Passing as Black/Passing as Christian: African-American Religious Autonomy in Early Republican Delaware

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The intensification of diverse local identities in the Delaware Valley during the American Revolution led to increased social conflict in the war and its aftermath. This conflict was sharply revealed in post-revolutionary religious life, which witnessed a dramatic upsurge in new religious groups that challenged traditional views of proper social and spiritual order.[1] African Americans' creation of a Christian denomination independent of white control marked the most stunning transformation of religious life in northern Delaware in the early republic. This new institution, the Union Church of Africans, was the most prominent expression of the wholesale transition from slavery to freedom for African Americans in the Delaware Valley during this period. Examining the rise of public and state-sanctioned Afro-Christianity in northern Delaware allows a rich view of both radical and conservative changes in the new nation.

Free blacks seized advantage of legal changes in the early republic to challenge racist assumptions about their supposed disorder and lawlessness. The post-colonial movement to prevent the establishment of any official state church in Delaware provided an unintended opening for African Americans to organize independent religious institutions. Conservative state legislators, who regained power after the Revolution, sought laws protecting religious freedom and toleration out of fear that radical Presbyterians would target Anglican elites, who were often conservative whigs if not loyalists, for punishment.[2] To ensure safe public space for religious differences, the legislature passed an act in 1787 permitting all Christian groups to appoint trustees and incorporate their congregations. State power to incorporate was itself a mark of the profound transformation accompanying the end of the colonial era. Previously this legal right had been a royal prerogative and patronage vehicle, but with power now vested in the citizens of the state through their representatives in the legislature, access to incorporation opened more broadly.[3] State legislators in 1787 hardly suspected that African Americans in northern Delaware would seize upon this law to establish a new denomination in 1813. African Americans' assertion of their right to worship independently from whites was a significant new demand for equality as free black people.

The city of Wilmington and the neighboring town of New Castle, just five miles apart, were the most significant urban areas in New Castle County, which makes up the northern third of Delaware. They were the birthplace of the Union Church of Africans, which maintained independence from white Methodism as well as from the African Methodist Episcopal Church in

Philadelphia and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination in New York City.[4] The creation of this black church outside the white-controlled Methodist Episcopal Conference did not spring up suddenly in 1813, but grew out of gradual changes in the post-revolutionary period. American Methodism itself had only separated from the Church of England in 1784. The presence of two black preachers, Richard Allen and Harry Hoosier, at the "Christmas conference" which founded the Methodist Episcopal Church suggests the importance of African Americans to the new denomination.

The first Methodist Episcopal Church in Wilmington, Delaware, was a biracial institution whose congregation was nearly a third African American at its founding in 1789. By 1802, its 117 black members comprised just less than half the congregation, but they lacked access to positions of authority in the church. As the black presence grew, African Americans faced increasing discrimination from white members who feared their growing prominence. White members made blacks sit in the gallery, prohibited them from taking communion, and denied African American lay preachers like Peter Spencer and William Anderson full ordination. The catalyst for the first separation in the Wilmington Methodist congregation occurred in 1805 when white members instructed their black brethren to hold class meetings in the gallery even when the church was otherwise empty.[5]

The terms under which Wilmington's black members formed the Ezion Methodist Episcopal Church reveals their steady movement toward establishing racial autonomy in their organized religious life. The members of the separate, but not yet independent, black congregation conceded that a white minister of the Wilmington church "for the time being is to have the directions and management of . . . spiritual concerns." This minister visited occasionally to perform the sacraments, while regular worship was led by black leaders with a "license to exhort or preach" and those who "appear[ed] to have gifts and grace proper to appear in public." Although the new congregation had to share spiritual authority with whites and remained within the Methodist Episcopal Church, they were adamant that only "persons of colour" be "empowered to have the entire direction and disposal of . . . Temporal revenues." In addition to financial matters, black trustees controlled who could qualify as members of the congregation and maintained sole disciplinary authority over members accused of having "walked disorderly."[6] Ultimately, the commingling of spiritual and temporal authority among whites and blacks collapsed. When a white preacher was permanently assigned to the black congregation in 1813, nearly three-quarters of the African-American Methodists in Wilmington terminated their connection to the biracial institution.[7] Although the Methodist Episcopal Church was probably the most racially progressive denomination in its day, the majority of its black members in Wilmington rejected its racially oppressive terms for worship and founded their own denomination.

In September 1813, 34 men and six women signed the Articles of Association forming the Union Church of Africans and acknowledging the election of seven trustees.[8] The Union Church of Africans (UCA) carried the importance of racial autonomy further than the Ezion congregation by making Africanness the basis for their denominational identity. Prior to the better-known case of Richard Allen and what would become the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination in Philadelphia in 1816, free African Americans in Wilmington formed the first black church in the United States that stood independent of white denominational authority and was recognized by a state government. Christianity provided a vehicle for one of the strongest assertions of black racial identity in the early republic. The decision to self-identify as the Union Church of Africans had enormous nationalist and racial resonance. The UCA was explicitly founded upon a shared African identity. Its articles required that "no person shall have any vote, say, or rule in, or be elected a Trustee . . . but Africans and the descendants of the African Race."[9] By taking such a boldly Africanist position in their denominational organization, the founding members made a radical claim to legitimacy in a state where slavery remained legal.

Since UCA members had previously experienced significant conflict with hierarchical authority in the Methodist Episcopal Church, they strengthened local control in their new organization. Trustees' control over financial decisions like mortgaging church property required a two-thirds vote of the members. The full congregation also determined by a majority vote who could preach or exhort before them. In vesting such power with the members, the UCA broke decisively with the Methodist Episcopal Church and built a less leader-centered organization than the AME would adopt in Philadelphia.[10] Part of the UCA members' decision to place greater authority at the local level may have stemmed from the fact that they lost control of the property that they had purchased in 1805 as the Ezion congregation because some black trustees chose not to separate from biracial Methodism. Of the seven Ezion trustees in 1805, only three signed the UCA's founding Articles in 1813.

Because no black church membership lists survive, it is difficult to assess precisely the divisions among African Americans that arose in Wilmington in these years. The aggregate figures for membership by race in mainstream Methodism, however, make plain that the majority of blacks in the biracial church departed when the opportunity arose to participate in an African denomination. In the year before the UCA founding, the 178 black Methodists in Wilmington outnumbered their white brethren by 36 persons. Furthermore, it was the only area in the Philadelphia Conference with a black majority. But, the following year only 46 blacks remained within biracial Methodism.[11] Such a sudden departure from the mainstream denomination is especially striking since many of the black Methodists must have had white landlords

and employers whom they thereby risked offending. The decision by some blacks to remain within biracial Methodism was a noteworthy minority decision. The decline of slavery and separation from white-controlled institutions accelerated divisions among African Americans.

Status as an independent African-American denomination operating under state sanction made the UCA exceptional in some respects, but it was just one example in a broad movement of black churches that made strong claims for public respectability as Christians in the post-revolutionary era.[12] An 1810 antislavery tract written by Daniel Coker, an African Methodist minister in Baltimore, reveals the intensity and breadth of the movement. His book included a list of 15 African churches in the new nation from Boston to Charleston which ranged over four denominational traditions from Baptist to Presbyterian.[13] These dispersed African churches, which could thrive publicly only where members were predominantly free, had a clear geographic center. The urban belt from Baltimore to New York contained 13 congregations. With three in Philadelphia and another three just south of the city (in West Chester, Pennsylvania; Salem, New Jersey; and Wilmington, Delaware), the densest concentration of public black churches in the early republic was in the Delaware Valley. Coker's text also demonstrates the radical potential in the new African churches whose members were intensely aware of themselves as black. For instance, the title page identified Coker as a "descendent of Africa" and dedicated the book to "People of Colour in the United States of America." There can be little doubt that those who organized black churches made central their demand for public recognition as Africans.

Coker's book purports to be the direct transcript of a debate between an African minister and a white Virginian over the Christian validity of slavery. The Virginian, of course, is quickly brought to understand that slavery had no scriptural basis and that the African minister had a better Biblical understanding than he himself. At one point the Virginian commented with some surprise, "you explain scripture so different from our minister. . . . I wonder that [he] never quoted this text in favor of freedom! It appears . . . he kept some part back."[14] Such language provoked readers to recognize that so long as whites controlled access to publicly acknowledged positions of religious authority, they could shape Biblical interpretation without significant challenge.

In contrast to those who assumed a white monopoly over Christian authority, Coker wrote as part of a notable new group of "African ministers . . . in holy orders" who had emerged from the ranks of local black preachers that had long existed in black communities. These religious leaders of predominantly free urban blacks were the only wholly new leadership cadre to emerge after the Revolution. The radical potential of this leadership class was demonstrated in a pivotal scene of Coker's book. As the African minister was about to convince the Virginian to free his 55 slaves, he directed the slaveowner to pass

him the Holy Book, saying, "My son, hand father the Bible."[15] Such a direct and unequal exchange between black and white rarely came without severe consequences for African Americans in early America, but the spiritual authority of the ministry gave rise to the possibility of profoundly altering race relations during the early republic.

Obviously, this exchange took place within the idealized confines of a literary text and was never realized in daily life. African-American churches operated in a context of sustained, and probably increasing, suspicion and hostility. Despite the decline of slavery in the North and the emergence of an Afro-Christian leadership group recognized within and beyond black communities, race relations hardened as free blacks faced persecution from whites threatened by blacks' new status as free. African Americans resisted racially based attacks and made their strongest case for autonomy and equality through independent black denominations like the UCA. The UCA played a major role in the vitality of African-American Christianity in the Delaware Valley as 31 congregations eventually established a connection to the UCA from Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New York. At the same time that the UCA leadership maintained independence from white Methodism, it also refused overtures from Richard Allen to join with the AME in 1816 and remains an independent denomination to the present day.[16]

The success of the UCA and the controversy that independent black Christianity caused among whites can be observed in microcosm in the port town of New Castle, Delaware, just outside of Wilmington. African Americans in the town formalized their participation in black religious and social life in the nearby city when seven men legally registered their congregation as the African Union Church of the Town of New Castle in October 1817. Five months later the trustees purchased property to build a church on a new street in the town.[17] When the New Castle congregation affiliated with the UCA it represented the public emergence of underground black Methodism that had been growing in the town for several years as part of a broad rising tide of biracial populist evangelicalism in the region.

John E. Latta, the conservative white Presbyterian minister in New Castle, strenuously opposed this new evangelical movement. Nevertheless, Methodism grew at a stunning rate during his pastorate, especially on the Delmarva Peninsula to the south of New Castle, which one scholar has described as the "Garden of American Methodism."[18] After a missionary tour of the Peninsula in 1804, Latta reported wretched spiritual conditions in the backwater area, but also noted that "several persons attached to the Methodist Church . . . are truly Calvinistic in their principles." His solution to the problem of evangelical popularity lay in better leadership for the poor souls who had gone astray. Latta believed that the "low ebb at which the taste for preaching appears at present," stemmed from a lack of proper guidance. Thus, he had no doubt

that recent Methodist converts "would join the Presbyterians if they started preaching."[19]

As proof of the redeeming power of traditional leadership, Latta offered evidence from his own tour. When he preached to a large Methodist congregation, he noted that "order, decorum, silence and solemnity, much greater than ordinary, prevailed." In the middle of this sermon, however, a man dropped to "his knees at the door of the church, and began to pray with a voice audible throughout the assembly." Latta immediately stopped preaching, and "no sooner had [I] done this than one of the Methodist society went, and laid his hand on the shoulder of the person praying, and requested him to desist. The request was forthwith acquiesced in and perfect order restored."[20] Such experiences demonstrated to Latta that social and religious order rested upon strong leadership. The conflict between enthusiastic evangelicals and religious conservatives was most powerfully expressed through starkly opposed devotional behavior. Populist evangelicalism was grounded upon physical testimony by individual members of the congregation, while conservatives like Latta insisted upon the "perfect order" of silent reflection on a minister's sermon.

Latta's opposition to any excitement among the faithful led him to caution ministers against excesses in searching for popularity. In a sermon five years after his missionary tour, he explained that ministers "must not watch for the applause or commendation of their hearers. Here we are particularly exposed to danger."[21] As religious styles centered upon audience participation gained popularity and infringed on Latta's pastorate in New Castle, his descriptions of enthusiastic religion became more lurid. In one sermon he explored the scriptural text, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a lamp upon my path." (Psalm 115, line 105) From this he contrasted the goodness of scriptural light versus being "in a state of *darkness, gross darkness.*" For Latta, evil religious practice consisted of "all kinds of confusion, disorder and extravagance, [and] in leaping, dancing and shouting." Such worship reveled in "drunkenness, lewdness, and debauchery," all of which was cast in stark imagery contrasting good and light versus bad and dark. Latta sweepingly condemned "the dark places of the earth" as "*full of the habitations of cruelty.*"[22]

This sermon explicitly targeted pagan idolaters, but the area where Latta preached and the language he employed suggest that he was particularly concerned with African-American spirituality. The increasing number of African Americans in his town stimulated his hostility to enthusiastic religion and led to his focus on negative black imagery. Surely Latta noticed the dramatic shift in black status in his town and his congregation during his pastorate from 1800 to 1824. During this period the free black population in New Castle increased ninefold, while the white population failed even to double. By 1830 African Americans made up almost one-quarter of the town's population and

90 percent of them were free. Local change had come decisively when slaves dropped from 64 percent to 15 percent of the town's black population in the decade after 1800. The town rapidly became a haven for free African Americans since the transition to freedom came more slowly in rural New Castle Hundred, surrounding the town, where the percentage of blacks held in bondage declined by only 7 percent (from 45 to 38 percent of the total black population) in the same decade. The black presence in the town and hundred grew from 23 percent of the total population in 1800 to 29 percent by 1830.[23]

The change in status from slave to free and the growing prominence of African Americans at the local level was also reflected in the county at large. Overall, the percentage of blacks in New Castle County grew from 16 to 22 percent from 1800 to 1830. Furthermore, they were increasingly free in spite of the continuing legal sanction of slavery in Delaware. In 1790 over three-quarters of the African Americans in the county had been enslaved, but by 1830 a complete reversal had occurred, and 88 percent of the black population was free.[24] The black transition from slavery to freedom transformed the basis of the social order in northern Delaware. A bold public assertion of Afro-Christianity accompanied this demographic shift and challenged conservative leaders like John Latta.

An extraordinary account of an African-American Methodist service in the town of New Castle suggests that Latta's opposition to religious enthusiasm was linked to local black evangelicalism and that his fears were widely shared among white leaders. One August Sunday in 1806, the architect and engineer Benjamin Latrobe found himself stranded in New Castle because the stage coach could not operate on the Sabbath. A few years previously, while surveying the town and designing a proposed canal, Latrobe had met "an old negro . . . methodist preacher in this place." Accompanied by a ship captain and a sailor named Jamieson, he went to attend the black preacher's service. Latrobe's detailed record of the event bears quoting at length.

> The poor enthusiast began his harangue in the usual style, uttering an immensity of incoherent nonsense. As he rose in his exertions, Jamieson began to groan most piteously . . . and he fell flat on the floor. The preacher came down to his assistance, and prayed over him most fervently and outrageously. . . . He at last threw himself upon the sailor, and vociferously called him to life. Jamieson, who seemed much incommoded by weight and heat opened his eyes:
>
> He is converted from sin, exclaimed the negro, say brother what has you seen, glory, glory, glory, what has you seen.

> Nothing answered Jamieson, but a damned big black b-gg-r, who is going to stifle me, if I do not right myself.
>
> Have mercy on his damn'd sinful soul said the parson. No man can serve two masters, you want to serve God and the devil. . . .
>
> That's a damn lie said Jamieson, I serve God, the Captain, and the mate, and that's three, and if I don't do my duty they give me a hell of a walloping.[25]

In closing the scene, Latrobe noted with gratification that, "an irresistible and universal laugh sent the congregation home." Like John Latta, Latrobe judged this a dismal Christian service. Clearly no "perfect order" appeared here in the sense of Latta's missionary report; indeed, it included just the type of leaping and shouting that he railed against as expressions of "gross darkness."

In all likelihood the English-born and Moravian-educated Latrobe, who had arrived in America a decade earlier, was stunned by the black religious service he observed in New Castle. In order to make sense of it in his journal, where he recorded the pettiness of provincial habits from his perspective as a sophisticated cosmopolitan, he resorted to stereotypes. Like Pavel Svinin's watercolor of an African-Methodist service in Philadelphia from the same period (see illustration), Latrobe focused on the importance of body movement, the centrality of direct personal revelation, and the lack of a sharp separation between preacher and congregation, all central to evangelical and African-American religion.

In his own journal, Svinin, a Russian diplomat in Philadelphia, described a hellish scene at an African-Methodist service where the doorkeeper looked "very much like Cerberus" and the minister was "a black terrifying skeleton." The sermon built slowly, but the preacher "ignited the imagination of the listeners with his terrible images and body movements." When he finished, the audience exploded in reaction to his description of the destruction of the universe:

> the temple shook right down to its very foundation and the arched ceiling rocked from their terrible roar. . . . I too feared real destruction, if not of the universe, then at least of the choir under which I was sitting and which shook threateningly with each strike of the agonized demon-possessed, who jumped and threw themselves about in all directions and who fell to the ground beating it with their arms and legs, and gnashed their teeth to show that all the evil spirits were leaving them.[26]

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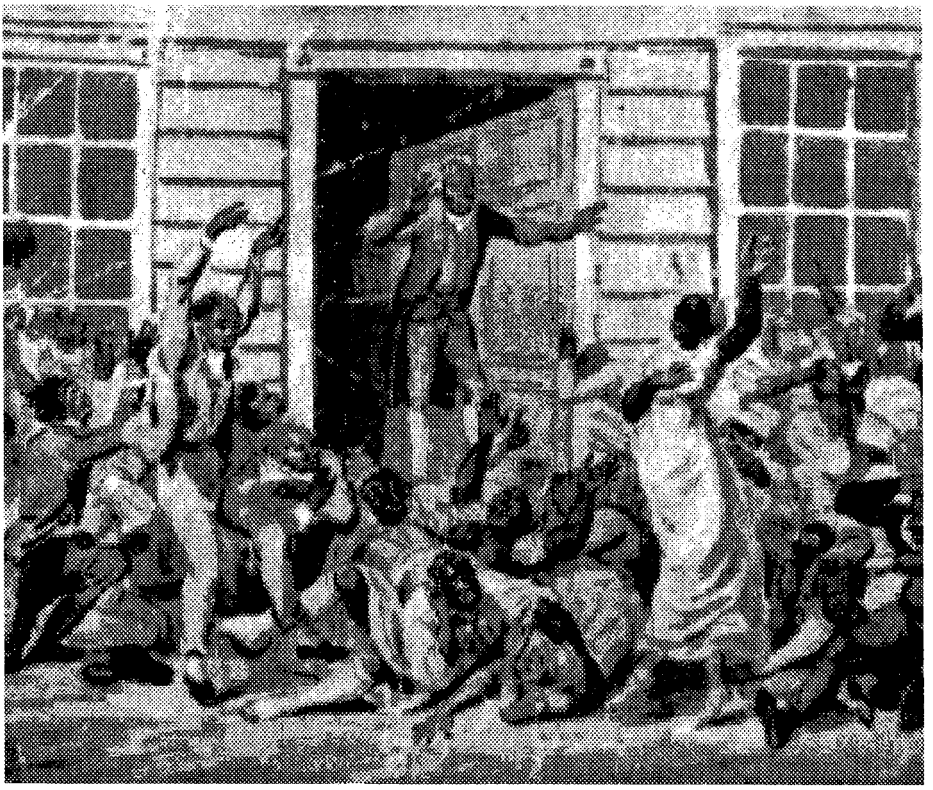
For Svinin, abandonment in evangelical devotion was Satanic and animalistic.

Svinin's painting of the scene placed Afro-Christianity in an even more lurid context by conflating enthusiastic religion with sexual promiscuity. Three figures form a triangle in the center of the image: a man dancing on the left with arms to the sky, a female partner matching him on the right with one hand to heaven and the other to her breast, and the preacher directed activity from the doorway of a building. An orgy occurs on the ground between the dancing couple, where they will presumably collapse when overcome by enthusiasm. The central figure on the ground is a woman with her arms held high, her legs spread wide, and her dress pulled up to expose her knees and thighs. The standing male dances between her legs with his toe pointing up her dress. Incredibly, the woman's checked blouse covers only her arms, exposing her naked chest, while another male figure drapes himself across her torso. This man hugs another woman sprawled in the foreground of the image, while a third woman leans against his buttocks. Svinin's watercolor dramatized aspects of African Methodism that many whites believed to be central to black religious enthusiasm but deemed too delicate to describe in writing.



Pavel Svinn, "Worship Service of Negro Methodists," (watercolor, ca. 1812), reprinted in Nora Beeson, ed., Traveling Across North America 1812-1813, Watercolors by the Russian Diplomat Pavel Svinn *(New York and St. Petersburg: Abrams Publishers and Izokombinat, 1992), fig. 60.*

One anonymous pamphlet attacked the excesses of religious enthusiasm by asking, "do those who are delighted with such things, consider what delights them? Some times . . . they are from such impure sources, as I am actually ashamed to name in this place."[27] Latrobe demonstrated similar reserve in his description of African Methodism in New Castle. Although it appeared in his private journal, he struck the letters from the insult that Jamieson reportedly cast at the black minister lying on top of him. While the account muffled the sailor's charge of sodomy, Latrobe's repulsion at this religious celebration clearly stemmed from a deep sense of bodily impropriety. In each case, white descriptions of religious enthusiasm invoked immoral sexual behavior.

The detailed descriptions by Latrobe, Svinin, and the anonymous writer "John Watson" are limited because they were produced by outsiders to the evangelical practices that they observed. However, a careful reading can point toward dimensions of African Methodism that the narrators did not intend to emphasize in these accounts. Not all whites, for instance, necessarily stood as critical outsiders to Afro-Christianity. Evangelical religion provided one of the few opportunities for black and white interaction and solidarity in early America.[28] Furthermore, as a small port on the Delaware River, New Castle was filled with common sailors like Jamieson. Jack Tar's social world was another major arena in which working conditions brought whites and blacks together in close quarters where they could occasionally share similar perspectives as common laborers and men of the sea.[29]

Recall Latrobe's description that lower-status whites could sometimes participate in black religious culture. This leads toward a reassessment of what may have occurred in that service. Crucial to this revision is the sailor's role in the drama. By presenting Jamieson as mocking African Methodism, Latrobe implies that he and the sailor were allied as whites, but it is also possible that Jamieson was a penitential participant in the service. He certainly was more likely to be one than either Latrobe or the sea captain who also attended the service. Thus, when Jamieson "fell flat on the floor" during what Latrobe understood as the minister's "harangue . . . of incoherent nonsense," it is possible that the sailor experienced genuine religious inspiration. The minister regarded his actions as appropriate, calling on him as a brother and asking, "what has you seen, glory, glory, glory, what has you seen." Latrobe recorded that Jamieson replied that he saw nothing but "a damned big black b-gg-r, who is going to stifle me, if I do not right myself." On first reading this passage it seems that Jamieson was insulting the preacher, but, alternatively, he may have been expressing an inner confrontation with the Devil. Postmodern calisthenics are not required to read across Latrobe's version of the dialogue to see that Jamieson may have been acknowledging the religious authority of the preacher. What Jamieson meant by saying that he needed to right himself is ambiguous. Did he declare a need to physically stand and get the preacher off of him? Did he

need to right himself spiritually before the Lord? Or, was he a clever trickster who recognized that this situation allowed him to play to both a white and a black audience and lampoon each to the other?

We need not resolve conclusively Jamieson's inner feelings during this dramatic scene. The black minister probably understood the sailor's comments in a metaphoric sense as would have been appropriate in the context of the religious service. The preacher attempted to help the sailor win the struggle for his soul, calling out that "no man can serve two masters, you want to serve God and the devil." Jamieson's response that he served three masters (God, the Captain, and the first mate) was humorous because its class-based awareness highlighted how worldly values transgressed the spiritually more important matters of salvation and damnation.

Latrobe's presentation of the incident, while seemingly slandering Afro-Christianity, is not the only possible interpretation of what occurred. It seems equally plausible that the butt of Jamieson's joke was not the preacher, the congregation, and their faith but was actually Latrobe and the captain — the outsiders at this service. The validity of this reassessment is bolstered by Latrobe's closing comment that "an irresistible and universal laugh sent the congregation home." Obviously the entire congregation did not suddenly realize, accept, and find humor in being lampooned by Jamieson. The congregation more likely understood him to be ridiculing Latrobe and the captain whose place atop the social order transgressed the spiritual equality of all Christians. Role-reversing humor is a major tool of cultural resistance among oppressed groups and most likely triggered the laughter that swept the black congregation.[30] In the context of this African-Methodist service, the white elites were out of place and temporarily unable to exert control or authority. When Latrobe observed that the whole event was "a farce . . . too degrading to human nature to be called ridiculous," he revealed his distance and hostility. The disclaimer may even indicate that Latrobe unconsciously recognized that he was the target of most of the congregation's laughter.

Latrobe's account is open to other possible interpretations, but to understand how personal identities were constructed and maintained, it is necessary to analyze closely such ethnographic sources of daily life. The main themes of my interpretation are: a white observer condescendingly assessed an African-Methodist service; he witnessed a complex religious event that he could never imagine being an active participant in; and the service concluded with an uproarious joke that he understood differently from the majority of black members in the congregation. This rich example from New Castle in 1806 demonstrates how black and white identities were shaped in relation to class and religion. Because enthusiastic religion had the potential to cross racial lines, especially among working people, it threatened a local social order already undergoing fundamental change as African Americans' status shifted from slavery to freedom.

In the Delaware Valley, and throughout the northern states, the creation of the nation coincided with a major redefinition of racial status as slavery was gradually abolished and African Americans became free. The rise of free black identities in the early-republican Delaware Valley fundamentally threatened widespread presumptions among whites about the basis for social order. In 1816, two petitions to the state legislature from whites in New Castle complained that racial mixing among the lower sort disrupted local life. One objected to peddlers who exchanged goods indiscriminately with apprentices, servants, and slaves, while another targeted the "frequent riotous assemblages of disorderly people, particularly negroes" in the "Tippling Houses kept up in said town." Another widely signed petition specifically complained about African Americans congregating in the town. Over one quarter of the town's taxpaying whites signed this protest against "the assembly of free negroes, mulatoes, and slaves within the limits of the town of New Castle without any lawful business." The petition demanded "some further provisions by Law to regulate and to prevent such disorderly meetings" because black gatherings caused "the great disturbance of the peaceable inhabitants of the Town."[31] African Americans in New Castle suffered serious social pressure that took on more public dimensions as they became free people in the new republic.

In an era when it first became possible to conceptualize African-American group identity separate from slavery, black church leaders were acutely conscious of the need to demand proper behavior from their flock. The maintenance of authority was an especially delicate concern for churches that favored enthusiastic evangelicalism. Afro-Christian churches were not exempt from this broad evangelical concern and carefully articulated rules to maintain righteousness. Like all other denominations of the era, the UCA crafted careful mechanisms for expelling members who failed to carry themselves in an "orderly and sober manner."[32] Because members of the UCA were well aware of the exceptional status of their denomination, they strove diligently to keep good order.

A single surviving copy of a UCA hymnal from 1822 indicates some dimensions of the denomination's religious practice as well as differences between its leaders and members. The hymnal's introductory comment, signed by three UCA ministers, explained that the book was published in response to popular demand:

> Since it has pleased the Lord to revise his work of grace among us in such a wonderful manner, the cry of our members continually is that they want Hymn Books, which they wish us to supply them with, to meet this anxiety, we have made this Selection.[33]

The introduction also suggests that church leaders hoped to steer members' religious practice in a more respectable direction. The ministers observed, "as we all know [that] singing is a part of divine worship, there needs not much to be said on the subject," but this was merely a pretense to explain what style of singing was appropriate. The leaders wanted the congregation to "sing with the spirit and with the understanding also." As African churches made a claim for respectability, these leaders hoped to restrain members' enthusiasm. The ministers continued that unless "you set the Lord before you . . . all our singing and praying is in vain. Therefore when you sing, sing to the Lord; and when you pray, pray to the Lord." UCA leaders were concerned that evangelical enthusiasm, particularly in congregational singing, could become dangerous when its driving source was "spirit" without the counterbalancing influence of "understanding."

The same scriptural injunction appeared in the preface to the 1818 hymnal of the AME church: "when the spirit and the understanding are united, it is believed to be a service acceptable in the sight of God, and beneficial to the souls of the people."[34] African-American religious leaders throughout the Delaware Valley hoped to shape enthusiastic religious practices into appropriate channels. This was a crucial matter that would bring precise public rewards. As the UCA ministers explained in closing their introduction, if the congregation demonstrated proper devotion, "then may be said, '*they that were not a people* have become the people of God,' — and we shall rejoice."[35] These introductory remarks expose a fundamental dilemma for what it meant to be African and Christian in the early republic. UCA leaders stated that their own African forebears had not been "a people" since they lacked awareness of a Christian God. This posed a central challenge for free people of color who were Christians. The hymnal's introduction suggested that only by overcoming a non-Christian past could African Americans successfully demand legitimate public space in the new nation.

The dilemma of how to be both African and Christian shaped the content and performance style of the material collected in the UCA hymnal. While its introductory note came from the church leadership, the hymns themselves offer access to broader dimensions of popular Afro-Christian identity within the congregation. Since the hymnal was compiled in response to members' demands for such a collection, it seems reasonable to assume that its 132 song texts were chosen from the favorite hymns in regular use by the congregation in the early 1820s. In most respects these hymns fall well within the canon of Anglo-American Christianity, especially that of Methodism. A sample of the UCA hymns checked against several indexes reveals that well over half were drawn from Anglo-Christian sources, with compositions by John and Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts predominating.[36] Like the Watts hymns that had contributed to a profound shift away from psalm singing in the mid-eighteenth

century Great Awakening, the UCA collection belonged to a second major transition in American religious music. Hymnals like this provided part of the basis for the development of camp-meeting spirituals which relied more immediately on folksong traditions, vernacular language, and non-biblical sources than the religious poetry of the hymns. Just as hymns had once made religious singing more meaningful to contemporary life than the psalms in the eighteenth century, spirituals did the same to hymns beginning in the early nineteenth century.[37]

Music was central to the creation of a populist evangelical style in the early republic. "John Watson" attacked the new religious music as "a growing evil" where "*merry* airs, adopted from old *songs*, to hymns of our composing" were becoming widely used in Methodist services. Not only was the new music derived from secular sources and "often miserable as poetry, and senseless as matter," worse yet, it was "most frequently composed and first sung by illiterate *blacks* of the society."[38] The threat of the new singing style lay in its African-American origins, which spread rapidly among evangelical whites. Just as Latta, Latrobe, and Svinin had reported, the new music was accompanied by disturbing body movements. "Watson" also found the enthusiastic style "consonant [with] animal spirits," and identified "stepping the merry strains with all the precision of an avowed dancer" as its hallmark. Following his description of black religious dancing, often cited as an example of the cultural survival of the West African ring dance, the author concluded, who "can countenance or tolerate such gross perversions of true religion! but the evil is only occasionally condemned, and the example has already visibly effected the manner of some whites."[39] Conservative whites saw a deep threat in Afro-Christianity as it seeped across racial boundaries and transformed white religious practice.

Although most of the song texts in the UCA hymn book grew out of an Anglo-American musical tradition, that does not mean that Christianity whitewashed African influences and the experience of slavery which bound the congregation together. Performance style within African churches transformed the English origins of the hymns and displayed the centrality of African traditions in the spiritual life of African Americans in the early republic. Understanding what black and white congregational singing may have sounded like in the early nineteenth century is a complex undertaking. Although reliance on recent recordings of early hymn-singing styles can further muddy analysis by imposing present-day musical and performance concepts, it still provides a useful framework for beginning to place music within the lived experience of participants. Fortunately, an excellent Smithsonian recording has taken great care to recreate early African-American singing styles and includes three hymns from the repertoire of Philadelphia's AME church.[40] The Richard Allen Singers' performance of the Isaac Watts hymn "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" is most

directly revealing of how the UCA congregation may have sounded. This traditional English hymn is performed in a "lined out" style where the leader raises the tune, and the congregation then takes it up. A call and response style was a customary form in English and African singing. However, African-American style drew out each line for a long period of time with a complex and layered audience response, while Anglo-American style generally responded in unison. In the recorded example of the Watts hymn, the congregation responded to the leader's introduction with a dirge-like mass of sound that represented a sharp break from Anglo-American congregational singing traditions.[41]

Pavel Svinin described the evangelical style in the 1810s as long "monotonous verses in loud and piercing voices." He noted that singing stirred up black congregants until they "fell on their knees, bowed their heads to the ground, and began to howl and moan in doleful, heartrending tones." From the very moment that Svinin entered the African Methodist house of worship, he was filled with a "sense of horror," and this feeling "further intensified when they began to howl in wild and shrill voices. It seemed to me that I had fallen into the realm of Pluto among all the frights of hell."[42] Congregational singing provided the starkest evidence to Svinin of the non-Christian behavior of African Methodists. White outsiders repeatedly interpreted black evangelicalism as barbaric and Satanic; they often perceived black religious practice to reflect savage African traditions rather than genuine expressions of Christianity.

Ironically, perhaps, focusing solely upon sources produced by the Union Church of Africans suggests greater Anglo American and Christian influences than white sources typically demonstrate. The song texts in the UCA hymnal reflect particular choices within Christian traditions and reveal a distinctive African-American theology stressing a mission to the poor and to social outcasts. This tone began with the epigram from *Isaiah* on the title page which concluded, "for the Lord has comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted." (*Isaiah* xlix, 13) Such a religious emphasis was crucial to a church whose leading members were drawn from the lower ranks of society. Out of the 40 founding UCA members in 1813, only four were able to sign their own names, and all four were among the seven men chosen as trustees. While this division reinforces a sense of the social distance that separated church leaders from members, it is also clear that even the church elite ranked low in the general social order. Of the six trustees who can be located in a Wilmington city directory for 1814, four were identified as laborers and two were blacksmiths.[43] Given this social background, it is not surprising that the God the UCA prayed to looked upon the lowly of the world as most deserving. One hymn declared that,

He fills the poor with good,
He gives the sufferers rest;
The Lord hath judgments for the proud;
And justice for the oppress'd.[44]

Calls for justice owed to the oppressed went beyond simply a theology of the dispossessed. UCA members rejected a Christianity that instructed them to accept slavery as a positive good. Just as they had taken advantage of incorporation laws undoubtedly intended only for whites to become a state-sanctioned denomination, so too Christian authority could be used to witness against an unjust society. UCA hymns often provided extraordinarily direct testimony about a sinful world where Africans were subjected to singularly severe punishment. When the congregation called on their Savior to "unloose the bonds of wickedness,/and let the captives go," surely they referred to slavery and protested the corrupt world that allowed such injustice.[45] Another traditional Anglo-American hymn similarly rang out with obvious resonance for African Americans living in a slave state:

We will be slaves no more,
Since Christ hath made us free,
Has nail'd our tyrants to his cross,
And bought our liberty.[46]

These hymns reveal how black churches provided powerful vehicles for radical resistance to worldly authority in the early republic. They also make plain why southern white leaders moved swiftly to close such institutions in the wake of the Gabriel and Vesey rebellion plots which both had links to Afro-Christian churches.[47] Certain Anglo-American hymns had dramatically moving appeal for the first generation of free people of color in northern Delaware.

But to discuss only the numerous hymns that embrace radical sentiments of punishment for the wicked would be misleading, for the UCA collection also counseled patience and passivity in place of confronting a sinful world. Many songs emphasized a more just future to come with salvation. Hymns such as "When Rising From the Bed of Death" and "Happy Soul Thy Days are Ended" emphasized that a better life awaited in the next world.[48] Taken as a whole, the songs collected in the hymnal represent a complex spiritual life which helped UCA members to negotiate a new group identity as free African American Christians.

In some respects the hymns point toward forms of Afro-Christian religious life that scholars have long associated with nineteenth-century slave religion.[49] But because UCA members negotiated a place for themselves as free blacks within a white-dominated society earlier than most African Americans, there

are important distinctions between their spiritual lives and those of southern slaves. While UCA members were intensely conscious of their African heritage and celebrated it in the name of their church and in their daily religious practices, they were also intensely Christian and embraced Christianity on their own terms apart from white surveillance. UCA members emphasized particular strains in Christianity. But they did not draw only on radical apocalyptic visions from Revelations nor solely on the example of Moses leading the Israelites out of slavery, as is sometimes suggested by the literature on slave religion.

The single most startling hymn in the UCA collection ties several often conflicting themes of African and Christian status together by explicitly addressing the relationship among African, free, slave, American, and Christian identities. Individual UCA members negotiated these multiple identities successfully in their daily life by stressing one over the other as befitted particular social circumstances. But potential for tension existed, especially as the relationships among the inter-related identities were all being redefined during the early republic. The hymn began by acknowledging the African origins of the congregation: "On Afric's land our fathers roamed." Clearly this was not a traditional Anglo-American hymn. The next line suggests a divided assessment of the African inheritance since the fathers were "a free but savage race." The positive value of their freedom is countered by their savage state: "No word of light their minds inform'd,/Of God's recovering grace." Here one sees plainly that African and Christian could exist in opposition to one another and that members of the first black Christian churches struggled to balance them. One route to reconciliation explained the origins of the slave trade as divinely ordained. In the terms of this hymn, God "let us o'er the Atlantic flood,/That we might learn his ways."[50] This was not, however, a self-hating hymn such as might have been employed by whites hoping to use Christianity as a tool of racial oppression. The hymn sharpened its view of the relationship between race and Christianity when it explained:

> Yet colour is no mark that shows,
> The inward state of mind;
> Thro' white and black corruption flows
> Infecting all mankind.[51]

The hymn suggests that UCA members fused an understanding of the African past that lacked the saving grace of Christianity with an equally strong sense that white Christians deserved no special status. Finding free blacks embracing Christianity in such a way as to distance themselves from Africa may seem a startling aspect of Afro-Christian identity which we approach today with some sense of discomfort. However, it was precisely as African Christians that free

blacks asserted themselves most boldly during the early republic and challenged the assumptions of mainstream America on a common ground of Christianity.

The Union Church of Africans was one of many institutions in which African Americans mobilized to denounce the white framework for discussing the growing "problem" of free blacks in the early republic. In an 1831 petition, UCA members opposed the plan of the American Colonization Society (ACS) to send free African Americans back to Africa. UCA members found ACS actions abominable, but, even more tellingly, the petitioners presented themselves in a fundamentally American vein. They declared that the ACS strategy for improving the condition of free blacks was "at variance with the principles of civil and religious liberty, and wholly incompatible with the spirit of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence of these United States." The goal of colonization was "unrepublican" and aimed to achieve "the total extirpation of our race from this country." The UCA petition even turned religious morality against the reform group by asking whether the "Christian benevolence" of the ACS could not be used more advantageously for blacks within the United States. The petitioners knew all too well that the evangelical promise of Christian fellowship and the national promise of citizenship faltered in the face of racial difference. UCA members explained that they were "deprived through prejudice from entering into the full enjoyment . . . [of our] rights in common with other Americans."[52] They plainly demanded equal status in the nation.

In the formation of the Union Church of Africans we can observe how the first generation of free blacks in northern Delaware established a place for themselves in the new nation as Africans and Christians. Free blacks made Christianity their main vehicle for challenging public authority in the early republic. Black Christians took advantage of the access to power that religion offered, but rejected racist theories invoked by others in the name of Christianity. By establishing themselves as the Union Church of Africans and by using traditional Christian forms to testify against the corruption and sinfulness of the white world, UCA members drew on diverse cultural inheritances in their assertion of self. What they recognized — and what is perhaps too easily forgotten — is that Christianity was not exclusively white in the early republic. While the egalitarian thrust of evangelicalism in the late eighteenth century failed to sustain a significant commitment to biracial equality, the revolutionary era had unleashed unintended changes in the meaning of race and the shape of race relations that were forced forward most adamantly by those who created African Christian churches.

Surviving evidence from black churches offers some of the most direct access to voices of people of color during the early republic. It deserves careful attention, for it reveals a bold Afro-Christian public identity. The UCA reinforces our sense that the black community was far from monolithic. A

growing free African-American population underlay the creation of independent African churches among which there were significant denominational differences as well as important distinctions between leaders and congregations. Black churches expressed some of the most radically nationalist ideas in the period, yet they also could be profoundly conservative institutions that encouraged members to assimilate toward an emerging middle-class standard. Black elites generally encouraged greater respectability among African Americans of lower social standing. This was not motivated by a rejection of African origins or cultural inheritances, but the drive for respectability could bring leaders, especially ministers, into conflict with ordinary African Americans who saw few benefits in adhering to the new code of behavior.[53]

Analysis of African-American culture too often becomes locked in an all-or-nothing debate over the relative weight of European or African cultural inheritances. The material examined here from the Union Church of Africans suggests that self-consciousness as Africans practicing distinctive forms was combined with a selective interpretation of an Anglo-American variant of Christianity in the syncretic culture of this institution and its members. Such a double identity was not maintained without tension, but its fusion of diverse elements made Afro-Christianity a powerful source of cultural creativity, expression, and radical change in the early republic.[54]

Members of independent black churches who were both African and Christian shaped a richly syncretic culture that drew upon European and African traditions but was distinct from both. In this they elaborated upon the powerful cultural innovation that had created a New World African-American identity.[55] At its broadest level this group identity united people of color throughout the Atlantic world, but such breadth relied upon a loose consensus bound together by the oppressive force of slavery. Of course, individuals always maintained multiple identities even under slavery, but an important part of the effectiveness of that labor system was to manufacture a homogeneous image of blackness that allowed little recognition of individual variation among those it enslaved. The Union Church of Africans offers evidence from one of the earliest attempts in the United States to claim blackness as a functioning free identity while still facing slavery as a living and legal force.

Notes

I benefited from the advice of many careful readers including Gary Nash, Michael Zuckerman, and, of course, Richard Dunn. Julie Goldsmith offered particularly incisive comments during my earliest work with this material. The audience discussion of a different version of this paper, presented at the Organization for American Historians' annual conference in 1996, helped me refine my analysis. Especially valuable were comments by Philip Morgan, the panel chair.

1. Nathan O. Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).
2. On the politicization of religion in revolutionary Delaware, see John A. Munroe, "Parson in Politics," *Delaware History*, 23 (1988-89), 300-312, and H. Clay Reed, "The Delaware Constitution of 1776," *Delaware Notes*, 6 (1930), 31, 99n. I examine this issue in greater detail in Chapter Two of my dissertation, which appeared in revised form as "Identity and Revolution: Everyday Life and Crisis in Three Delaware River Towns," *Pennsylvania History*, 64 (January 1997), 56-101.
3. For a discussion of the transformation of corporation law, see Pauline Maier, "The Revolutionary Origins of the American Corporation," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 50 (1993), 51-84.
4. For a brief comparison of different African Methodist churches, see Will B. Gravely, "African Methodisms and the Rise of Black Denominationalism" in Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, eds., *Perspectives on American Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1993), 108-126.
5. Lewis V. Baldwin, *The Mark of a Man, Peter Spencer and the African Union Methodist Tradition* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 11-12. Baldwin's scholarship on this relatively unknown African Methodist denomination has been indispensable to my study. His most detailed publication is *"Invisible" Strands in African Methodism: A History of the African Union Methodist Protestant and Union American Methodist Episcopal Churches, 1805-1980* (Metuchen, NJ: American Theological Library Association, 1983).
6. Deed (1805), New Castle County, Recorder of Deeds, Book C-3, 226-230, microfilm reel 1A, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.
7. *Minutes Taken at the Several Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Totten for Hitt and Ware, 1812), 23; and *Minutes Taken at the Several Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Totten for Hitt and Ware, 1813), 32.
8. Articles of Association (1813), New Castle County, Recorder of Deeds, Book M-3, 470-473, microfilm reel 4A, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware. The Articles have also been reprinted as an appendix to Baldwin, *Mark*, 73-79.
9. Articles, #6.
10. On these differences, see Baldwin, *Invisible*, 48-52; and Gravely, 120-121.
11. Figures from *Minutes*, cited previously.
12. See Sylvia R. Frey, *Water From the Rock, Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), Chapter Seven, for an overview of numerous southern black churches in this period. For a brilliant assessment of Afro-Christianity's central place among free blacks in Philadelphia, see Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom, The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
13. Daniel Coker, *A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister* (Baltimore, MD: Edes for James, 1810), 41-43.
14. *Ibid.*, 23-24.
15. *Ibid.*, 31.
16. Baldwin, *Invisible*, 50-55; and *Mark*, 31. During the 1850s the UCA split into the African Methodist Union Protestant and the Union African Methodist Episcopal denominations.
17. On the African Union Church in New Castle, see New Castle County, Recorder of Deeds, Book S-3, 274-275 and Book T-3, 514-515, microfilm, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware. The New Castle trustee Jacob Marsh in both these documents may be the

same trustee who signed his name with a mark as Joseph March in the 1813 UCA Articles.

18. On the strength of Methodism in the area, see William Henry Williams, *The Garden of American Methodism, The Delmarva Peninsula, 1769-1820* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1984). The most thorough study of Methodism in the broad region is Doris Elisabett Andrews, "Popular Religion and the Revolution in the Mid-Atlantic Ports: The Rise of the Methodists, 1770-1800" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1986).

19. John E. Latta, "Standing Committee of Missions of The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, A Report by their Missionary," Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

20. *Ibid.*

21. John E. Latta, *Christ's Ministers Watchmen for Souls* (Hartford, CT: Hudson and Goodwin, 1809), 4.

22. John E. Latta, *A Sermon* (Wilmington, DE: Porter, 1822), 6, 8-9, emphases in original.

23. This paragraph is based upon my analysis of the federal census schedules. For a more detailed examination of local demography, see Liam Riordan, "Identities in the New Nation: The Creation of an American Mainstream in the Delaware Valley, 1770-1830" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1996), especially Chapters Three and Four.

24. For county-wide census figures, see Patience Essah, "Slavery and Freedom in the First State: The History of Blacks in Delaware from the Colonial Period to 1865" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985), 228.

25. Edward C. Carter II, John C. Van Horne, Lee W. Formwalt, eds., *The Journals of Benjamin Henry Latrobe 1799-1820* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), vol. 3, 41-42.

26. Nora Beeson, ed., *Pavel Svinin's Traveling Across North America, 1812-1813* (New York: Abrams, 1992), 46-47. Watercolor reprinted as fig. 60.

27. [John F. Watson], *Methodist Error; or, Friendly Christian Advice, to Those Methodists, Who Indulge in Extravagant Emotions and Bodily Exercises* (Trenton, NJ: Fenton, rev. ed. 1819), 28-29n.

28. The strongest statement of biracial cooperation in colonial America is Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). Rhys Isaac also notes that evangelical religion could transgress racial divisions in *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790* (New York: Norton and Company, 1982).

29. The best study of sailors in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world is Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For another suggestion of how similar social conditions could bring "lower sort" whites and blacks together under certain circumstances, see Billy Smith and Susan Klepp, *The Infortunate; The Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

30. For a discussion of role-reversing humor, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), esp. 300-308.

31. Miscellaneous Petitions, January 15, 1816; February 10, 1816; and January 24, 1809; Legislative Papers, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware. I first became aware of these petitions from Constance Jean Cooper, "A Town Among Cities: New Castle, 1780-1840" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Delaware, 1983), 312-313.

32. Articles, #6. Jon Butler successfully demonstrates the importance of authoritarian strands in early nineteenth-century American religion in *Awash in a Sea of Faith* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); especially Chapter Nine. In this he offers an important correction to the argument of Nathan Hatch, cited in note one.

33. Peter Spencer, comp., *The African Union Hymn Book* (Wilmington, DE: Porter, 1822), 3. Union Theological Seminary, New York City.

34. Quoted in Eileen Southern, *Music of Black Americans* (New York: Norton and Company, 2nd ed., 1983), 80-81. The UCA may have borrowed directly from the AME preface; which would reinforce the argument here about the common concerns of church elites.

A striking difference between the two instructions is that the AME leadership expressed itself in more sophisticated and concise language.

35. Spencer, 3-4, emphasis added.

36. The best, but by no means exhaustive, starting point for tracing the origins of Christian hymns is John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (London: Murray Press, rev. 1915; orig., 1892). A more recent guide that addresses some of the gaps in Julian is Edna D. Parks, *Early English Hymns: An Index* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1972). While drawn mostly from twentieth-century hymnals, including one compiled by the AME, Samuel J. Rogal, *Guide to the Hymns and Tunes of American Methodism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986) is quite useful. Interestingly, Rogal bitterly complains about the retention of English songs well into the twentieth century.

37. Southern's book remains the standard survey of African American musical traditions. On the development of early religious singing among Afro-Christians, see 35-41, 75-88. The major work on African American church music is Jon Michael Spencer, *Black Hymnody: A Hymnological History of the African-American Church* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992). Both fine studies are limited by their broad chronological scope.

38. [Watson], 28-29, emphasis in original.

39. *Ibid.*, 30-31, 133. On the African significance of the ring dance, see Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture, Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

40. *African American Congregational Singing, Wade in the Water* (Smithsonian/Folkways Compact Disc SF40073, 1994).

41. For examples of white congregational singing of Watts' hymns, as arranged by the mid-eighteenth century Philadelphia Presbyterian James Lyon, see *America Sings, Volume I: The Founding Years, 1620-1800* (Vox Records 5350, 1976).

42. Beeson, 46-47.

43. Gravely, 121.

44. Spencer, 110-111, hymn #99, stanza 5.

45. *Ibid.*, 10, hymn #5, stanza 2.

46. *Ibid.*, 70, hymn #57, stanza 3.

47. Frey, 320-325. However, the most detailed recent study of Gabriel's Rebellion sharply rejects the view that Gabriel had any notable religious motivations. See Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), especially 179-181.

48. Spencer, 14-16, hymns #8 and #9.

49. Classic work on the subject includes Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (New York: Vintage Press, 1972); John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, rev. and enlarged ed., 1979); and Levine, cited previously. Because this work focuses on slave traditions in the South and mostly relies on mid-nineteenth century sources, none directly addresses the situation of UCA members. Nash, cited previously, is more useful in this regard.

50. Spencer, 119, hymn #107, stanzas 1, 4. I should clarify that this was simply one of many possible attitudes and is certainly one that I do not personally endorse. For a discussion of alternative black explanations of the slave trade in African and African American oral traditions, see William D. Piersen, *Black Legacy, America's Hidden Heritage* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1993), 4-14.

51. Spencer, 119, hymn #107, stanza 3. David Grimsted discusses a very similar sentiment in a poem by Phillis Wheatley where she observed that "mercy brought me from my pagan land" but later chides the reader to "Remember, Christians, Negroes black as Cain/May be refined, and join the angelic train." Grimsted follows the observation of Richard Wright in interpreting these lines as revealing how Wheatley was "truly one in her world" without a divided African and Christian identity. David Grimsted, "Anglo-American Racism and Phillis Wheatley" in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 338-444, quote 355-356.

52. Petition reprinted in William L. Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization* (New York: Arno Press, 1968; orig., 1832), part II, 36-40.

53. On status differences among free blacks in this period, see Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988). On divisions over colonization, see especially 34-48.

54. My emphasis on the double identity of African Americans draws, of course, on W. E. B. DuBois' assessment of the "double consciousness" of black Americans in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thompson Limited, 1973; orig. 1903), 3-4.

55. A particularly useful model for approaching the formation of a New World African-American identity has recently been reissued, Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, rev. ed. 1992; orig., 1976).