of land and farm equipment -- represented an enormous reliance upon the community's resources.

The usual solution to the problem of financing the church schools was the solicitation of gifts from individu-
als and congregations. As with the Sunday school movement, the ministers organized societies and agencies to assist them in the raising of funds. The Georgia Educational Society, organized in 1824 under the leadership of the Presbyterians in the state, was typical of the agencies established in every southern state by the ministers of every major denomination. These agencies and scores of others like them were under the supervision and guidance of ministers. Through the labors of the agencies, individual ministers, and laymen, millions of dollars were raised to establish and endow the church schools. It was an unprecedented draft upon the South's wealth.

The clergy's campaign for higher education must be judged a qualified success. Hundreds of schools were established, and even if many died after only a few years of life, several score of the institutions survived the Civil War, with some emerging in the twentieth century as excellent academic centers. Many of the colleges and seminaries founded in the antebellum period, such as Wake Forest, Davidson, and Mercer, were academically sound. If most schools dispensed a rather imperfect or antiquated curriculum, it was still vastly better than nothing at all.

Unquestionably, the denominational schools fulfilled their primary function as the training centers for preachers and missionaries. Beyond this, they provided many young men and women from the lower orders with the rudimen-
tary knowledge requisite for significant social and political service. The schools also promoted a cohesiveness among southern clerics, and diminished sectarian antagonism in the process. This result is rather surprising to those conditioned to regard the antebellum southern clergy as passionately and narrowly sectarian and intolerant. True, ministers and laymen viewed their denominational schools with a certain amount of sectarian pride, and the faculties of these institutions were expected to provide a defense of a denomination's cherished orthodoxies.\textsuperscript{62} But the schools did more to promote unity among southern churchmen than divisiveness and intolerance. This unity, born of shared objectives and shared trials, manifested itself in a number of forms.

That denominational schools actively recruited and welcomed students who were adherents of sects other than their own sponsoring denomination suggests a certain community of feeling and a recognition that sectarian differences were neither threatening nor particularly important.\textsuperscript{63} Wofford College went so far as to offer free

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 60-69.

\textsuperscript{63}Smith, Pierce, 170. In his "cornerstone" speech of 1851, William Wightman, president of Wofford College, assured prospective students from other denominations that no attempt would be made to "alienate them from the religious views in which they may have been brought up. . . ." At Wofford College, Wightman asserted, students could expect to enjoy the "true spirit of catholic liberty." Wallace, Wofford, 45. Likewise the founders of the University of the South, though devoted to the idea of a truly Episco-
tuition to sons of ministers irrespective of their denominational affiliation. In 1852, George F. Pierce, then president of Emory College, gave expression to this fraternal feeling in a speech lauding the nobility and courage of Baptist and Presbyterian educators in Georgia, while recognizing them as co-laborers in a great work for the kingdom of God. Pierce regarded as absurd any contention that the denominational schools were hotbeds of sectarian intolerance and attributed such accusations to the jealous and vindictive imagination of over-zealous friends of the state schools.

The friends of the state schools did indeed tend to look with fear and jealousy on the church schools. It was reported that professors at Chapel Hill routinely denigrated Normal College as a "humbug" and "trash." More serious were the aggressive campaigns designed by state

pal institution, gladly welcomed "all" who desired entrance, irrespective of denominational affiliation, George R. Fairbanks, History of the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee from Its Founding by the Southern Bishops, Clergy and Laity of the Episcopal Church in 1857 to the Year 1905 (Jacksonville, Fla.: H. and W. B. Drew Company, 1905), 16.

Wallace, Wofford, 50.

Smith, Pierce, 170.

Ibid.

Chaffin, Trinity, 157.
school men to deny legislative charters to church colleges. The proponents of the state schools anxiously desired to see those institutions retain a monopoly on higher education in the South. Perhaps this desire for control grew out of a commendable concern for the quality of higher education in the region. But the preference for monopoly may also have stemmed from an elitism on the part of some upper class southerners who regarded higher education as a mark of social standing and wealth. Such individuals would be distressed to see plain farmers' sons standing proudly at commencement services, eagerly receiving their parchment trophies which would soon adorn some smooty cabin. The clerical proponents of church schools thoroughly shattered the monopolistic aspirations of champions of the state schools.

These were significant results of the struggle for denominational schools, but equally important, if less obvious, was the ideological change represented and promoted by their founders. The very existence of so many institutions, easily more than two hundred across the South, and the raising of millions of dollars, often a few dollars at a time, to support these schools, reflects the clergy's success in convincing many southerners that higher education was a prerogative of all classes, even the very

68 Ibid., 154-157, 167-168; Godbold, Church College, 12, 26, 148; Hollis, South Carolina, 172.
poor. Equally significant, the clergy successfully convinced many southerners that education, even for the lower classes, merited substantial reliance upon the community's financial resources. The community, they argued and assumed, had an obligation to underwrite all forms of education and make them accessible to all southerners.

Even so, the clergy's campaign for educational reform and development, both elementary and advanced, did not secure complete victory. A majority of southerners still probably believed in 1860 that education was not a fundamental right but rather a commodity to be purchased by those who could afford the price. Still, if their struggle did not end in complete victory, the ministers pushed southern society in a more equalitarian and progressive direction and by their efforts expanded greatly the social, economic, and political opportunities for thousands of southerners from the lower orders. It was no mean accomplishment.

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Their suggestions for the use of the South's wealth mark the clergy as an altruistic class with a genuinely compassionate ethic. Yet, while they worked for the relief of the poor and the expansion of educational opportunities, the ministers were also engaged in an intense struggle that led at least some southerners to question
the disinterestedness of the clergy. This issue, so divisive and pervasive, involved the financial support of the ministers themselves. It was an old question, obvious at times in the colonial era, but it was during the antebellum years, that the issue attracted the greatest and most intense attention. The matter was debated continually in the pages of religious publications. Few issues of any journal passed without some reference to the need for systematic or increased ministerial support.

It is no surprise that the issue received such attention in the antebellum era. Perceiving that theirs was an affluent region, the southern ministers resented their being denied a more equitable share of that wealth. Not everyone understood or appreciated the clerical position. Even some among the clergy questioned the propriety and practicality of a salaried clergy. Opponents of the concept liked to use the term "hireling" clergy. But again, in the face of strong and outspoken opposition, the clergy mounted their assault, igniting a conflict which would span the entire era.

The opposition to a paid ministry was far greater in some denominations than in others. In theory the Episcopal church was committed to the concept of a salaried clergy, but many Episcopal priests and bishops were forced to de-

\[69\] Loveland, Evangelicals, 60.
vote much of their time to securing better and more regular pay for the clergy. In the 1820s, Bishop Moore, the spiritual head of the Episcopal church in Virginia, observed caustically that the good Episcopal laity of Virginia, though far from poor, were reluctant to pay a sufficient wage to the priests or even to maintain the buildings and grounds of the parish churches. Moore assumed this attitude resulted from the fact that potential contributors were not inclined to put their money where they had little hope of reaping a substantial profit. 70

So the issue for Episcopal clerics was not that the clergy should be regularly supported by the congregation, but rather that they receive support sufficient for them to live decently without having to find secondary means of support. 71

The situation among Presbyterians was much the same.


Presbyterians generally accepted the concept of a paid clergy. Their longstanding preference for an educated clergy had disposed them, since the late colonial period, to think in terms of a professional ministry, but like the Episcopal priests, Presbyterian divines often felt compelled to ask for more money or a more regular payment.\textsuperscript{72} Like the great majority of other Southern ministers, Presbyterian clerics were often forced to supplement their professional stipend with money earned in other employment, usually farming or teaching.\textsuperscript{73} Of course, most southern ministers were responsible for their entire support which might only occasionally be supplemented by a special gift from a grateful congregation or individual. Frequently, such gifts were not cash, but food, livestock, or a new suit of clothes. Such "free-will" gifts were the primary source of "professional" support offered to Baptist and Methodist ministers in the antebellum era. These denominations, with their tradition of lay ministers and an uneducated clergy, were slow to adopt the concept of a salaried clergy.

The debate in these denominations began in the early antebellum era and continued with intensity through the

\textsuperscript{72} Thompson, Presbyterians, 212, 215, 460-461; Loveland, Evangelicals, 59-60.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
decades before the war. Initially a considerable number of Baptist and Methodist clerics opposed the idea of a "professional" clergy. Gradually the proponents of a salaried ministry carried the day in these denominations, so that by the 1850s very few ministers actively supported the anti-salary faction. As did Presbyterians and Episcopalians, the Methodists and Baptists were careful to assure their congregations that they only desired a living wage.

In the 1830s, the Georgia Baptist pastor, Shaler Hillyer asserted, "Compensation full and equal you cannot render. It would bankrupt Christendom to attempt to return an equivalent for a single soul. But be not alarmed, we do not propose to make such a draft on your resources. All that the minister asks, and all that he claims, is a reasonable and adequate support for himself and his household. This you owe him in view of the laborious nature of his work, and its transcendent value." 74 If provided with a reasonable salary the clerics promised their congregations that they would be all the more faithful to their pastoral labors as they would be freed from the time and energy re-

74 Shaler G. Hillyer, "The Support of the Ministry," in Georgia Pulpit. Hillyer's sermon, probably preached in the 1830s, was echoed frequently in the pages of religious publications throughout the antebellum era. Another excellent example is: "The Divine Assessment for the Support of the Ministry," Nashville Christian Advocate, 22 March 1855.
quired by their extra-pastoral tasks. Confident that their position was both reasonable and Biblical, the ministers were not timid in pressing their argument. The scripture clearly taught that the servant was worthy of his hire, and the sacred volume also stated that the mouth of the ox was not to be muzzled as it tread upon the grain.

But the southern clergy, for all the time and energy they devoted to the campaign for a salaried ministry and fair wages, never seemed entirely comfortable with the struggle. Some reasons for their discomfort are obvious. Few people enjoy asking for money; the clergy were certainly no different in this regard. Many found the struggle rather degrading and the role of the mendicant thoroughly distasteful. Aside from the natural aversion to such special pleading, the ministers were also plagued by the thought that they might be regarded -- some critics said as much -- as Mammonists, children of the age, motivated by the same materialistic impulse which they so frequently and aggressively condemned.

To refute such

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75 Thompson, Presbyterians, 215; "Things Which Hinder the Usefulness of Ministers," Southern Religious Telegraph, 16 September 1836.

76 Loveland, Evangelicals; 60.

77 Ibid., 62; "Are Ministers Supported?" Visitor and Telegraph, 15 March 1838.
criticism many ministers emphasized that they desired only a minimal allowance, a sufficient salary to allow them to feed, shelter, and clothe themselves and their families in an adequate manner. A few ministers went so far as to request a salary which would allow them to educate their children, but this request rarely figured in the discussions of the amount desired. Most would be satisfied with a comfortable subsistence. In order to make this point, one minister wrote in the Visitor and Telegraph in 1828 that he personally would not give one dollar to a minister who desired a "fashionable" lifestyle, but he believed pious and modest ministers should receive an adequate stipend.

Questions remain as to why the clergy were so determined to have systematic support. Practicality is the most obvious answer. The ministers believed they could be more effective if not distracted by secular occupations. This was undoubtedly true and was their most powerful argument, but other influences prompted the ministers in their campaign for regular support. For some clerics, their salary represented public acknowledgement of their

78 Loveland, Evangelicals, 60-61; see also citations for note 62.

79 "Are Ministers Supported?" Visitor and Telegraph, 15 March 1828.

80 Loveland, Evangelicals, 59.
professional status. With the expansion of an educated clergy after 1830, this desire was increasingly pronounced. Farmers' sons trained at Wake Forest, or Trinity, or Baylor, expected and wanted public recognition of their entrance into a professional class. This argument was obliquely employed by a writer in the Christian Index in 1839 who equated ministers with other professionals in the community. The only important distinctions between the other professionals and ministers, the writer noted, involved the "nobler" calling of the ministers and the paucity of their pay in comparison to lawyers and doctors. In 1855, the Southern Christian Advocate carried an article which compared the pay of ministers with that of other professionals and concluded that the average clerical salary of $500 annually was well below the average salaries paid to those with similar professional training. Aside from establishing their credentials as professionals, the ministers believed that systematic and reasonable financial support would indicate that they were still a respected and valued part of community life. Once a central force in southern society, the clergy of the antebellum era felt

81 Ibid., 61.
83 Loveland, Evangelicals, 63.
84 Christian Index, 13 April 1837.
that their status and influence were deteriorating.\textsuperscript{85} Planters, politicians, and the monied classes had usurped the clergy's former position, or so many clerics believed. The desire for vindication or affirmation was particularly important to men who spent so much of their time and energy attacking many of the fundamental assumptions of their community. Financial support would serve as something of a vote of confidence and acceptance.

In their campaign for a salaried or better supported clergy, the ministers not only stressed the immediate benefits of such a practice -- better sermons, more visitation, better attention to the needs of the sick and the poor -- but also the general and long term benefits for the community at large. The clerics regarded themselves as a desperately needed stabilizing and reforming influence in southern society. Whatever made them more effective would redound to the improvement of community life. An effective clergy, they argued, would help keep the vicious elements in the community at bay and would encourage pious living

\textsuperscript{85}The sense that the clergy's influence was declining is evident in many of the sermons and writings previously cited, particularly those which address the new, materialistic "spirit of the times." The same sentiment may also be found in J. J. Finch, "The Primary Business of the Gospel Ministry, a Sermon Preached before the State Convention of North Carolina in the City of Raleigh, October 20, 1844," \textit{Biblical Recorder}, 1 February 1845; "Why the Preaching of the Gospel is Less Efficient Now Than in the Days of the Apostles," from \textit{The Christian Observer}, in \textit{Biblical Record}, 16 March 1844.
on the part of young people. The clergy found a durable theme in its pledge to arrest the wayward tendencies of youthful southerners. Bishop Moore was typical of other southern ministers when he challenged church members to give for the support of the clergy out of a concern for the temporal and eternal well-being of their children.

To make certain that their brethren did not lose their sense of priorities, many clergymen continually produced sermons and articles which were specifically aimed at ministers. Such pronouncements were designed to warn clerics to monitor closely and restrain their own economic aspirations. In the early 1820s, at the outset of the debate on systematic ministerial support, the Reverend Moses Hoge cautioned his fellow ministers to manifest "an exemplary moderation with respect to secular interests." The venerable Presbyterian leader added, "shall stewards of the mysteries of God be ambitious to be rich! This would be a miserable prostitution of their sacred character. . . . the man whose glorious office it is to be the honored instrument of detaching others from the love of this world, must not himself love the world, or glory in any of its possessions or most admired distinctions. . . . Should a minister be poor . . . let him not murmur or

\[86\] Christian Index, 13 April 1837.

\[87\] Henshaw, Moore, 242.
despond ... [but] promote the best interest of the souls committed to his care -- 'Poor, but making many rich.'

An article in the Christian Index in 1837, entitled "Ought I to Marry a Minister?" warned prospective spouses to anticipate considerable "want" and "privation" as a normal and acceptable part of a clergyman's life. Such evocations were not designed to impede the struggle for ministerial support. They were intended as warnings that ministers were also liable to Mammon's allurements.

To some extent the clergy was falling into the snare it had warned so many others about. It was letting material rewards serve as a mark of place and influence. This inconsistency was a subtle failing, eminently understandable, mitigated by the fact that most ministers submitted with little obvious rancor to the reality that their financial rewards would usually be small, allowing them, at most, a life of genteel poverty. The vast majority of clerics seemed to accept their impoverishment as in

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88 Moses D. Hoge, Sermons Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Moses Hoge, D.D. (Richmond: N. Pollard, 1821), 16-17.

keeping with the sufferings of Christ. All they really sought was a moderation of that poverty for the benefit of their families.

Gradually the ministers won the support they desired, or at least they won the concession that their claim was valid. Substantial financial support continued to elude a majority of the ministers until the late nineteenth century, however. And their victory, such as it was, came at a high cost. The ministers had compromised, to an extent, their prophetic role in the community. Their long struggle for compensation, however just, had spattered their vestments and frock coats with some of Mammon's unholy oil, and exacted a price in self esteem and innocence.  

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Looking back over the antebellum era in 1860, an aged cleric might find pleasure in reviewing the clergy's role in distributing the wealth of God's storehouse. At the clergy's behest, vast sums had been expended on benevolence, missions, and education. Some ministers were, in fact, reasonably pleased with the record of southern society in this regard. But others, the majority of southern ministers, believed that little had actually been given in pro-

90 Loveland, Evangelicals, 62.

91 Ibid., 159.
portion to the great wealth of the region. Certainly, the contributions of southerners had been insufficient to restore or inaugurate a stable Christian commonwealth. Nor had southerners given to the extent that Mammon's hold on them had been broken. From the clerical perspective, the economic mind of the South was still, at the outbreak of the Civil War, threateningly acquisitive and selfish. In December of 1860, a writer for the *Southern Christian Advocate* savagely rebuked southern churchmen for their persistent rejection of the Biblical standards of benevolence. In a tone of bitter dejection, the writer spoke of the death of vital Christianity in the South. In the mind of most clergymen, southern society and southern churches had failed the great test of prosperity.\(^2\)

\(^2\)"Southern and Southeastern Georgia," *Southern Presbyterian*, 18 May 1948; "The Claims of Benevolence Upon the Church," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, 15 August 1851; "Care, Deceit, and Vanity," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, 5 April 1855; "Love of Money, Root of All Evil," *Christian Index*, 21 February 1856; Henry Chamberlain Lay, "The Worldly Mind," (1857) Manuscript sermon, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; "The Lives of Christian Men," *Southern Churchman*, 14 August 1857; "Christian Idolatry," *Southern Churchman*, 14 August 1857; "How to Influence the Masses," *Southern Churchman*, 13 November 1857; "Don't Grow Weary in Giving," *Southern Churchman*, 7 September 1860. The quote is taken from: "Deceit and Falsehood in Regard to Christian Benevolence," *Southern Christian Advocate*, 28 December 1860. This sense among the clergy that the South had failed the test of prosperity, was also reflected in many sermons and articles which did not specifically note the South's paucity of benevolent giving. Many of these statements have been previously cited, particularly in Chapter One.
CHAPTER VI
"National Materialism"

Writing in the 1850s, George Fitzhugh argued that the United States was the home of two distinctly different minds -- or spirits to use the more conventional antebellum term. These two minds had produced two different cultures with clearly divergent social, economic and philosophical systems. Of the two cultures, Fitzhugh found the southern infinitely superior in all things. He was particularly glad that the southern mind was free from the blighting influence of mammonism which stained and warped the northern mind and culture.

Despite periodic economic disasters, the antebellum era was generally a prosperous time for southerners, and Fitzhugh took great pride in southern prosperity. He derived equal, if not greater, pleasure from his conviction that the South's prosperity was the result of the region's bountiful soil and climate and the South's superior social order, and not based upon the sort of grasping materialism so evident in the North and so much a part of the northern spirit. To the great apostle and apologist of the South and its institutions, the northern mind was ignoble, aggressive, cruelly acquisitive -- wholly antithetical to the more altruistic and disinterested southern mind.1

1George Fitzhugh, Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society (Richmond: A. Morris, 1854), 226-258.
Fitzhugh was only one among many in his own day and subsequent generations who observed and commented upon the two distinct minds which supposedly inhabited the antebellum United States. ² To be sure, disparities between the northern and southern cultures existed. As the North experienced urbanization and industrialization, the South remained rural and predominantly agricultural. And, of course, the South remained wedded to a labor system largely abandoned by Western nations. These differences often produced varying political and social conceptions. But for Fitzhugh and many others, these differences were only the most obvious manifestations of a fundamental divergence, a divergence not merely in the cultural and economic structure of the two sections, but in the two sectional spirits. From the apologists' perspective, southerners and northerners were looking for very different things out of life. Southern apologists believed that northern men and women dreamt only of personal economic advancement, whereas slave state citizens cherished social stability and a placid pastoral existence.

Not all observers of antebellum society were as convinced of the reality of two distinct and divergent minds. In 1845, an anonymous contributor to the Southern Cultivator offered a brief appraisal of northern and southern men

²Certain southern apologists have been cited in Chapter Three, pages 34-36. See also notes 1-5 of Chapter Three.
that implicitly challenged Fitzhugh's perspective. Although the correspondent conceded the external differences between the "habits" of men in the two sections, he contended that the same mind which directed and governed the southerners also inspired and animated men and women in the North. The writer asserted that the environs of both regions were driven by the same compelling vision, "the hope of realizing a fortune in the future." There can be no doubt that southern ministers overwhelmingly concurred with this appraisal, at least as far as it applied to their own section. They had long lamented the spirit of greed and acquisition which they believed shaped southern attitudes and actions.

While the southern clergy mourned the mercenary spirit of the times and its influence upon their society and individual southerners, northern pulpits rang with precisely the same lamentations. The northern clergy, along with the southern ministers, certainly endorsed the observations contained in the Southern Cultivator as they applied to their own communities. Ironically, northern pulpits and the northern religious press often repeated Fitzhugh's criticisms of northern mind and culture. Free state preachers were fully cognizant of the failings of northern

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3"Northern and Southern Men," Southern Cultivator quoted in Christian Index, 15 August 1845.

4The southern clergy's views in this regard are discussed in Chapter One. See especially the citations in note 1 of that chapter.
society, especially the destructive materialistic mentality that they believed dominated the northern mind.

Francis Wayland, the distinguished New England Baptist and president of Brown University, observed in 1837 that the great evil abroad in the land was the popular obsession with economic advancement. Wayland feared that millions of Americans had simply forgotten God as well as the nobler sentiments in the mad rush for riches. It seemed that virtually all thought, all energy, and every waking moment revolved around money, houses, and the making of fortunes. From Wayland's perspective, the "spirit of the age" was a base, cruelly competitive materialism. His angry critique of the antebellum mind appeared in scores of journals across the North. In the South, Wayland's views were eagerly seized by the editors of the Christian Index. Jesse Mercer and William Stokes, of the Index, accepted Wayland's viewpoint and regarded it as entirely applicable to their southern readership.

Certainly there was nothing unusual about Mercer and Stokes opening the pages of the Index to a northern minister. Throughout the antebellum era, the editors of the southern religious press frequently published articles and sermons by their northern brethren. It was a practice

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5 Francis Wayland quoted in Christian Index, 31 August 1837.
6 Ibid.
which continued apace until the firing on Fort Sumter. Southern Methodist and Baptist publications continued to carry northern contributions even after those two denominations officially split into northern and southern organizations. For apart from the issue of slavery, clerical editors in the South found the views of northern divines almost entirely compatible with their own. Nowhere was this affinity more pronounced than in the northern and southern clergy's recognition and concern over the contemporary economic environment.

Speaking in the 1840s, Boston Transcendentalist, Reverend Theodore Parker railed against the evil in his community. "The love of money," he asserted "is out of proportion to other things -- love of justice, of truth, of a manly character developing itself into a manly life." According to Parker, most of the able young men of Boston dreamt only of devoting their lives to the pursuit of wealth. The Bostonian's perspective was not unique. Other ministers in Boston and throughout the North shared his view. In an associational circular letter of 1837, the Baptist clergy of Boston decried the unrestrained materialism of the day. "Have not the minds of many Chris-


8 Ibid.
tians become infected with the prevalent spirit of worldli-ness to the detriment of their personal holiness? The master passion of the day is avarice . . . and even Christians have sacrificed their consciences on the altar of Mammon." In 1855, a writer for the Philadelphia-based Presbyterian Magazine expressed incredulity at the actions and attitudes of the men and women about him. "When one pauses to reflect upon the universal scramble for the 'root of all evil,' the money mania of the day becomes a sort of miraculous phenomenon." In Indiana, the Reverend William Daily also lamented the avarice he saw on every hand. "In our wild, almost frantic race after wealth, fame and personal aggrandizement, there has been a practical ignoring of the Great Supreme Power, who is 'God over all, blessed forever.'" In Daily's mind the problem had grown so serious, so fundamental, that a stranger in America would conclude that the United States had "no God."

Southern clerics had long shared these views. Indeed, they employed identical rhetoric in their war against Mam-

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12 Ibid.
mon. An interesting comparison of northern and southern clerical phrase-making is William Winan's use of the term "perpetual whirl" and Daily's statement about the "frantic race" for wealth. Words like whirl, race, scramble, grasping, and frantic were commonplace in clerical descriptions of their communities North and South. The ministers of both sections clearly sensed an unthinking, furious spirit in American economic life. Thus from the clerical perspective it would seem that northerners and southerners alike were guided by the star of economic success. This common perspective supports the opinion expressed in the Southern Cultivator that the American mind was an economically acquisitive mind which transcended geographical boundaries. The distinctive sectional minds, so clearly seen by Fitzhugh and other northern and southern apologists were far less distinct when viewed through clerical eyes.

Northern and southern ministers did not recognize the materialism of their day as a unifying feature of a national mind, or, if they did, they did not usually address the issue in such terms. Occasional references to the "national sin" are to be found. Jesse Mercer wrote


14 Wayland's article cited earlier reflects a national perspective. And Daily's sermon, cited above, is unusually comprehensive in its condemnation. An 1835 article in the Southern Churchman referred to the "national characteristic" (Mammonism), but again these explicit refer-
in 1837 that the Boston Baptist Association's condemnation of the mammonism of their city was equally applicable to Georgia. And in a savage 1858 editorial entitled "National Materialism," the editor of the Central Presbyterian decried the aggressive, mammonist American "character." He wrote, "the aim of the vast majority of our population is ... at all events to be rich ... We lack that reigning force of great principles, without which nothing either great, or enduring, can be established. The reigning power is wealth." But such explicit references to a common or national mind were comparatively rare. Ministers, North and South, generally evidenced a more parochial perspective when they described the mercenary spirit of the times. Still, it seems that most southern ministers implicitly recognized a common mind, for nothing else adequately explains the consistent publication of northern declamations in the southern religious press.

Beyond their harmony in identifying the materialistic mentality of their communities, northern and southern clerics took identical approaches in the confrontation with the false god of mammonism. They condemned speculation,

15 Christian Index, 29 December 1836.

16 "National Materialism," Central Presbyterian, 3 July 1853.
"shrewd" business practices, and the "arts" of trade.\textsuperscript{17}
Northern ministers, like their brethren in the Southland, labored especially hard to portray wealth as a danger, a "snare" which destroyed its possessors more often than it benefited them.\textsuperscript{18} Far from bringing peace and contentment, wealth usually brought, in northern sermonology and clerical writings, vanity, guilt, and spiritual declension.

Henry Ward Beecher typified his brother ministers when he noted that very few wealthy men derived any "pleasure" from their possessions.\textsuperscript{19} According to some northern ministers, the misery of the rich was usually the result of the immoral manner in which they had acquired wealth. Theodore Parker doubted that most rich men had acquired their


\textsuperscript{19} Henry Ward Beecher, Life Thoughts (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Co., 1858), 144; Weekly Messenger quoted in Biblical Recorder, 9 March 1844.
wealth through "skill, foresight, or industry," but rather their wealth resulted from base endeavors. But it was not just the manner of its acquisition which made wealth so dangerous.

Once acquired, riches were seldom employed in a manner to bring credit to their possessor. In the clerical perspective, wealth was primarily used to provide an ostentatious and prideful lifestyle. Northern ministers were repulsed by fashionable ostentation. Charles Grandison Finney, the renowned New York evangelist, on occasion singled out the fashionable man or woman in his congregation for personal censure. To appear at a Finney meeting in a stylish "hat with three feathers" invited a withering rebuke. Yet, ministerial concern went far beyond the waste of money which "fashion" represented. The clergy felt compelled to rebuke the fashionable, not simply because they had misspent their money, but because their expensive adornments represented, in clerical eyes, a haughty spirit, an attempt to elevate themselves above their fellow


citizens. Clerics disapproved of such "elevation," regarding it as a false and impious delineation between the affluent and the less affluent. The clerical idea, which they believed as God's ideal, called for a more homogeneous community where distinctions in economic status were minimized, not exaggerated. For most northern clergymen, intellect and piety, not merely accumulated wealth, constituted the only proper standard for standing in the community. Northern ministers were willing to honor the pious man of means, but wealth alone was not sufficient to earn their approbation.

Riches were especially dangerous to children. This theme served as a cornerstone of the northern clergy's denigration of wealth. Henry Ward Beecher ably wielded this rhetorical scourge:

I see many men who are bringing up

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25 Ibid.


27 Ibid.
their children as I should bring up mine, if, when they were ten years old, I should lay them on the dissecting table and cut the sinews of their arms and legs, so that they could neither walk nor use their hands, but only sit still and be fed. Thus rich men put the knife of indolence and luxury to their children's energies, and they grow up fatted, lazy calves, fitted for nothing, at twenty-five, but to drink deep and squander wide; and the father must be a slave all his life, in order to make beasts of his children. 28

A writer for the Presbyterian Magazine fully concurred when he asserted that riches tended to produce "effeminate and luxurious" sons who were a blight upon their parents and the community. 29 The same sentiments, expressed in identical terms, were staples of clerical thought in the South. 30 Certainly there was nothing in either clergy's discussion of wealth that made its acquisition an attractive or proper objective for a young man's life. As Beecher warned, it was better to be a "bankrupt" than to court spiritual disaster in the scramble for wealth. 31

Indeed, northern ministers, like their southern colleagues, regarded poverty as a safer road to piety than

28 Beecher, Life Thoughts, 72-73.

29 Presbyterian Magazine, May 1855, 208.

30 This topic treated in Chapter Three.

31 Beecher, Life Thoughts, 72-73.
wealth. Although they recognized a class of vicious poor whose actions and impiety they mourned and condemned, still they saw no inherent or necessary relationship between poverty and ungodliness. To the contrary, as a writer for the *Presbyterian Magazine* pointed out, most faithful Christians were to be found among the lower economic orders. The northern clergy regarded the working poor as a noble element in society, worthy of praise and respect, not denigration. The northern clergy's well documented concern for the spiritual, educational, and physical welfare of the poor was also matched, as in the South, by a determination to see that the lower orders were not robbed of all dignity by a society where economic acquisitiveness was assumed a positive virtue. At times, ministers found it useful to remind their communicants that Christ had been poor, and that he had chosen his apostles from among the poor.

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33 *Presbyterian Magazine*, May 1855, 201.


Although the northern ministers did what they could to lessen the social stigma attached to poverty they did not contend that poverty was desirable or intrinsically virtuous. They did not suggest that men should seek poverty or passively remain impoverished. They believed men could reasonably aspire to economic competency — what John S. Capers of South Carolina described as a state of "happy mediocrity," Like southern divines, the northern clerics argued that men should be content with an income sufficient to feed, clothe, and house their families comfortably and provide for the education of their children. Any surplus resources were to be spent on benevolent causes: the spread of the Gospel and amelioration of the sufferings of the poor. For the clergy, aspiring to more than a comfortable sufficiency was unwise and usually sinful. Only the rarest of individuals, those with special dispensation from Heaven, could strive for more without imperiling their souls and the souls of their children.


37 Ibid.

38 Joel Parker, Invitations to True Happiness and Motives for Becoming a Christian (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1855), 126-127; Beecher, Life Thoughts, 144; "Investments,"
In denigrating riches and stressing the virtues of the pious poor and the propriety of economic restraint, the northern divines challenged the economic mind of their region. They were questioning a value system which they felt uncritically sanctioned economic advancement. Rather than hailing the skillful businessman, the "sharp" entrepreneur, or the adroit speculator, they argued that such individuals were treading a thin wire over a spiritual abyss. Like their brothers in the slave states, the northern ministers believed and taught that a more excellent way was available, a way marked by benevolence and economic restraint.

I am not suggesting that northern and southern ministers agreed on all things. Their conflict over slavery was profound and deep and cannot be minimized if the antebellum clergy is to be properly understood. My point is not that the clergy was of one mind, but rather that their sermons and writings suggest a common theme which marked, even dominated, the antebellum American mind, North and South. The clerics labeled that theme, or force, mammonism, covetousness, or avarice. More objective observers would employ less pejorative terms like capitalism and materialism.

The clerical perspective does not reveal two fundamentally distinct regional mentalities, rather a shared ideology that celebrated personal economic advancement.

Vermont Christian Messenger quoted in Christian Index, 6 April 1849.
To ministers the avaricious spirit or mind, whether it employed slaves or machines to accomplish its selfish purpose, was still the same misguided and sinful spirit. If ministerial testimony is to be believed, it was precisely this flawed and destructive spirit which sustained and drove Americans irrespective of their geographical region.

Perhaps recent students of the antebellum mind would do well to consider the manner in which ministers examined the mind or spirit of their communities. The clergymen were not easily distracted by externals. They attempted to look beneath the surface, to discern the hearts of their neighbors, to identify the force which governed their actions. They were often disappointed by what they found, for men persisted in being weak and fallen creatures. So too, those looking for an exotic or unique regional mind might be disappointed to find that men and women, in both sections of the nation, were remarkably similar in their most basic assumptions and aspirations.
EPILOGUE
A Prophetic Voice

As the nation lurched toward civil war, Bishop Stephen Otey, head of the Episcopal Church in Tennessee, attempted to place the country's woes in perspective. In a pastoral letter, the old bishop lamented the antipathy between North and South. Through all the political rhetoric, sniping invective and high-sounding constitutional arguments, Otey believed that he had discerned the underlying source of the conflict. The venerable divine recognized, amidst all the political antagonism, the sinister spectre of Mammon. Otey believed that the "insatiable lust for gold," lay at the very heart of the conflict. He did not contend that one side or the other expected the struggle to produce economic gain, but rather suggested that neither side, because of the popular obsession with money and the material things of life, retained sufficient poise or piety to diffuse the conflict in a calm and equitable way. The frantic spirit which drove men and women to sacrifice families and piety upon the altar of Mammon, was now, in the bishop's view, driving them to sacrifice their nation. That Bishop Otey linked the national political crisis to the contemporary economic mind is not surprising. For


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fifty years, southern ministers had laid most of the South's and the nation's problems at the feet of the false god.

Throughout the antebellum era, the southern clergy had waged an unremitting war against the materialistic "spirit of the times," against the most fundamental economic aspirations and attitudes of southern men and women. As their region rushed toward a thoroughly commercial mentality, the ministers endeavored to persuade any who would listen that money was a grossly deficient, frequently sinful objective for one's life. They might as well have stood on the banks of the Mississippi and commanded the river to cease its movement. The message the clergy proclaimed was hopelessly out of date in antebellum America. In the South, the cotton boom, the opening of the West, and the transportation revolution fueled a dynamic, expanding economy with abundant economic opportunity. Amid this burgeoning affluence, the ministers stood, constantly warning about the dangers of riches and the grave spiritual risks involved in acquisition. The clerics would have been hard pressed to select arbitrarily a message less likely to gain popularity or widespread acceptance. Similarly, the clergy's continual harping on the necessity of reforming slavery and their demand that southerners employ their wealth -- communal and personal -- to benefit the lower economic orders, scarcely reflected popular attitudes. In a very real sense the southern divines were strangers
within their own land. They were men with a vision and message out of another time, either in the dim past of primitive Christianity or in a glowing millennial future. Even so, their philosophical and intellectual isolation did not deter them in their struggle to reform southern society and the southern mind.

It is a strange distortion of history indeed to allege that the southern clerics were merely passive, silent observers of their culture, men whose only thoughts revolved around the mode of baptism or the number of converts gleaned in a camp meeting. Certainly, the ministers were concerned with such things — evangelism was supremely important to them — but their view, their gospel, encompassed far more. Sermons and other religious writings of the era are replete with social observations and criticism. The allegation that the ministers were social ciphers is therefore apparently rooted only in anger or contemptuous embarrassment that the clerics had failed to repudiate utterly the institution of slavery. This myopic view of the southern clergy and their relationship to southern society and culture is wrong. A broader, more balanced view of the clergy reveals southern ministers as anything but passive. It took a determined and courageous man to stand before an assembly of Virginia planters and call them

selfish mammonists, to denigrate their carriages and houses as the trappings of a proud and ungodly heart.³ And when Henry Ruffner proposed, in 1841, that the rich be taxed to provide schools for the poor, he was advocating a plan which was extremely radical for his time and society.⁴ Likewise, C. C. Jones' impassioned call for the reformation of slavery was hardly calculated to comfort and reassure the planters of the South Carolina and Georgia Synods.⁵ These statements and the sentiments they represent were typical of the antebellum southern clergy. It is patently erroneous to designate such pronouncements, and their authors, as culturally passive or socially disinterested. And the clergy's aggressive temperance campaign and condemnation of the code duello reveal all the more clearly a socially aware and critical clergy.

Bishop Otey's pastoral letter, therefore, is a fitting epilogue for the antebellum southern clergy. No apology for southern life or culture, Otey's letter was a reproach

³Philip Slaughter, "The Root of All Evil," Southern Churchman, 30 April 1841.


and a warning. It was a plea for men and women to forsake Mammon and turn to a merciful God with fear and trembling. Otey's voice was the voice of a prophet calling a wayward people to repentance. His was the voice of the southern clergy -- critical, determined, proclaiming a message which transcended conventional culture.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

My study is based primarily upon the published sermons and devotional writings of the antebellum southern clergy. The clergy's pronouncements have been gleaned from a variety of sources, but most often they were drawn from antebellum religious newspapers and periodicals and published sermon collections. Certainly there is no lack of antebellum southern sermons with all the major denominations well represented. There are fewer sermons from the earliest years of the era, but still I believe that a sufficient number survive to allow confident research and analysis.

Published Collections

Perhaps the single most important published collection, for my purpose, is The Southern Preacher (Philadelphia: William Fry). This volume, published in 1824, is especially valuable as it comprises sermons from the first decade of the antebellum era. Moreover, the contributors to this collection were from a variety of denominations. It would be difficult to imagine a more ideal source.

Another very important collection of early antebellum sermons, which might also be grouped under the "Newspapers and Periodicals" heading, is cited here as it was exclusively a compilation of sermons, albeit a serialized publi-
cation. Under the title The Presbyterian Preacher of Virginia and North Carolina (or a slight variation of this title), this short lived publication -- it lasted only from 1827 to 1828 -- comprised more than one hundred sermons.

The Georgia Pulpit, or Ministers' Yearly Offering, Containing Sermons and Essays from Georgia Baptist Ministers, edited by Robert Fleming (Richmond: H. K. Ellyson, 1847) is also an invaluable source. The sermons of some twenty Georgia Baptist clergymen are contained in this collection. A few of the sermons date back to the 1820s.

A large number of Methodist sermons were published between 1848 and 1852 in a periodical entitled the Southern Methodist Pulpit. Many of the sermons originally published in this periodical later appeared in a series of bound volumes issued between 1849 and 1860 under the title of the periodical, or a slight variation thereof. The later editions of the bound series were simply duplications of the 1858 edition. It was this edition, Methodist Pulpit, South (Washington, D.C.: William T. Smithson, 1858) which most aided me in my research.

Besides these general collections, the researcher may turn to collections which represent the labors of one minister. These collections are not always distinct editions entitled "sermons" or "discourses," but rather they often are an integrated portion or special section of a biography or memoir. The works cited below were uniformly valuable.
Published in 1821, *Sermons Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Moses Drury Hoge* (Richmond: N. Pollard), contains a large number of the Virginia Presbyterian's discourses. James McChord, an Episcopal cleric in Kentucky, frequently reminded his spiritual charges of God's impartiality and urged them to disdain materialism. McChord's pronouncements are contained in *Sermons on Important Subjects Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Reverend James McChord* (Lexington: Thomas T. Skillman, 1822). As the title indicates, G. T. Chapman's *Sermons Upon the Ministry, Worship, and Doctrine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (Boston: E. P. Dutton, 1867), is primarily a series of doctrinal statements. Even so, it contains some insights into the Episcopal clergy's perception of southern society. Nathaniel Bowen's *Sermons on Christian Doctrines and Duties*, 2 vols. (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1842), also contains a substantial amount of Episcopal doctrine, but these two volumes are replete with the social observations and opinions of Bowen who was, for three decades, an Episcopal rector in Charleston. For my purposes, Bowen's sermons were extremely informative. Richard Channing Moore, Episcopal Bishop of Virginia from 1819 to 1840 was, like Bowen, a close student of southern life. A number of his sermons, along with much of his correspondence is contained in J. P. K. Henshaw's *Memoirs of The Right Reverend Richard Channing Moore, D.D., Late Bishop of the
Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia, 
Accompanied by a Selection from the Sermons of the Late 
Gurley's Life and Eloquence of Reverend Sylvester Larned, 
First Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Or­
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cant collection of sermons by Larned who served the Presby­
terian congregation in New Orleans during the early 1820s. 
The long-time pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in 
Augusta, Georgia, E. P. Rogers published eight of his ser­
mons under the title Earnest Words to Young Men in a Series 
of Discourses (Charleston: Walker and James, 1851). This 
is an extremely useful work evidencing a very keen social 
awareness on Rogers' part. A number of other significant 
collections were published in the 1850s. H. B. Bascom's 
Sermons from the Pulpit (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 
1852) is an extensive collection taken from the manuscripts 
of perhaps the most widely known and heard Methodist evan­
gelist to labor in the antebellum South. The Methodist 
itinerant, J. O. Andrew published a number of his sermons 
in a volume entitled Miscellaneies: Comprising Letters, 
Essays, and Addresses (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 
1854). This volume is an outstanding source again reveal­
ing the sensitivity and interest with which many clerics 
observed southern life. Valuable for its sermons, as well 
as the sentiments expressed by its author-editor, is

Several very important collections, comprising antebellum sermons, were published after the Civil War. *A Pastor's Valedictory, A Selection of Early Sermons from the Manuscripts of Reverend Joseph B. Stratton Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Natchez from A.D. 1843 to A.D. 1894* (Natchez: Natchez Printing and Stationary Company, 1899), is an invaluable collection. Fourteen of the twenty-one sermons included in this collection are from the antebellum era. Another useful collection is *Sermons by the Right Reverend Stephen Elliott, D.D., LL.D. The Right Reverend Bishop of Georgia with a Memoir by Thomas M. Hanckel, Esq.* (New York: Pott and Amery, 1867). R. I. Hutchinson's *Reminiscences, Sketches, and Addresses Selected from My Papers during a Ministry of Forty-Five Years in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas* (Houston: E. H. Cushing, 1874), is an excellent collection of the Methodist


**Individual Sermons and Clerical and Non-Clerical Topical Works**

A useful repository of Episcopal sermons, perhaps easily overlooked, is the annual *Journals of Proceedings* of the various dioceses of the Church. In my research I found especially useful the *Proceedings for the Diocese of Mississippi* 1828, and 1843 and the *Proceedings for the Diocese of Tennessee*, 1858 and 1859. Other sermons or ad-
addresses of special interest which were published separately are: Richard Furman, Conversion, Essential to Salvation: A Sermon which was Preached at the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston before the Religious Tract Society of that City at Their First Anniversary, June 10, 1816 (Charleston: J. Hoff, 1816); William Winans, A Missionary Discourse Delivered in the Methodist Episcopal Church at Natchez, Mississippi (Natchez: Christian Herald Office, 1836); William Winans, The Citizen of Zion, Substance of a Sermon on Psalm XV (Natchez: Daily Courier, 1857); Henry Ruffner, Inaugural Address Delivered on 22 February 1837 (Lexington: C. C. Baldwin, 1837); C. C. Jones, The Glory of Woman (Philadelphia: 1857); William Sparrow, Romanism and Protestantism Compared as to Their Temporal Influences, A Sermon Preached in the Chapel of the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia (Alexandria: Southern Churchman, 1852).

Monographs by southern clergymen on specific topics which I found relevant include: C. C. Jones' thoughtful and objective study The Religious Instruction of Negroes in the United States (Savannah: T. Purse, 1842). A fascinating work by one of the best minds in the antebellum South is William Henry Ruffner's Charity and the Clergy Being a Review of the New Themes Controversy, Together with Sundry Reflections upon the Religious Press, Theological
Semanaries, Ecclesiastical Ambition, Growth of Moderatism, Prostitution of the Pulpit, and the General Decay of Christianity (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1853).

Henry Ruffner's significant statement on public education, Proposed Plan for the Organization and Support of Common Schools in Virginia (1842) is contained in United States Bureau of Education: Report of the Commissioner of Education (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900). Also of interest and value are the addresses of several Episcopal Bishops contained in Reprints of Documents and Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the University of the South Prior to 1860 (Sewanee: University of the South Press, 1888). An important pronouncement relating to the proper treatment of slaves is The Presbytery of Tombeckbee to the Churches and the People Under its Care: The Religious Instruction of Our Colored Population (Columbia: Steam Power Press of R. W. Gibbs, 1859). A work of value primarily as it demonstrates the southern clergy's devotion to Biblical orthodoxy is John Leadly Dagg's Manual of Theology (Charleston: Southern Baptist Convention Press, 1855). Dagg's volume is a conventional exegetical study, the type very popular with southern divines. Such works rarely contain social observation or criticism.

Of the non-clerical works consulted the following were particularly helpful. Thomas R. Dew, et. al. The Pro-
Slavery Argument (Charleston: Walker, Richards and Company, 1852); J. D. B. DeBow, "The Non-Slaveholders of the South," in The Interest in Slavery of the Non-Slaveholders, The Right of Peaceful Secession, Slavery and the Bible (Charleston: Evans and Cogswell, 1860). One of the more reliable contemporary appraisals of the antebellum South is Daniel R. Hundley's Social Relations in Our Southern States, ed. William J. Cooper (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969). The apologetic literature of the Old South is typified by George Fitzhugh's Sociology for the South or the Failure of Free Society (Richmond: A Morris, 1854). Apologetic literature of a different style is J. P. Kennedy's Swallow Barn, or a Sojourn in the Old Dominion (New York: G. P. Putnam and Company, 1854). Hinton Rowan Helper's The Impending Crisis and How to Meet It (New York: Burdick Brothers, 1857), has been excessively maligned as the work of an unbalanced extremist. Surely it must be read with caution, but to my mind it is scarcely a monstrous or dramatic aberration, and may in-deed reflect a considerable trend in antebellum southern thought.

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I regard the works cited below as valuable primary source materials. None are critical historical treatments of the persons they describe. Yet, they all provide significant information about the antebellum era and the
clergy. The following works were primarily useful for
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Church, South (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 1854);

**Manuscript Collections**

A number of manuscript collections proved extremely useful. Private diaries and correspondence either explicitly corroborated public pronouncements or provided no evidence which would cast doubt upon the sincerity of the ministers. In addition, several of the collections contained unpublished sermons. The William Winans Collection at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi is a case in point as it comprises not only a substantial portion of Winan's correspondence, but also over one hundred manuscript sermons. The Johnston Notebook, also at Millsaps interested me primarily because it contains some thirty unpublished sermons by John S. McGowan, a pioneer Methodist itinerant in Mississippi.
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number of prominent Methodist leaders. The small collection includes interesting if disparate correspondence, personal and professional of William Wightman, Lovick Pierce, William Capers and Lewis Myers. Especially interesting to me was William Capers' diary of his trip to Britain in 1828, portions of which were reproduced in Wightman's biography of the imminent bishop. The voluminous Richard Furman Papers, held in the Furman University Special Collections, were valuable chiefly because they contain several of Furman's important addresses.

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southern clergy. The mere listing of titles does little justice to the wealth of information found in these periodicals. As with other classes of sources I only cite those publications which I deemed most useful in my research.

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of Literature, Science and Arts (Columbia, 1840-1841).

Secondary Sources

Books


In my treatment of the Jacksonian mind I relied heavily upon John William Ward's *Andrew Jackson, Symbol for an Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953) which I consider the finest discussion of the Jacksonian mind. Two other excellent treatments of the subject are: Marvine Meyers,


Two books which have influenced and informed my study focus upon religious life in the North are Timothy Smith's *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), and Arthur C. Cole's *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists* (New York: Octogon Books, 1966). I must add that I believe
Coles' book is flawed by the author's tendency to impose rather arbitrary standards on the ministers he discusses. This unfortunate failing is most noticeable when Coles describes the evangelists' deep ambivalence toward popular economic trends. After discussing the clergymen's inclination to repudiate conventional economic ideas, Coles dismisses their position as insignificant because they failed to call for a redistribution of property or the organization of labor.

Useful works treating narrower aspects of southern religious life are: Ray Holder's commendable biography William Winans, Methodist Leader in Antebellum Mississippi (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977). Sadie Bell's massive study, The Church, the State and Education in Virginia (Philadelphia: Science Press, 1930) provides sound analysis and a wealth of original sources. The best discussion of church colleges in the Old South is still Albea Godbold's brief monograph, The Church College in the Old South (Durham: Duke University Press, 1944). I must mention in this context several valuable college histories. These works are not models of critical analysis or insightful interpretation but they do ably present the "facts" concerning their respective subjects and more importantly they include a substantial body of original sources. Several of the better school histories are: David Duncan Wallace, History of Wofford College, 1854-1949 (Nashville:

**Articles**

Over the years a number of excellent articles have appeared treating the southern clergy's relationship to slavery. T. D. Clark's "Slave Trade Between Kentucky and the Cotton Kingdom," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 21 (December 1934), is an excellent piece of research and writing. Equally valuable is J. Carleton Hayden's "Conversion and Control: The Dilemma of Episcopalians in Providing for the Religious Instruction of Slaves, Charleston, South Carolina, 1845-1860," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 40 (June 1971). Wayne C. Tyner's "Charles Colcock Jones: Mission to the Slaves," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 55 (Winter 1977) offers little in the way of interpretation, but is very valuable for its original sources. George Toxler's "Eli Caruthers: A Silent Dissenter in the Old South," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 45 (June 1967), is an interesting discussion of Caruthers' views, though I feel Troxler exaggerates Caruthers' silence. Evidence that Virginia Baptists had a long standing ambivalence toward slavery is found in James David Essig's "A Very Wintry Season, Virginia Baptists and

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VITA

Kenneth M. Startup was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1952. He received his B. A. in History from West Georgia College in 1975. Two years later he received his M. A. in History from Virginia Polytechnic Institute. After a year in the J. M. Dawson Church-State Studies Program at Baylor University he began his doctoral studies at Louisiana State University. He was awarded a Ph.D. in History from that institution in 1983. Mr. Startup is currently teaching at Southern Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas.
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Major Field: History

Title of Thesis: Strangers in the Land: The Southern Clergy and The Economic Mind of the Old South

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

September 2, 1983