Annotated Bibliography on the Black Church in America
With Special Emphasis on Orthodox Evangelical Leaders

A Fundamentalism File Research Report
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This report is intended to be a resource to help Fundamentalist Christians in studying and evaluating religious leaders and movements. It draws primarily upon materials housed in the Fundamentalism File in the J. S. Mack Library on the campus of Bob Jones University.

Although every effort has been made to provide an impartial study of the topic, this work will naturally reflect the interpretations and viewpoint of its author. This report should not be taken as representing an official statement of the position of Bob Jones University. The University’s theological position is well expressed by its creed.

The staff of the Fundamentalism File would welcome any questions or comments concerning the content of this report.

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Annotated Bibliography on the Black Church in America

The works listed below are provided to suggest useful resources for the study of the black church in America. These works represent a variety of religious and political viewpoints and their inclusion should not be taken as a complete endorsement of their contents by the author or his institution.

Guiding the selection of these resources (in addition to a desire to list standard and generally helpful works on the topic) is a conviction that much current writing on the African American church is overly dominated by the tendency to view the subject almost solely through the lens of race, class, and gender. These perspectives are unquestionably helpful, particularly in light of the overall black experience in America. Such an approach, however, ignores central aspects of the black church’s history and has a tendency to fit all evidence into a preconceived framework.

One needs to remember that also central to the history of the African American has been a powerful current of evangelical, pietistic Protestant Christianity. The black church in America was born during the Great Awakening and has long nurtured a vital piety coupled with a commitment to historic Protestant orthodoxy. Any approach to black church history that ignores these factors can produce, at best, only an incomplete picture or, at worst, a distorted one.

Without downplaying the formative influence of racism and other social/political factors, this bibliography attempts to highlight a facet of the black church that is too often ignored—its unquestioned connection to historic evangelical Protestant Christianity.

General Works


Banks, William L. The Black Church in the U.S. Chicago: Moody Press, 1972. One of the few relatively conservative books on the subject and one that deals with current issues (e.g., civil disobedience, black theology), but not well organized and not detailed about men and movements.


Burgess, Stanley M., and Gary B. McGee, ed. Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Regency Reference Library, 1988. Notes the important contributions of African Americans in the history of Pentecostalism, notably in the articles “Azusa Street Revival” (pp. 31-36); “Black Holiness-Pentecostalism” (pp. 77-84); “Church of God in Christ (CGIC)” (pp. 204-5); “Mason, Charles Harrison” (pp. 585-87), and “Seymour, William Joseph” (pp. 778-81).

Clarke, Erskine. *Wrestlin’ Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979. A discussion of white efforts at the evangelization of slaves, stressing both successes and failures, the book details the work of white preachers such as Charles Colcock Jones of Georgia.


Jackson, Joseph H. *A Story of Christian Activism: The History of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.* Nashville: Townsend Press, 1980. A massive (nearly 800 pages) but disappointing work. Jackson, president of the NBC from 1953 to 1982, was known as a conservative for preferring legal means to civil disobedience as the vehicle of the civil rights movement. He clashed with Martin Luther King, Jr., who in turn led a split, the Progressive National Baptists. Jackson spends only about 200 pages on the history of the convention prior to his presidency; the rest of the book is an apology for his position. Sometimes useful but often dry and focused on small details. Scanty bibliography.

Johnson, James Weldon. *God’s Trombones*. New York: Viking Press, 1955. A collection of poems based on black preaching that reveals something of the power of the black pulpit; Johnson was a leader in the “Harlem Renaissance” and not necessarily sympathetic to conservative Christianity, but his poems generally treat the Scripture and the old-time black preacher with respect. Johnson’s preface on the role of the black preacher is particularly interesting.


Journal of Negro History. This important resource in African American history was founded by Carter Woodson in 1916. There are many references to specific articles from this journal in the entries that follow.


Lincoln, C. Eric, and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1990. Probably the best available book on the subject, although the authors are liberal in outlook. If one sorts through the authors’ interpretations, one can find a great deal of
useful information. Pages 20-91 survey the history of the major black denominations.


———. “Images of the Black Church in America.” *Baptist History and Heritage* 16 (1981): 19-29, 40. A highly useful introductory article by a Southern Baptist historian; he surveys five influential books on the black church—*The Black Church* (1903) by W.E.B. Du Bois, *The History of the Negro Church* (1921) by Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro Church in America* (1964) by E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Religion* (1964) by Joseph Washington, and *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) by James Cone—then discusses how each views the black church in America. None of the views espoused are wholly acceptable to orthodox Christians, and some are completely antithetical to Christianity. The article, however, is a beneficial introduction to the literature.


Young, Henry J. *Major Black Religious Leaders, 1755-1940*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977. A series of brief sketches of the theology of some major black leaders, the author includes sketches of some orthodox figures (e.g., Richard Allen and Daniel Payne), but he presents their views almost entirely in terms of liberation theology.

Sources on Specific African American Christian Leaders

**John Marrant (1755-91)**

Converted under the preaching of George Whitefield in Charleston around 1760, Marrant later became an early missionary to the Indians. He eventually traveled to England, where he became associated with Selina, Countess of Huntington, and the Calvinistic Methodist Connexion. That group in turn sent him to Nova Scotia to minister to a colony of blacks there as well as to the Indians.

Saillant, John. “Hymnody and the Persistence of an African-American Faith in Sierra Leone.” The Hymn, January 1997, pp. 8-17. In giving the background of the free colony in Sierra Leone, Saillant discusses the work of Marrant, giving more detail of his work in Canada and noting the influence of music and Calvinism in Marrant’s thought.


George Liele (c. 1750-1828)
Liele is known partly for helping found the Silver Bluff Baptist Church in South Carolina (across the Savannah River from Augusta, Georgia), one of the first African American congregations in the U.S. He is even more famous, however, as a pioneer missionary to Jamaica, where he helped establish the Baptists in that island.


David George (1743-1810)
A former slave, George was a coworker with George Liele in Georgia and the main leader of the Silver Bluff Baptist Church. After the Revolution, he immigrated to Nova Scotia, where he ministered among the Loyalist exiles. Eventually, he and his church went to the free colony of Sierra Leone in Africa.


Andrew Bryan (1737-1812)
A former slave and a convert of George Liele, Bryan was one of the founders and first pastor of the First African Baptist Church of Savannah. He underwent much persecution, including a public whipping, to establish this work.


Richard Allen (1760-1831)
Founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Allen is one of the most important figures in black church history. A convert to Methodism, Liele purchased his freedom from slavery and became a successful preacher. Discrimination from white Methodists caused
Allen and several others to form a separate body. Later in life, he became a leading opponent of efforts to send all free blacks as colonists to Africa.


Harry Hosier (1750?-1806)

Popularly known as “Black Harry,” Hosier traveled with Bishop Francis Asbury throughout the South, preaching with great success to both black and white audiences.


Lemuel Haynes (1753-1833)

A Congregationalist pastor in New England during the Second Great Awakening, Haynes was perhaps the first African American to pastor a white congregation. An heir of Puritan theology, Haynes was one of the most orthodox and most articulate black preachers in American history. He was particularly known as an opponent of Universalism and openly disputed with Universalist spokesman Hosea Ballou.


John Chavis (c. 1763-1838)

Presbyterian evangelist during the Second Great Awakening and later educator in North Carolina, he was one of the most articulate blacks in the antebellum South.


John Stewart (c. 1786-1823)

A free-born Virginia black, Stewart was converted in Marietta, Ohio, and he joined the Methodists. Stewart went as a missionary to the Wyandot Indians in northern Ohio, where he saw some success in preaching the gospel before his early death. His grave in Upper Sandusky, Ohio, is now a Methodist shrine.


Lott Carey (c. 1780-1828)

Carey was a pioneer missionary to Africa. Born a slave in Virginia, he was converted while working in Richmond. He purchased his freedom, became first a lay exhorter and then a licensed Baptist preacher. He went to Liberia in the 1820s as one of the first American missionaries to that continent and one of the founders of that nation. (Note: As the sources listed below demonstrate, his last name was sometimes spelled Carey and sometimes Cary.)


John Jasper (1812-1901)

A former slave preacher, Jasper became a leading black preacher in the post-Civil War South. A powerful orator, despite his dialect, he is best known for the sermon “The Sun Do Move.”


Daniel Payne (1811-93)

Educator and bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Payne was free-born in Charleston, S.C. Driven out of the South by legislation prohibiting the education of blacks, he moved to the North, where he attended seminary and became a pastor. There Payne also became a staunch advocate of the abolition of slavery. He helped found Wilberforce University near Xenia, Ohio.


Samuel Morris (1873-93)

A native of the Ivory Coast, Morris came to America to study so that he might return to preach to his people. He died while attending Taylor University in Indiana, but the story of his life inspired others to volunteer for missionary service.

Reade, Thaddeus C. *Samuel Morris (Prince Kaboo).* “Edition of 1924.” Upland, Ind.: Taylor Univ. Press, 1924. A brief, best-selling pamphlet that was probably most responsible for publicizing Morris’s life story and bringing financial stability to Taylor University.


**Matthew Anderson (1845-1928)**

“Pastor, churchman, and social reformer,” as the journal article below describes him, Anderson was Presbyterian pastor in Philadelphia. He was a graduate of Oberlin College and one of the first black students at Princeton Theological Seminary.


**Francis J. Grimké (1850-1937)**

A graduate of Princeton Seminary (where he was a classmate of Matthew Anderson), Grimké was the long-time pastor of Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. He was a theological conservative (“a Negro Puritan,” according to a biographer) and an unflinching advocate of black civil rights.

Bruce, Dickson D. *Archibald Grimké: Portrait of a Black Independent.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1993. A biography of Francis Grimké’s older brother that also is useful for studying Francis Grimké, especially his early years.


**Charles Tindley (1851-1933)**

Eloquent Methodist pastor and hymnwriter, he is best known for his large ministry in Philadelphia and his songs such as “Nothing Between” and “Stand By Me.” His song “I’ll Overcome Some Day” was adopted and altered by the civil rights movement as “We Shall Overcome.”


Jones, Ralph H. *Charles Albert Tindley: Prince of Preachers* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982) A good biography, certainly the best available resource, but suffering from a lack of bibliography and footnotes.


Charles Price Jones (1865-1949)

Founder of the Church of Christ (Holiness), U.S.A., a group similar to the Nazarenes in doctrine, Jones was a major leader among black holiness Christians. He was also a popular gospel songwriter. He split with C. H. Mason, founder of the Pentecostal Church of God in Christ, over the matter of tongues.


John Perkins (1930- )

The founder of Voice of Calvary ministries, Perkins is an evangelical minister involved not only in evangelistic and discipleship ministries but also in projects designed to foster economic development of poor black communities, notably in his native Mississippi. Perkins has also been involved in civil rights activity, such as promoting black voter registration. Often opposed, he received national notice after suffering a vicious beating by a Mississippi sheriff and his deputies.


