

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: RACE, RELIGION, AND CLASS: THE THOUGHT OF
REVEREND GEORGE FREEMAN BRAGG, JR.,

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George Freeman Bragg (1863-1940) was a black Episcopal priest and civil rights activist during the Progressive Era in America. He was also a brilliant yet complicated man whose thoughts and opinions were in tension with one another. Bragg's writings are not one dimensional and lend themselves to various interpretations. Hence, it is possible to view him as either an accommodationist, a man imbued with a racial consciousness or an unwieldy blend of both. However, much of the available literature on Bragg presents a one-dimensional portrait of him. Celebrating his many civil rights struggles, these portraits ignore the sometimes contradictory and complex nature of his thought. Indeed, Bragg bears witness to historian Wilson J. Moses's contention that all serious prolonged thinking eventually results in contradiction. Hence, the following thesis will critically examine the writings of Bragg in an effort to flesh out the complex character of his thought. It will also attempt to provide a workable explanation to explain the same. The writings of Bragg were not the only sources used to examine his thought. The works of historians Wilson J. Moses, Kevin K. Gaines, and Evelyn Higginbotham that focused on black elites, racial uplift ideology, and classism were indispensable to this study. Notwithstanding, there were a

plethora of primary and secondary sources that undergirded this study and helped to socially contextualize and interrogate Bragg's complex thought.

RACE, RELIGION, AND CLASS: THE THOUGHT OF REVEREND GEORGE
FREEMAN BRAGG JR.

by

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“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.”- Malcolm X

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

The following study will examine the thoughts and opinions of the Reverend George Freeman Bragg relative to his view of American racism and the plight of African Americans during the Progressive Era in Baltimore. As a civil rights leader and literary savant, Bragg exemplified his activism not merely through social protest and institution building, but through the disciplines of journalism and historical research. Indeed, at the mere age of 19 he founded Virginia's first African American newspaper, called *The Lancet* which was concerned with black empowerment through politics. In 1898, he founded the *Ledger* newspaper in Baltimore and two years later he merged his paper with John Murphy's *Afro* to become the *Afro American Ledger*. Its name was later changed to the *Afro American* and Bragg was its editor until 1915. This newspaper is still in circulation today and since its inception it has addressed and advocated for African American political, social and religious empowerment. Bragg's histories of the Episcopal Church are also monumental as they are still recognized as authorities on the history of African Americans within the Episcopal Church.

As a religious and civil rights leader, Bragg was rector of Baltimore's historic St. James Episcopal Church from 1892 to 1940. During his tenure as rector Bragg fought on many fronts, such as the fight for equal pay for black teachers, and the fight to end police brutality and segregation on trolley cars. Bragg also believed in institution building and thus sought to the needs of the black poor, in part by founding the Maryland Home for

Friendless Colored Children in 1899 for black orphans. However, despite Bragg's impressive body of work and civil rights resume, he was not unidimensional. Indeed, some interpreters, while justifiably recounting Bragg's valiant efforts against racism, have neglected to address the complex and sometimes contradictory character of his thought and ideas relative to American racism, southern culture and the black poor. Based on many of his writings, Bragg seemed to valorize certain southern personalities such Confederate General Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis, both of whom were icons of the racist Lost Cause Movement during the 19th and early 20th centuries. He also affirmed aspects of southern, white culture that many blacks during the Gilded Age considered icons of white supremacy, such as his positive affirmation of the racist trope of the "black Mammy," among other beliefs. He also tended to view the black poor as morally inept, superstitious and criminal, despite his advocacy for the same. The omission or lack of discussion of such aspects of Bragg's thought in biographical treatments ostensibly results in a romanticized portrait.

As a result, it is not the intention of this study to present a romanticized portrait of Bragg by exemplifying those viewpoints he espoused which are amenable to the social sensibilities of 21st century western readers. Nor is it the intention of this work to denigrate Bragg for views deemed repugnant when viewed through a 21st century moral lens. This study seeks to humanize Bragg, by acknowledging the complex, contradictory and sometimes condescending nature of his thought and providing a historical context and nuanced interpretation of the same. Such a posture does not negate the necessity for sharp critique but merely provides a historical context in which to do so. In so doing this

study follows the methodological construct of historian Wilson Jeremiah Moses, who not only acknowledged the contradictory nature of the human cognition as reflected in the thoughts of 19th century thinkers but sought to distance his historiographies of said figures from both doxological interpretations and ahistorical denunciations. Hence, the following study is intentionally provocative as it seeks to demythologize Bragg, freeing him from these two extremes and to present him as a human being in all his ideological strengths and weaknesses.

CHAPTER II: Review of Literature

During the Gilded Era the African American community in Baltimore was abuzz with civil rights agitation as black leaders fought against the myriad guises of Jim Crow in Baltimore. While some historians argue that Jim Crow in Baltimore was relatively benign when compared to its manifestation in southern states, some contemporaries of the period, such as activist and black attorney Walter T. McGuinn, believed, “Disfranchisement, ‘Jim Crowism’ and segregation” were “but the subtler forms of race slavery” in Baltimore.¹ Against this oppressive back-drop however, Baltimore was also home to an opulent black aristocratic class. The splendor of this class could be seen in its living accommodations. Booker T. Washington, the most influential black leader of the Gilded Era, believed the black community’s “most comfortable and attractive homes in proportion to the population” existed “in the city of Baltimore.” The financial coffers of this class were also noted. According to one calculation conducted in 1890, at least twenty African Americans “represented a wealth of \$500,000 in Baltimore.”²

Such opulent living on the part of some elites suggested to some African Americans an aloofness from the daily struggles of the black masses and raised suspicions on the part of the black underclass of the black elite’s commitment to civil rights. According to Episcopal historian Harold T. Lewis, in his work, *Yet with a Steady Beat: The African*

¹ Dennis Halpin, “Reforming Charm City: Grassroots Activism, Politics, and the Making of Modern Baltimore, 1877-1920,” (PhD diss., New Brunswick Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2012), 233-34.

² Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 77.

Americans Struggle for Recognition in the Episcopal Church, blacks in the Episcopal Church, which historically had the largest concentration of black elites, had to constantly answer the “allegation of ‘Uncle Tom-ism.’”³ Despite such criticism, black elites were not immune to all forms of white supremacy and some were ardent civil rights activists. The Reverend George Freeman Bragg, rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Baltimore from 1892 to 1940, was one such elite. His civil rights resume, which included, but was not limited to, the establishment of an African American orphanage for young black boys in 1899, direct engagement with the perennial fight for racial equality within the Episcopal church and an exhaustive literary corpus, which included numerous newspaper articles and historical works premised on black empowerment, strongly suggested a figure who was dedicated to the betterment of the black community.

However, despite the activism of Bragg and many others, the interrelationship between the black aristocracy and civil rights activism in Baltimore was not seamless or devoid of tension, especially when it came to the black upper classes’ views of the black underclasses. Indeed, many black aristocrats were beholden to certain ideas that seemed to problematize and detract from their social activism on behalf of the black masses. Racial uplift ideology, which many elites subscribed to, has been brought into question by some historians. This ideology was a patriarchal, and hierarchical construct and under its auspices the black elite, both male and female, believed it was their moral obligation, to

³ Harold T. Lewis, *Yet With A Steady Beat: The African Americans Struggle for Recognition in the Episcopal Church* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 3.

“reform the character and manage the behavior of the black masses,”⁴ particularly that of the poor and lower classes. W. E. B. Du Bois’s influential essay, *The Talented Tenth*, articulated this understanding of racial uplift’s class and patriarchal pretensions.

The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.⁵

This understanding of uplift was prevalent throughout the black upper class. Even Booker T. Washington, who differed with Du Bois relative to the necessity of a liberal arts education, nonetheless concurred with Du Bois that racial uplift was the panacea for the moral degradation which affected the masses of African Americans.

However, despite the prevalence of this idea, not all black elites believed it was their obligation to reform the black underclass. In fact, some wanted nothing more than to distance themselves from the black underclass. According to Bragg, this “exclusionary spirit of negroes against negroes” had roots in the antebellum period. Drawing from his biography of William Levington, founder of St. James Episcopal Church, Bragg noted that Levington fought against a “‘*caste spirit*’ that free negroes had toward their brethren in bondage [Emphasis Mine]” in early St. James.⁶ Bragg stated that free negroes were so

⁴ Kevin K. Gaines, “Racial Uplift Ideology in the Era of “the Negro Problem,” Teachers Serve National Humanities Center. Accessed December 11, 2018, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1865-1917/essays/racialuplift.htm>>

⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth,” ed. Booker T. Washington, *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes*, (New York: J. Pott & Company, 1903), 33.

⁶ George Freeman Bragg, *The First Negro Priest on Southern Soil* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1909), 14.

fervent in their desire to oust the enslaved population from their midst, that the prolonged stress of fighting against this position resulted in Levington's early death.⁷ While Bragg did not distance himself from activism, he was an adherent of uplift ideology, which, as previously stated, was not always egalitarian in its pretensions toward the black underclass. In fact, some contemporary historians classify this ideology as racist and thus challenge some of the positions taken by black elites. Assessing the impact of this ideology on the intellectual thought of Bragg is complicated by the contradictory and sometimes complex nature of Bragg's thought. As historian Wilson Jeremiah Moses reminds us, "all active thinking run unavoidably into contradiction" and Moses applied this concept to the intellectual moorings of black intellectuals of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸ Thus, Bragg is not easily reduced to the level of a sinner or elevated to the level of a saint. As a result, the following literature review will attempt to provide the reader with a brief, yet critical assessment of some works about the black aristocracy, racial uplift and black Episcopalianism during the Progressive Era and Gilded Age.

In 2004 historian Wilson Jeremiah Moses published, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey*. While Moses does not include Bragg in his coterie of black intellectuals, Bragg was nonetheless a contemporary of all of the leaders reviewed in the study. And according to historian August Meier in his *Negro Thought in America*,

⁷ George Freeman Bragg, *The First Negro*, 13-14.

⁸ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xi.

1880-1915, Bragg occasionally worked directly with Du Bois and Washington on social justice issues related to African Americans.⁹ Crummell, the 19th century black Episcopal priest and Black Nationalist leader, was a fellow Episcopalian who on occasion shared his pulpit Bragg. Their proximity to one another, with Bragg in Baltimore at St. James Episcopal Church and Crummell in Washington at St. Luke's Episcopal Church made their fellowship palpable and upon Crummell's death, Bragg was crowned the leading black Episcopalian in America.¹⁰ In many ways then Bragg could have been included within Moses' volume, particularly in light of Moses' reason for writing.

In his work Moses argued for the ontological status of contradiction as an indelible part of human cognition and social reality.¹¹ Indeed, in making such an assertion Moses intentionally followed the lead of Crummell. According to Moses, Crummell believed human beings were not merely destined to encounter and grapple with the vicissitudes and conundrums of the human condition, but to attempt to make intelligible the nebulous and inscrutable aspects of the human experience.¹² Hence, the perennial effort on the part of human beings to understand, interpret, and systematize the seemingly incongruent, abstract, and absurd aspects of their world, led to various intellectual tensions and contradictions in their thought. Moses finds evidence for this propensity to contradiction in the ideas of prominent black leaders of the 19th and 20th centuries and Bragg is no exception. However, Moses does not merely set about the task of illustrating various

⁹ August Meier, *Negro Thought in America 1880-1915, Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963), 111, 223.

¹⁰ August Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 111, 223.

¹¹ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Creative Conflict*, xi, 2.

¹² Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Creative Conflict*, xv.

ideological contradictions in his chosen coterie of black thinkers and leaders. As a historian, Moses undertook the additional task of understanding their contradictions within their historical setting. If Moses is right that contradiction is central to the human condition and thus black thought, it is possible to comfortably situate Bragg, whose thought was complex and contradictory at times, within this black intellectual universe, where contradiction was not an anomaly.

Historian Kevin Gaines in his 1996 work, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, discussed the ideological shortcomings of black leadership through his critique of racial uplift ideology. In so doing Gaines provided a gauge in which to apprehend Bragg's idea of racial uplift and acquire insight on his frame of mind in regard to the black underclass. Like Moses, Gaines noted various tensions and contradictions within this ideology starting with its contested meaning.¹³ According to Gaines there were two competing notions of racial uplift ascendant during the 19th century. The first, which flourished after Emancipation and during Reconstruction, was premised on a democratic ideal which saw racial uplift through collective communal praxis. Hence, uplift required and respected the skills, leadership and ingenuity of a diverse assortment of African Americans in various undertakings.¹⁴ According to Gaines the contribution of this collective assortment of individuals is emblazoned within the "collective memory" of the African American community who "recognize[ed] the service of countless parents,

¹³ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), xiv-xv, 20-21.

¹⁴ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 1-2.

teachers, ministers, musicians, and librarians as community builders.”¹⁵ However, at the end of Reconstruction another understanding of uplift emerged to challenge this democratic vision. This understanding was based on a rigid dichotomy which placed black elites at the top of a social class hierarchy as a result of their assimilation of Victorian values, education and cultural bearing. These elites believed it was their providential responsibility, as the “better class” to lead the allegedly uncouth, ignorant and unassimilated black masses at the bottom of this class hierarchy, into moral and social liberation.¹⁶ Implicit within this definition is the tacit acknowledgement on the part of black elites that the “minstrel representations stressing culturally backward, or morally suspect blacks” were accurate portrayals of the black underclass.¹⁷ Such an admission was designed to force white Americans to acknowledge the presence of classes within the black community and specifically to view black elites as categorically distinct from the black masses, as exemplars of the highest cultural and moral refinements of the Victorian era.

In delineating these two distinct understandings of racial uplift, Gain’s valorizes the former and reins in the second for critical review. However, Bragg’s understanding of racial uplift does not neatly fit into a dichotomized understanding of these two definitions, but harbors aspects of both despite their lack of congruency. Indeed, he held certain condescending views about the black underclass, while at the same time he respected and cared for members of this class, as he genuinely and diligently worked to uplift them

¹⁵ Ibid, 2.

¹⁶ Ibid, xiv.

¹⁷ Ibid, 74.

through education and the creation of black institutions. This scenario seems to reflect the complex character of Bragg's thought which was not unidimensional.

Historian and theologian Gary Dorrien in his work, *The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel*, examined the black social gospel that was ascendant during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his examination Dorrien briefly discussed how proponents of the black social gospel sometimes became ensnared within the negative entanglements of "a politics of respectability." Such proponents according to Dorrien, "recycled harmful stereotypes about Afro American culture and manners."¹⁸ This observation has particular resonance for Bragg, as Dorrien specifically noted that "George Freeman Bragg's African Episcopal Church in Baltimore" was an "anchor of the black social gospel."¹⁹ By way of implication Dorrien suggests the possibility, that Bragg could have occasionally become ensnared in "a politics of respectability" like other black social gospel leaders. While Dorrien does not specifically state such, he does address Du Bois's entanglements with this ideology and such may have, by way of proxy, implications for Bragg.

To be sure, Dorrien considered Du Bois to be the mantel piece and exemplar of the black social gospel. It is for this reason that some of his exploits can be seen as representative or indicative of positions other social gospel proponents possibly advanced over the course of their careers. This is particularly pertinent as it pertains to racial uplift and pejorative views of the black poor. For instance, in 1897 before the American Negro

¹⁸ Gary Dorrien, *The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Social Gospel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 12.

¹⁹ Gary Dorrien, *The New Abolition*, 20-21.

Academy, Du Bois had this to say about poor, African Americans in the south, “Unless we conquer our present vices, they will conquer us; we are diseased, we are developing criminal tendencies, and an alarmingly large percentage of our men and women are sexually impure.”²⁰ Such appears to be consistent with some black elites who cast moral aspersions on the foibles of the black underclasses during the late nineteenth century. Such views are also commensurate with various pronouncements from Bragg.

Historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad in his work, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*, also noted that such pronouncements as Du Bois’s aforementioned quote were indicative of “racial uplift ideology” where black elites, in the name of unity, engaged in “one-sided jeremiads against the poor and disreputable blacks.”²¹ However, sociologist Aldon D. Morris in his work, *The Scholar Denied W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* stalwartly objects to such interpretations of Du Bois. While Morris does not deny that Du Bois discussed the “cultural ignorance” of many African Americans, characterizing them as “undeveloped people,” “child-like” and “backward,” he nonetheless denied that such meant Du Bois harbored pejorative views of the black underclass.²² Instead, he argued that Du Bois’s apparent broadsides against the black masses should be contextualized within the language of social constructionism and race, which is understood as eschewing biological

²⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Conservation of the Races” The American Negro Academy Occasional Papers 2 (Washington, D.C: American Negro Academy, 1897), www.webdubois.org/dbConsrsvOfRaces.html.

²¹ Khalil G. Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 2010, 68.

²² Aldon D. Morris, *The Scholar Denied and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (California: University of California Press, 2015), 30, 40-41.

constructions of race and premising racial inequality on group power dynamics and “economic exploitation, and social oppression.”²³ As such, Morris concluded that Du Bois understood crime in black communities as a natural outgrowth of the debilitating effects of chattel slavery and sustained racial oppression, not inherent, individual failings as argued by Social Darwinists of the period.²⁴ Aldon’s interpretation could have been applied to Bragg who largely attributed crime in the black community to segregation and racism as opposed to the foibles of the black community.²⁵ However, on other occasions Bragg seemed to proffer reasons for crime in the black community that were moral in nature and thus ran counter to sociological explanations. Muhammad’s discussion of Du Bois’s bilateral reasoning and the tension of maintaining incongruent positions could be applied to Bragg.

Indeed, Muhammad noted that Du Bois posited a bilateral strategy for combating racism in the 1899 publication of, *The Philadelphia, A Social Study*. This was an ethnographic study of Philadelphia’s black and impoverished seventh ward. It was at once, individualistic and intra-racial as it promoted self-help and thus attacked immorality and crime within the black community. But this work was also externally directed as it assailed white supremacy and systemic racism as social accomplices in the construction of black criminality. Thus, prior to the publication of Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, Muhammad noted that Du Bois had “an unmistakable tension between his elitist sensibility and Victorian concern about moral accountability, and his professional view of crime as a

²³ Aldon D. Morris, *The Scholar Denied*, 44.

²⁴ Aldon D. Morris, *The Scholar Denied*, 40-41.

²⁵ George F. Bragg, "Toussaint L'Ouverture Quoted in Reply to Dr. Ainslie," *The Baltimore Sun*, Dec 13, 1933, ProQuest.

‘tangible phenomena of Negro Prejudice [Emphasis Mine].’”²⁶ This view seems to echo Wilson’s emphasis on contradiction in the thought of black leaders. This observation also seems reminiscent of Bragg who, as previously mentioned, incorporated two seemingly incongruent notions of racial uplift in his thought and praxis. And Bragg, like Du Bois gained much traction from this dual approach. During lectures Du Bois selectively oscillated between the two parts of this approach and emphasized one part or the other “depending on the relative biases and ‘stupidity’ of his audiences.”²⁷ Dorrien concurred with Muhammad’s assessment of Du Bois’s bilateral thought and two-pronged solution to American racism in *The Philadelphia Negro*.²⁸ Dorrien also echoed Muhammad’s view of the pejorative aspects of racial uplift ideology or “respectability politics” among some black elites, who were proponents of the black social gospel.²⁹

Historian Ibram X. Kendi in his work, *Stamped from the Beginning, The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, concurs with the general contours of Dorrien and Muhammad’s assessment of *The Philadelphia Negro*. However, Kendi’s work, writ large, is generally concerned with the myriad guises of racism in American history. As such, he not only provides a more in-depth analysis of racial uplift and its relationship to racism, but deems uplift an expression of racism, despite its abolitionist roots.³⁰ This assertion directly trespasses upon Bragg’s valorization of various abolitionist leaders and the

²⁶ Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 67-8.

²⁷ Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 72, 227-8.

²⁸ Gary Dorrien, *The New Abolition*, 183.

²⁹ Gary Dorrien, *The New Abolition*, 12.

³⁰ Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 124-125.

assimilationist ideology he extrapolated from them. Hence, Kendi's discussion of racial uplift's origins and his interpretation of the same is germane to Bragg's thought. Thus, in his chapter entitled, "Uplift Suasion," Kendi traced the racist roots of uplift ideology back to the "craze to exhibit Phyllis Wheatley and Francis Williams and other 'extraordinary' Black people." This exhibition implied that all blacks could be like Wheatley and Williams and thus win their freedom if they followed their moral example.³¹ Thus, abolitionists of the antebellum period in America attempted to undermine slavery by admonishing free blacks to engage in acts of social sobriety and to culturally assimilate Victorian values and behavior. Thence, free blacks were to be abstemious, frugal, faithful spouses, law abiding and devout Christians, so as to counter racist characterizations of blacks as morally debased, promiscuous and ignorant. In so doing, abolitionists believed most whites would eventually see the humanity of free blacks and such would bring about the diminution or demise of American slavery.³²

However, to posit the cultural assimilation of European norms and values as the litmus test in determining one's humanity was the express definition of racism and ethnocentrism. For if said strategy was successful, free blacks would only be considered human if they were seen through a Eurocentric lens as white men in dark skins. To be unassimilated then was to be deemed beyond the pale of human consideration. For Kendi, the abolitionist strategy was inherently racist for it assumed that "racist ideas" about black people were the direct result of "negative Black behavior." This meant that, "notions of

³¹ Ibid, 124.

³² Ibid.

black inferiority” which were allegedly premised on “negative black behavior” were valid and consequently, to believe in notions of black inferiority was to hold racist ideas.³³

In her chapter entitled, “The Politics of Respectability,” which appeared in her 1993 work, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, historian Evelyn Higginbotham also noted some of the pejorative propensities associated with racial uplift ideology. However, unlike many other writers on this subject, she did so from the vantage point of African American women. Indeed, her work chronicled the history of the Women’s Convention Movement in the black Baptist church during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and she noted that these women were staunch advocates of respectability politics.³⁴ Bragg supported such movements and women’s organizations, to include the National Association of Colored Women and the Colored Young Women’s Christian Association. Both he and his wife, Nellie Bragg also supported the Colored Fresh Air Circle and Empty Stocking Circle of which Mrs. Bragg was the treasurer. These organizations, composed solely of black women, aided poor black children in Baltimore.³⁵ The question becomes, how did notions of respectability, find expression in the well-meaning charitable work conducted by the Braggs in Progressive Era Baltimore. Higginbotham seems to give an appositional response to this question based upon her understanding of respectability’s dual propensity to both affirm and demean.

³³ Ibid, 124-125.

³⁴ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 185-229.

³⁵ Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 76-77, "Child Helping Society," *Afro-American*, Feb 27, 1909, ProQuest.

Thus, on one the hand Higginbotham noted that members of women's organizations that espoused respectability politics, ran the risk of distancing themselves from valuing black cultural art forms and aspects of working-class culture. Indeed, Higginbotham noted that some members were dogmatically blinded from appreciating the radical elements in jazz and the dance hall. They did not see such forms as means of protest, only as heretical breaks from the orthodoxy of Victorian norms and values.³⁶ Poor and working-class black women's apparel and the comportment of blacks in church were also stringently policed by the proponents of respectability. If women did not dress modestly, they were blamed for any unwanted or crude sexual advances by men. In church, black people were also chided for being "too noisy" or emotional as such actions were considered uncouth and backward.³⁷ Such conclusions have salience relative to Bragg's thinking about the black underclass. And the Victorian laden ideas about proper comportment may have helped to set the tone for the women's organizations he and his wife were intimately involved with in Baltimore. However, on the other hand, respectability "held subversive implications" for Higginbotham.³⁸ Truly, it was a potent weapon in the hands of poor black women of the convention, as it equipped them with the vestments to radically contest the racist discourses of black women during the Progressive Era. Thus, in contradistinction to the Social Darwinian portrait of black women as "lazy, immoral and inept," the "poor black washer-woman, cook and toiler," through respectability "manners and morals, boldly asserted their will and agency to define themselves."³⁹ However, Higginbotham's analysis

³⁶ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 200.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 201.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 188.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 191-92.

of black Baptist women also provided a counter narrative to the staunch dichotomy drawn between the black upper and lower classes in regard to the promulgation of uplift ideology.

Indeed, Higginbotham noted that while the leadership of the Women's Convention of the black Baptist Church was composed of middle-class black women, its membership was almost solely composed of working-class black women.⁴⁰ This organization was not a spawn of the black aristocracy, but a working-class organization that adopted respectability as a necessity for upward social mobility and social liberation. This revelation challenges the popularly held notion that respectability was an idea found only among the black upper classes. But its presence among the black working class, naturally resulted in different conclusions regarding race, class and racial progress. For instance, Higginbotham noted that many black elites believed the black lower classes were primarily responsible for the lack of racial progress. However, the black Baptists women of the convention believed it was the black elite and the criminal element among the black underclass that were the major bulwarks toward racial progress. Higginbotham observes this in Nannie Burroughs's use of biblical narratives. Burroughs, who was the leader of the Women's Convention of the black Baptist church, likened "black Baptist women" unto "the biblical Israelites" and "described their foes as, the giant Anakite people (white America *and the black elite*) and the nomadic, marauding Amalekites (white and black idle and lawless classes)."⁴¹ It was Burroughs's apocalyptic vision that "the children of Amalek

⁴⁰ Ibid, 205.

⁴¹ Ibid, 208.

would be routed and the giant sons of Amalek driven out” by “the common people of whom God has made more than any other.”⁴²

It should not be surprising then that Higginbotham observed a marked difference between the respectability politics of the Women’s Convention i.e. working-class black women and that of middle-class and elite black women, as exemplified in the National Association of Colored Women.⁴³ Higginbotham juxtaposed the orientation of these two organizations in their regard to the black underclasses and in doing so illustrated a diversity in understandings of uplift during the 19th and 20th centuries. In a presidential address delivered by National Association of Colored Women President Mary Church Terrell in 1904, Higginbotham detected a note of class elitism typically associated with racial uplift and the black middle-class. In her address Terrell said that black women will always be judged by the actions of working class and poor black women. Hence, while middle class and elite black women may wish to “shun them and hold” themselves “entirely aloof from them” it was the responsibility of the National Association of Colored Women to “go down among the lowly, the illiterate and even the vicious to whom we are bound by the ties of race and sex and put forth every possible effort to uplift and reclaim them.”⁴⁴ For Higginbotham, this statement denoted class differentiation as the National Association of Colored Women did not expressly identify with poor and working-class black women.⁴⁵ Obversely, she noted that the Women’s Convention readily identified with working class

⁴² Ibid, 209.

⁴³ Ibid, 206-07.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 207.

women and considered middle and upper-class blacks who abstained from social activism bulwarks to racial progress.

Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier in his 1964 work, *The Negro Church in America* also observed a dichotomy between the black upper and lower classes, but he noted this in the context of the black church during the period of Emancipation. Indeed, as stated in the introduction to this paper, entrenched class prejudice was an attendant feature of St. James Episcopal Church prior to Bragg's arrival and during his pastorate which began in 1891. Reverend William Levington, who Bragg stated was the founder of St. James Episcopal Church, had to contend with such issues and so did Bragg.⁴⁶ Frazier's study then, provides an interpretation of such class-oriented situations that was not only pervaded St. James, but was a staple feature of other elite Black Churches. Thus, Frazier's historical interpretation of class within the Black Church will provide context for St. James and shed light on how such may have affected Bragg's thought. For Frazier, issues of class or social stratification, which he noted as prominent features in the African American community, were not the product of slavery or antebellum plantation life, despite the presence of what he called "germs of stratification" among the enslaved population during the antebellum period.⁴⁷ Such social stratification, according to Frazier, was the product of the merger of two very different black ecclesiastical institutions, namely the "Invisible Institution" (II) and the "Institutional Church" (IC) which occurred during the period of Emancipation and

⁴⁶ Mildred Louise McGlotten, "Rev George Freeman Bragg, A Negro Pioneer in Social Work" (Master's thesis, Howard University, 1948), 270-30, George Freeman Bragg, *The First Negro Priest*, 13-14.

⁴⁷ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 36.

Reconstruction.⁴⁸ This merger was truly a synthesis of opposites for immediately after Emancipation the majority of African Americans fled from the Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian churches, to the Methodist and Baptist churches. These latter churches allowed the formerly enslaved a greater degree of ecclesiastical autonomy and the freedom to worship with unencumbered passion and visceral intensity, whereas many free blacks preferred the more urbane and staid worship services of the Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian churches.⁴⁹

However, despite the gulf which separated these church denominations, Frazier is careful not to erect a rigid dichotomy. Thus, he noted that class differences also permeated some Baptist and Methodist churches as they were based on “what were considered standards of civilized behavior” and “distinctions in color.”⁵⁰ There were a number of factors which can be gleaned from Frazier’s work, which generally differentiated these two institutions. One factor was that the IC was a product of the formerly enslaved population in the south, while the IC was the product of “free blacks who were free prior to the Civil War.”⁵¹ Differences in geography and educational attainments can also be adduced, for in the North education for blacks was not merely theological but included “other elements,” but education for blacks in the south was virtually nonexistent as “limitations were placed on even allowing the Negro to read the Bible.”⁵² As a general rule, the clergy associated

⁴⁸ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church*, 36.

⁴⁹ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church*, 37.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid, 36

⁵² Ibid, 44

with the IC had some level of formal education, while the clergy in the II were generally uneducated.

With such stark differences in geography and education it should not be surprising that there were significant religio-cultural differences which caused friction between the IC and II. Frazier illustrated such differences by briefly describing the views of many of the black elite toward the ecclesiastical style of worship which permeated many southern churches. According to Frazier, the northern churches had a plethora of “mulattoes and unmixed negroes who represented a higher degree of assimilation of white or European culture.”⁵³ Hence, some educated, northern unmixed black and mulatto clergymen objected to the singing of slave spirituals that were a prominent feature in many southern churches. Some northern as well as educated southern clergymen pejoratively described the spirituals as “corn field ditties.” In general, clergymen objected to what they perceived as the “heathenish mode of worship” they observed in southern black religion.⁵⁴

Findings in historian Willard B. Gatewood’s 1990 publication, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920*, place Bragg and St. James Episcopal Church at the center of the religious and social life for the black aristocracy in Baltimore during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For instance, Gatewood seemed to follow the logical trajectory of Frazier’s observation that there was a religio-cultural and social chasm that existed between the “institutional church” and the “invisible institution.” He believed this historic difference, rooted in the post Emancipation period, resulted in black elites attending predominately, though not exclusively Episcopal, Congregational and

⁵³ Ibid, 36.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 37

Presbyterian churches and members of the black underclasses attending Baptist and Methodists churches. As such it should not be surprising that St. James Episcopal Church, of which Bragg was the rector, was one of the main hubs of the black elite in Baltimore.⁵⁵ According to Law Professor Larry S. Gibson in his work, *Young Thurgood: The Making of a Supreme Court Justice*, noted that Bragg provided “occasional spiritual advice” to a teenaged Thurgood Marshall, who was a member of his church.⁵⁶

Frazier, as previously stated, also noted the prevalence and importance of mulattoes in black elite circles during the post Emancipation period. However, Gatewood utilized Frazier’s 1939 work, *The Negro Family in the United States*, as opposed to his 1964 *The Negro Church in America* and noted that while “a light complexion was a factor in gaining admission to the upper class, *its significance as a stratifier varied from place to place*.”⁵⁷ Baltimore was allegedly such a place as Gatewood noted that biracialism or light skin color was not an obsession of the black elite in Baltimore. He arrived at this conclusion by juxtaposing the absence of articles in *The Afro American Ledger* that covered the social soirees of light skinned gatherings of the black elite, with the inundation of such articles in other black newspapers and journals about the black elite in other cities. As Bragg was editor of the *Ledger* until 1915, he played a central role in the excision of articles that focused exclusively on the social shindigs of elite, black mulattoes. Nonetheless, *The Washington Bee*, which was a prominent black newspaper that chronicled the affairs of the black elite of Washington, DC, was a prime example of black newspapers that provided

⁵⁵ Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 290.

⁵⁶ Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood: The Making of a Supreme Court Justice* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2012), 74.

⁵⁷ Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 153.

extensive coverage of the social affairs of black elite mulattoes. Indeed, Gatewood asserted that this newspaper had a plethora of articles that regularly chronicled the gatherings of “blue veinism” or blue vein societies of the black elite in that city.⁵⁸ The highlighting of such high-powered soirees for light skinned and mulatto members of the black elite suggested, in not so subtle ways, the importance, indeed superiority of light skinned blacks and mulattoes. Indeed, prominent Washingtonian and black aristocrat Daniel Murray, who was an assistant librarian at the Library of Congress during Reconstruction, sang the praises of biracialism.

According to historian Elizabeth Dowling Taylor in her work, *The Original Black Elite: Daniel Murray and the Story of the A Forgotten Era*, some black Washington newspapers and magazines such as *The Colored American* and *The Colored American Magazine*, sometimes carried the opinions of Murray who espoused the superiority of mulattos. According to Dowling, Murray argued mulattoes were biologically superior to both pure whites and blacks. This opinion obviously placed Murray at odds with Bragg relative to the biologically superior status of mulattoes. Indeed, historian Hayward Farrar in his work, *The Baltimore Afro American 1892-1950*, discussed the impact of racial uplift ideology and the black elite on the racial character of the articles in *The Afro-American Ledger*.⁵⁹ He stated that from the newspaper’s early iteration from 1892 to 1915 when Bragg was editor, it was geared toward black elites. But despite this fact, Farrar did not document a fascination with light skin or biracialism in the pages of *The Afro American*

⁵⁸ Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 162.

⁵⁹ Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American 1892-1950* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 131-39.

Ledger during Bragg's tenure as editor. In fact, one article documented its opposite. In a 1903 article published in *The Afro American Ledger* entitled, "The Greatest Negro, A Brave Black Man," an unknown author seemed to champion unmixed blacks relative to mulattoes. The author stated that Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass, both of whom were biracial, and Toussaint L Overture, who was pure-blooded, were the three greatest black men of the nineteenth century. But the author declared Overture as the greatest of the three. The author ended the article with a challenge to readers to find "a mulatto to match the might of Toussaint in courage, purpose and endurance."⁶⁰ While the author of said article is unknown, Bragg still can take some credit for its publication as he was the editor of the *Ledger* at the time. Both Murray's and the unknown author's viewpoint were out of kilter with the prevailing wisdom of the era which attributed an inherent superiority to the property of whiteness. While Murray and some black elites believed white blood made them superior, this was at odds with the predominate view of the era, which attributed a weak constitution to mulattos. Indeed, in America it was argued that the infusion of black blood into white bloodlines diluted the inherent strength and vitality of whites. But in the October 1902 edition of *The Colored American Magazine*, Murray attributed a kind of "hybrid vigor" to mulattos for he asserted:⁶¹

Years ago, it was believed that the mulatto was a hybrid and was of weak physique and doomed to die out, but they are not dying out; indeed, they have greater strength, larger families, more prolific in sexual union, greater mental power, and a larger percent of increase than either the white man or the black man, drawing strength from their black side and intelligence from their white.⁶²

⁶⁰ "Baltimore, March 7, 1903," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Mar 07, 1903, ProQuest.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Dowling Taylor, *The Original Black Elite: Daniel Murray and the Story of a Forgotten Era* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), 251.

⁶² Elizabeth Dowling Taylor, *The Original Black Elite*, 253.

In making such an assertion, Murray merely provided a different spin on the racist notion of Social Darwinism that was evident in his day. He simply substituted whites for persons of biracial parentage, as the true carriers of a superior “blood inheritance.”⁶³ Interestingly, Murray considered southern whites to have different bloodlines than those of his much-vaunted Scottish forebears. He believed that the tainted blood which coursed through the veins of southern whites manifested itself in acts of debauchery and violence. Indeed, he stated, “the criminal instinct of the people . . . [furnish] illustration of the power of blood inheritance.”⁶⁴ Thus, the south, which he stated was historically “the dumping ground for the thieves, respited murderers and prostitutes of Europe” was a direct reflection of their genetic predisposition.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, Murray still argued for the intellectual and physical superiority of mulattos to pure bred whites and blacks and as stated earlier, such must surely have been a bone of contention between he and Bragg.

Episcopal priest and historian, Harold T. Lewis dedicated his work, *Yet with a Steady Beat: The African American Struggle for Recognition in the Episcopal Church*, to Bragg, who he championed as “Priest, Historiographer and Exemplar.”⁶⁶ Indeed, Lewis’s work seemed to reiterate some of the arguments put forward by Bragg to defend the history and integrity of black Episcopalians. One such argument he reiterated was that blacks who remained in the Episcopal Church after Emancipation did so not because they were “Uncle Toms,” desired social advancement or were class elitists, but because they truly believed

⁶³ Ibid, 250.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 251.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 252.

⁶⁶ Harold T. Lewis, *Yet with A Steady Beat: The African American Struggle For Recognition in the Episcopal Church* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), VI.

the Episcopal Church was *catholic*.⁶⁷ For black Episcopalians, being *catholic* meant that the Episcopal Church was originally founded upon an idea of racial universalism which promoted inclusivity and egalitarianism. They believed this idea mirrored the original intention of the primitive church. Indeed, being “‘catholic’ demonstrated that Christ’s religion was intended for all people.”⁶⁸

As such, African American’s reasons for remaining in the Episcopal Church, according to Lewis were theological and not sociological. Hence, Lewis challenged Gatewood and black religious scholars C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, who he contends in their respective works, suggested that blacks who gravitated toward or remained within the Episcopal Church were “social climbers” or “Uncle Toms.”⁶⁹ As a result, Lewis eschewed sociological reasons for black elite’s affiliation with the Episcopal Church and proffered a theological reason instead. In the introduction to his work, however, Lewis claimed that he was not trying to supplant such sociological reasons with a theological one for social reasons “alone cannot account for the dedication and unfeigned loyalty blacks have shown to the Episcopal Church for 200 years.”⁷⁰ Hence, from this statement Lewis initially wanted to expand the cadre of reasons for black affiliation with the Episcopal Church to include a theological reason, not dismiss sociological reasons.⁷¹ However, later in his work he asserted, “Black Episcopalians remained in the church . . .

⁶⁷ Harold T. Lewis, *Yet with A Steady Beat*, 2-3.

⁶⁸ Harold T. Lewis, *Yet with A Steady Beat*, 26.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 59, Willard B. Gatewood. *Aristocrats of Color*, 282, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 124, 159.

⁷⁰ Harold T. Lewis, *Yet with a Steady Beat*, 4.

⁷¹ Harold T. Lewis, *Yet with a Steady Beat*.

*not because they were social climbers, as Gatewood and Lincoln, and others might suggest, but out of a sense of entitlement” as the catholic character of the Episcopal Church, they believed, entitled them to equal membership within the church [Emphasis Mine].*⁷²

In some ways Lewis’ work seemed, at least in part, to be an apologia for black Episcopal membership within the Episcopal Church. Indeed, black fidelity to such an overtly racist institution such as the Episcopal Church has been a perennial thorn in the side of black Episcopalians and has demanded a satisfactory explanation from the same. Historian and Episcopal scholar Robert A. Bennett in his article, “Black Episcopalians: A History from the Colonial Period to the Present,” has risen to the challenge, following the same general trajectory of Lewis in reframing the image of black Episcopalians. But Bennett informs the readers of his article that he is not alone in this act of historical revisionism as there were others, both contemporaries and predecessors who “wrote to refute (the) theories” that “Negroes in the Episcopal church are social climbers and worse, seek to deny their peculiarly Black religious heritage.”⁷³ Among this group black Episcopal priest George Freeman Bragg and his 1922 work, *History of the Afro American Group of the Episcopal Church*, serve as a kind of archetype for those black Episcopalians whose literary works endeavor to redeem wish to redeem and elevate the historical image of black Episcopalians. Hence, Bennett notes the work of, “M. Moran Weston, Ph.D., *Social Policy of the Episcopal Church in the Twentieth Century*, Joseph Nicolson, *What is Happening to*

⁷² Ibid, 11, 59.

⁷³ Robert A. Bennett, “Black Episcopalians: A History from the Colonial Period to the Present,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 43, no. 3 (September 1974): 232.

the Negro in the Protestant Church, and Carleton Hayden and Otey Scruggs with publications in the *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*.”⁷⁴

This theodicy of black Episcopalians who have wrestled with their participation within the Episcopal Church, has not been lost on religious historian Laura F. Maffly-Kipp. In her article, “The Burdens of Church History” Maffly-Kipp stated that she has, “struggled (to) intellectually” make sense of African Americans, “particularly those like Bragg” who have expressed a fierce loyalty and undying fidelity to racially oppressive churches.⁷⁵ Like Lewis, the common sociological or historical explanations proffered by historians for African American’s identification with racially oppressive churches, such as the desire for “political advantage, economic gain or the securing of a certain kind of social status available through church life,” for Maffly-Kipp doesn’t “completely make sense of the inordinate desire of many blacks a century or more ago not just to *join* Christian churches.” But to actively relish “the meticulous cataloguing, recording, and tracing of collective progression” as Bragg had painstakingly done in his histories of the Episcopal Church.⁷⁶ In doing so they showed their unwavering fidelity to the church. However, unlike Lewis, Maffly-Kipp does not provide a theological explanation to explain this situation. It is tempting to view Lewis’s choice of a theological explanation, namely faith to explain African Americans fidelity to the Episcopal Church, as less than a scholarly solution to a

⁷⁴ Robert A. Bennett, “Black Episcopalians: A History from the Colonial Period to the Present,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 43, no. 3 (September 1974): 232.

⁷⁵ Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “The Burdens of Church History,” *Church History* 82, no. 2 (June 2013): 354.

⁷⁶ Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “The Burdens of Church History,” *Church History* 82, no. 2 (June 2013): 355.

historical conundrum. Indeed, utilizing Lewis's theological explanation allows one to conveniently side step the weight of scholarly opinion and the pejorative characterizations of black elites that accrue and recast them as pious, Christians who are true believers in the *catholicity* of the Christian Church. Hence, this theological explanation conveniently casts black Episcopalians in a positive, affirming light, but according to one historian of religion, religious passion has the potential to sacrifice critical analysis and plunge a well-meaning scholarly pursuit into a dogmatic abyss.

At least this is the opinion of historian Paul Griffin in his book review of Lewis's work. In it Griffin stated that Lewis, "writes out of a deep passion that is informed by his experiences in the Episcopalian priesthood."⁷⁷ However, it is this very passion and fondness for the priesthood that infringes upon the scholarly exercise. For Griffin concluded that it was this very passion which denied Lewis the necessary "detachment demanded" to produce a "critical and balanced work."⁷⁸ Thus, while he lauds Lewis for his attempt to write a "much needed history of African Americans struggle for recognition within the Episcopal Church" he believes the work was ultimately marred by "an almost blinding hagiography."⁷⁹ This writer does not go to the same extent that Griffin does in his sharp rebuke of Lewis, but Griffin's underlying concern should not be dispensed with because of his strong tone. Nonetheless, we do well to balance Griffin's critique with Dorrien's observation of the academy's "customary academic prejudice against religion

⁷⁷ Paul Griffin, review of *Yet with a Steady Beat: The African American Struggle For Recognition in the Episcopal Church*, by Harold T. Lewis, *Anglican and Episcopal History* 66, no. 3 (1997): 400-01. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42611880>.

⁷⁸ Paul Griffin, review of *Yet with a Steady Beat*, 402.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 401-02.

and religious intellectuals.”⁸⁰ Indeed, a perusal of some of the non-religious histories of the black Episcopal experience reveals some works which lack the “critical balance” Griffin calls for. Mildred Louise McGlotten’s thesis “Rev. George Freeman Bragg. A Negro Pioneer in Social Welfare” and Delmita P. Reid’s, “For Zion’s Sake, I Will Not Hold My Peace, George Freeman Bragg, Jr. 1863-1940” are two pioneering works in their examination of the life and works of Bragg. However, despite their immense scholarly contributions they seemed to lack a balanced assessment of Bragg. For instance, in Reid’s work she acknowledges Bragg’s adherence to racial uplift but does not mention any of the possible pitfalls associated with this ideology and Bragg’s adoption of it. McGlotten’s work merely celebrates Bragg’s many accomplishments with no critical commentary.

Scholar Rhondda Robinson Thomas in her work, “The First Negro Priest on Southern Soil: George Freeman Bragg, Jr. and the Struggle of Black Episcopalians in the South, 1824- 1909,” used Bragg as a template from which to examine the struggle of black Episcopalians against white supremacy in and outside of the Episcopal church from the antebellum period to the early nineteenth century. Thomas insightfully detailed how the refined, Victorian style of dress donned by some blacks during this period, counteracted the racist caricatures of “black men as brute” promulgated by white supremacists during the period.⁸¹ In several sections of her paper Thomas provided minute detail of the refined dress of black Episcopalians and in so doing spoke to their upper-class status. In one

⁸⁰ Gary Dorrien, *The New Abolition*, 9.

⁸¹ Rhondda Robinson Thomas, “The First Negro Priest on Southern Soil: George Freeman Bragg, Jr. and the Struggle of Black Episcopalians in the South, 1824-1909,” *Southern Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 93.

section of her paper Thomas examined a portrait of the 1906 Conference of Church Workers that was found in Bragg's 1909 publication, *The First Negro Priest on Southern Soil*. It shows thirty-eight black men adorned in Episcopal clerical garments. Several are arrayed "in the Episcopal priest's distinctive white surplice worn over the black cassock" but "most are clothed in well-tailored dark suits and clerical collars . . . and a few others have donned fancy ties."⁸² This description not only speaks to the cultured ecclesiastical adornment of the black aristocracy within the Episcopal Church, but also speaks to their economic status in terms of that class of blacks who had the financial means to acquire a tailored made suit and expensive neckties.

Thomas also noted Bragg's description of Reverend William Douglass, a convert to Episcopalianism, who also was pictured in his work as being adorned in a "tailored dark coat and white shirt with a detailed neckpiece."⁸³ Thomas ended her descriptions noting:

Bragg's circulation of the formal portraits of Douglass and other African American church workers in the early twentieth century counteracted stereotypes of uneducated black preachers who were criticized for stressing emotionalism over spirituality and the reward of heaven rather than the demands of daily life.⁸⁴

Ironically what Thomas failed to note was that it was not just whites who had "stereotypes of uneducated black preachers who were criticized for stressing emotionalism."⁸⁵ It was the very people she championed as pushing back against such racist stereotypes, who trafficked in these very racist caricatures. Indeed, many black elites within the Episcopal Church also harbored pejorative views of uneducated preachers and emotionally laden

⁸² Rhondda Robinson Thomas, "The First Negro Priest, 93.

⁸³ Rhondda Robinson Thomas, "The First Negro Priest, 95.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

religious services. Bragg was no exception. Hence, black Episcopalians attempted to undermine racist stereotypes just as they harbored and trafficked in the same.

In conclusion, this literature review has examined some of the pertinent literature as it pertains to the black aristocracy, racial uplift and black Episcopalianism during the Progressive and Gilded Ages. This review is by no means exhaustive however, it is hoped that such an examination has provided a critical background on the aforementioned ideas that both informed the complex thought of Bragg and historical works about Bragg.

CHAPTER III: A Brief Biography of Bragg

George Freeman Bragg Jr. was born to George Freeman Bragg Sr. and Mary Bragg on January 25th, 1863 in Warren County, North Carolina. This county, located on the northeastern border of North Carolina, just 86 miles from St. Petersburg, Virginia, was one of the pillars of North Carolina's tobacco plantation economy and the seat of one of the largest concentrations of enslaved persons in the state of North Carolina. According to historian Guion Griffis Johnson in his work, *Ante Bellum North Carolina: A Social History*, "In 1790 sixty-nine per cent of the families in North Carolina owned no slaves, while the average number of slaves per slaveholding family was 6.29. In Warren County, however, where there was a considerable concentration of slaves due to the predominance of tobacco culture, eleven slaveholders in 1790 owned more than fifty slaves."⁸⁶ He further notes that "in 1860, only five counties, Edgecombe, Granville, Halifax, Warren and Wake, contained more than 10,000 slaves . . . in Warren County the slave population was 68 percent of the total (population)."⁸⁷

Bragg Jr.'s parents were born into this slave economy, which functioned like a racial caste system. Such a hierarchical system of racial determinism was given divine sanction by the Episcopal Church, which the Bragg family was devoutly loyal to. Indeed, the rector of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Warren County, North Carolina, George Freeman Washington, who Bragg Jr. was named after and who baptized several generations of the Bragg family, had this to say about slavery:

⁸⁶ Guion Griffis Johnson. *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 15.

⁸⁷ Guion Griffis Johnson. *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, 470.

No man nor set of men in our day, unless they can produce a new revelation from Heaven, are entitled to pronounce slavery WRONG; and that to brand them who, in the Providence of God, are now holders of slaves, with the epithet of ANTI-CHRISTIAN, is a presumption in the extreme.⁸⁸

Despite such theological rationalizations, slavery was not to be Bragg Jr.'s birthright or that of his family as the Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, just twenty-four days before his birth, declared, "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."⁸⁹ Thus, Bragg Jr. was born into freedom and with this newfound freedom the Bragg family migrated north to Petersburg, Virginia. But the war had reduced Petersburg to a small glimmer of its former self as its economy, which was once one of the strongest in the state, was severely crippled. Indeed, during the antebellum period, Petersburg's economy and promise of jobs, made it a mecca for free blacks in Virginia, amassing the second largest concentration of free blacks in the south, behind Baltimore. However, for the Bragg family the Episcopal Church was an important factor in determining their destination after the war. Indeed, Carrie Bragg, noted in her work "An Accurate, Early History of St. Stephens Church," published in 1890, that, "A number of communicant(s) from Warrenton, N.C., who were members of the white Episcopal Church in that city during slavery, moved to the city of

⁸⁸ George Washington Freeman, *The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders* (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1836), 12, Library of Congress, accessed November 16, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/rightsdutiesofsl00free/>.

⁸⁹ Abraham Lincoln, "Emancipation Proclamation," Primary Documents in American History, Library of Congress, accessed November 16, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/emanproc.html>.

Petersburg at the end of the war. They were allowed to worship in the gallows of Grace Episcopal Church (white) Rev. Churchill Gibson was its pastor.”⁹⁰

Ironically, during the Reconstruction period most Freedmen did not flock to the Episcopal Church but defected from it in a mass exodus to Baptist and Methodist churches.⁹¹ This irony speaks to the fidelity of the Bragg family toward the Episcopal Church and ostensibly places them outside of the mainstream exodus of freedmen from the Episcopal Church during Reconstruction. Indeed, Bragg later notes in his *The Episcopal Church and the Black Man*, that after the Civil War, in the states of, “Georgia and South Carolina, where colored Episcopalians were strongest numerically, there was a wholesale exodus of colored people from the Episcopal Church.”⁹² In 1892 Episcopal Bishop of New York, Henry Codman Potter stated, “I do not think it would have been very strange if the colored race, after it had been freed, should have refused to follow the white man’s God.”⁹³ Such a conclusion maybe partly based on the Episcopal Church’s stalwart support of slavery during the Civil War for while other denominations, like the Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists, were divided, North and South, over the issue of slavery, the Episcopal Church, in “deference to the large number of slave-holders” within its ranks,

⁹⁰ A hand written history of the Saint Stephens Episcopal Church in Petersburg, Virginia, 1890, box 1, folder 1, Papers of Carrie Bragg Campbell, The Special Collections and Archives of the Johnson Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

⁹¹ J. Carleton Hayden, “After the War: The Mission and Growth of the Episcopal Church Among Blacks in the South, 1865-1877,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* Volume 42 No. 4 (1973): 411.

⁹² George F. Bragg, *The Episcopal Church and the Black Man* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1918), 12.

⁹³ Henry C. Potter, Sermon at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in 1892, quoted in Harold T. Lewis, *Yet with a Steady Beat: The American Struggle for Recognition in the Episcopal Church* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 39.

remained united.⁹⁴ Hence, proslavery statements such as those expressed by Bishop George Washington Freeman were not anomalies or condemned by other members of the church hierarchy. Surprisingly, despite its decidedly proslavery position some Freeman did not leave the Episcopal Church but expressed an undying loyalty to it. These freemen consisted of mulattoes and unmixed blacks who were considered a part of the black aristocracy during the antebellum.⁹⁵ This would suggest that the Bragg's who also evidenced fidelity toward the Episcopal Church were a part of this upper-class contingent of Freeman. Such stubborn fidelity to an institution which unabashedly supported the institution of slavery might also imply that the Braggs harbored a strong strain of social and theological conservatism.

But the Braggs also desired a sacred space apart from the "gallows of Grace's Episcopal Church" in St. Petersburg.⁹⁶ In 1867 Caroline Wiley Bragg, in conjunction with the Protestant Episcopal Freedmen's Bureau and former Confederate's, Reverend Churchill J. Gibson and Major Giles B. Cooke, founded St. Stephens Normal School and Church which was to be a black church. Its construction was led by Bragg Sr. and the congregation was heavily staffed by the Bragg family. Hence, this was a black church constructed, staffed and operated by the Bragg family and other Freedmen. Bragg Jr. attended this school at age three but despite the prevalence of black role models at age 6

⁹⁴ Harold T. Lewis, *Yet with a Steady Beat*, 43.

⁹⁵ Montgomery, William E, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1993), 126

⁹⁶ A hand written history of the Saint Stephens Episcopal Church in Petersburg, Virginia, 1890, box 1, folder 1, Papers of Carrie Bragg Campbell, The Special Collections and Archives of the Johnson Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

Bragg allegedly exclaimed, “I want to be a preacher just like Dr. Gibson.”⁹⁷ Indeed, in his memoirs Bragg fondly noted, “I don’t think that I have ever loved any man on earth more sincerely and affectionately than the late Rev. Dr. Churchill J. Gibson.”⁹⁸ Thus, Bragg’s socialization process involved both black and white social and cultural influences. Such followed him throughout his theological and secular experiences.

In 1878 at the age of 15 Bragg attended the Theological School of St. Stephens. However, the following year Bragg abruptly left the school because, according to his pastor, he was “wanting in the virtue of humility.”⁹⁹ During this period of estrangement from the seminary, Bragg continued his studies under a tutor named, John D. Keiley, where he studied ancient languages and philosophy.¹⁰⁰ Bragg also ventured into the political arena by joining former Confederate General William Mahone’s Readjuster Party. This party was a hodge-podge alliance of Democrats, Republicans and Freemen, who attempted to reduce or ‘readjust’ Virginia’s prewar debt. The support of Bragg and many other Freedmen in Petersburg for the Readjuster Party, stemmed from the party’s promise to support black interests and the ability of “colored people to draw near in friendly intercourse with those who were able to help them, and that without the feeling of absolute condescension.”¹⁰¹ Indeed, Mahone was known for his kindness to Freedmen in Petersburg and Bragg, in his 1926 tribute to General Mahone, referred to him in messianic

⁹⁷ J. Carleton Hayden, “For Zion’s Sake I Will Not Hold My Peace: George Freeman Bragg, Jr., Priest, Pastor, and Prophet,” *Linkage* 6 (1986): 10.

⁹⁸ George F. Bragg, *A Bond Slave of Christ* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1912), 4.

⁹⁹ George F. Bragg, *A Bond Slave*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ George F. Bragg, *The Hero of Jerusalem in Honor of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of General William Mahone of Virginia* (Baltimore, 1926), 9.

terms as, “The Hero of Jerusalem, who brought political and civil deliverance to the suffering of the sons of Ham.”¹⁰²

Through this party, Bragg became the first African American page of the Virginia State Legislature in 1881 and published the first African American newspaper in St. Petersburg, Virginia called the *Lancet* in 1882.¹⁰³ However, young Bragg’s support for the Readjuster Party and participation in politics in general was pragmatic. This pragmatism was used in the service of black empowerment which suggests the presence of a racial consciousness. But despite Bragg’s pragmatism toward politics in the interest of black people, he was morally committed to Christianity and Episcopalianism which was decidedly Eurocentric. Hence, in 1886 he re-entered the theological school at St. Stephens when a new rector took over, determined to become a priest. But the policy in the Virginia Diocese at that time was designed to restrict blacks to the diaconate and discourage them from pursuing the highly-coveted office of priest.¹⁰⁴ According to Bragg, even well-meaning whites, considered it “practically impossible for colored men to reach such high eminence; only in very exceptional cases could it be hoped for.”¹⁰⁵ Because of such racial reasoning, the Episcopal Church placed almost insurmountable requirements before the black aspirant. Bragg stated that aspiring postulants for holy orders had to first become deacons which required three or four years of schooling. After successful completion of

¹⁰² George F. Bragg, *The Hero of Jerusalem*, 3

¹⁰³ George F. Bragg, *A Bond Slave*, 1, Lawrence L. Hartzell, “The Exploration of Freedom in Black Petersburg, Virginia 1865-1902,” in *The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia*, eds. Edward L. Ayers and John C. Willis (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 140.

¹⁰⁴ George F. Bragg, *A Bond Slave*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ George F. Bragg, *A Bond Slave*, 2

their schooling they were sent to engage in the various ministries of the diaconate. If they could find the time in between their busy schedule to become candidates for priestly orders and pass several exams they could then apply for priestly orders.¹⁰⁶ Bragg railed against this system and sought the assistance of Reverend Gibson. He completed his studies toward the diaconate and was ordained a deacon on January 12, 1887 at St. Stephens.¹⁰⁷

In that same year he was sent to Holy Innocence Mission in Norfolk, Virginia. In a very short time Bragg turned this struggling mission around and founded an industrial school for colored women.¹⁰⁸ Bragg was then priested in December of 1888 at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Norfolk, Virginia.¹⁰⁹ He was then given a pastorate in Baltimore, Maryland at St. James Episcopal Church in 1891, which historically was the first black Episcopal Church "on southern soil."¹¹⁰ This congregation, like the Holy Innocence Mission, consisted of a poor, black congregation. Bragg revitalized this congregation and turned it into an independent, self-supporting church. Part of his revitalization efforts involved measures designed to racially uplift the poor in Baltimore. Hence, in 1899 he founded the Home for Friendless Colored Children, which was dedicated to orphaned black boys in Baltimore. He fought to get black teachers in black schools, and he was a

¹⁰⁶ George F. Bragg, *A Bond Slave*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ George F. Bragg, *A Bond Slave*, 11.

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence L. Hartzell and the Dictionary of Virginia Biography, "George F. Bragg (1863-1940)," 2 November 2015, *Encyclopedia Virginia: Virginia Humanities*. https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Bragg_George_Freeman_1863-1940.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ George F. Bragg, *The First Negro Priest On Southern Soil* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1909), 9, 28.

vociferous opponent of Jim Crow.¹¹¹ Such accomplishments do not scratch the surface of Bragg's efforts or his many talents. For he was both a historian and a journalist. Bragg authored well over twenty books. In 1898 Bragg founded the *Ledger* newspaper, which lasted approximately one year. Then in 1900 the *Ledger* merged with *The Afro American* to become *The Afro American Ledger*. Bragg was editor of the *Afro American Ledger* until 1915.¹¹² Within this literary corpus Bragg left a legacy of civil rights agitation and rich historical knowledge of the many contributions of African Americans to American history. On March 12th, 1940 Bragg died at Providence Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland living this literary legacy for all to examine.

¹¹¹ George F. Bragg, Jr, "Letters From The People," *The Baltimore Sun*, Mar 14, 1896, ProQuest, "Negro Teachers Graduated," *The Baltimore Sun*, Jun 20, 1917, ProQuest.

¹¹² Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 4-5.

CHAPTER IV: History of Race and Class in Baltimore

It is important to understand the historical and social landscape within which the Reverend George Freeman Bragg thought and moved to understand and appreciate the subtle nuances and tensions within his thought. As an Episcopal priest and civil rights leader in Baltimore during the Progressive Era, Bragg was deeply concerned with issues of white supremacy and the plight of the African American community. Hence, understanding historical events in regard to race and the particular racial temperament of Baltimore during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, provide the necessary context in which to examine not only the thought of Bragg, but that of both black and white Baltimoreans who moved and lived in the city during that era. Hence, the following paper will provide a brief overview of Baltimore's history in regard to race from the end of reconstruction to the Progressive Era, but it will not examine the parameters of Bragg's thought as this will be the subject of subsequent chapters.

Denying African Americans, the right to vote was the mission of many southern legislatures after the Civil War, following the Compromise of 1877. Maryland, while historically not a part of the confederacy, was a former slave state with strong southern sympathies and was thus heavily invested in disenfranchisement efforts. The Democratic Party was considered the party of slave holders and the south and Maryland Democrats were relentless in their desire to disenfranchise African Americans. Thus, in 1905 John Prentiss Poe, a Democrat and President of the University of Maryland Law School, drafted legislation to disenfranchise African Americans in Baltimore. He did this to deprive the Republican Party of a critical voting block which would cripple the party and thus result in

a political monopoly for the Democratic Party.¹¹³ Poe's amendment thus stated that all men who were eligible to vote before ratification of the 15th amendment on February 3, 1870, or their descendants after them, could vote. All others would be subjected to a literacy test which consisted of reading a portion of the state constitution and providing a reasonable interpretation of the portion read to the voter registrar.¹¹⁴ As African Americans were not eligible to vote prior to the 15th amendment, they would be effectively barred from voting and with a 40% illiteracy rate for adult black men, many would have undoubtedly failed the literacy test as well.¹¹⁵ However, this amendment would have also precluded most European immigrants from voting, as most were not present prior to the ratification of the 15th amendment in 1870.¹¹⁶ Hence, in the election of 1905 Marylanders defeated the Poe Amendment with the majority of votes against the measure coming from city voters.

This defeat did not deter the Democratic Party from their quest to wrench power from the Republican Party by disenfranchising black Baltimoreans. Thus, in 1907 Maryland Attorney General Isaac Strobe Strauss proposed an amendment under his name, the Strauss Amendment. This amendment intended to keep all of the strengths of the Poe Amendment, but none of its weaknesses.¹¹⁷ Hence, this amendment retained the stipulation that those born before the 15th amendment were barred from voting but provided the caveat

¹¹³ Matthew A. Crenson, *Baltimore A Political History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 337.

¹¹⁴ James B. Crooks, *Politics & Progress: The Rise of Urban Progressivism in Baltimore, 1895 to 1911* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 1968), 56-58.

¹¹⁵ James B. Crooks, *Politics & Progress*, 57.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 56-57.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 64.

that immigrants who were naturalized before the same amendment was ratified were eligible to vote. For all others, i.e. African Americans, voting privileges could only be ascertained if they owned or paid taxes on \$500.00 in property or by passing a literacy test. The test required them to write “the name of the President of the United States, a Justice of the Supreme Court, Governor of Maryland, and a Judge of the Maryland Court of appeals, and if a Baltimorean, the Mayor.”¹¹⁸ Despite its caveat to immigrants, the measure was once again defeated by Baltimore voters. Surprisingly, instead of weakening their resolve, this defeat embolden forces within the Democratic Party as they reasoned that their margin of defeat for this measure was not as wide as the defeat of the Strauss Amendment. Thus, they felt that they were getting closer to achieving their goal.¹¹⁹

Hence, in 1911 Charles County Delegate Walter Diggs drafted the Diggs Amendment. This amendment, like the Strauss amendment before it, portended to keep all of the strengths of the Poe and Strauss Amendments but none of their weaknesses.¹²⁰ Hence, the amendment stated that all white men under 21 years of age were eligible to vote and as the Strauss Amendment stipulated, African Americans had to show that they owned or paid taxes on \$500.00 or more in property. However, drafters of the amendment added that a law should be passed that prohibited blacks from voting on this measure. Despite such overtures to European immigrants, this measure was also defeated by voters.¹²¹ It is tempting to argue that European immigrants and progressive white reformers who voted

¹¹⁸ James B. Crooks, *Politics & Progress*, 64, Matthew A. Crenson, *Baltimore* 339.

¹¹⁹ Matthew A. Crenson, *Baltimore* 339.

¹²⁰ Matthew A. Crenson, *Baltimore* 339.

¹²¹ James B. Crooks, *Politics & Progress*, 70 note 55.

against the measure did so purely based on a sense of morality, but their opposition to the measure may have also been based on self-interest. Indeed, crippling the Republican Party would have resulted in a political monopoly for the Democratic Party. And as with all monopolies, there is a strong tendency to take the people who are in need of a particular service, for granted. Thus, progressive reformer John Semmes of the Reform League asserted, "I shudder at a one-party State and cannot forget that in Baltimore . . . the Negro vote has been an agency of good government in helping to keep the two parties somewhat evenly balanced."¹²²

This period of governmental attempts to disenfranchise black Baltimoreans overlapped with Jim Crow legislation in housing from 1910 to 1948. During this period white Baltimoreans attempted to legally segregate African Americans in poor, overcrowded sections of the city. They attempted to do this through a variety of legal measures, most notably through the West Segregation Ordinance of 1910. This law, which was ratified on December 20th, 1910, was the first legally ratified ordinance of its kind in America.¹²³ It stipulated that it was illegal for African Americans to move onto a majority white block and for white Americans to move onto a majority African American block.¹²⁴ Obviously, this law was predicated on prior African American incursions onto majority white blocks which began in the late 19th century.¹²⁵ With the exception of African

¹²² James B. Crooks, *Politics & Progress*, 65.

¹²³ Antero Pietila, *Not in my Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, Publisher, 2010), 23-24.

¹²⁴ Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood*, 142.

¹²⁵ Dennis P. Halpin, "'The Struggle for Land and Liberty': Segregation, Violence and African Americans Resistance in Baltimore, 1898-1918," *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 2 (2015): 1-2.

American live-in servants and domestic workers, *de facto* residential segregation was always a fact of life in Baltimore.¹²⁶ The transition to *de jure* residential segregation occurred when civil rights activist and attorney W. Ashbie Hawkins purchased 1834 McCullough St. in May of 1910 and then leased it to his friend, attorney George McMechan in June of that same year.¹²⁷ This simple chain of events was pivotal as it galvanized white Baltimoreans to political action and ultimately resulted in *de jure* residential segregation in Baltimore. Nonetheless, in November of 1917 the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of, *Buchanan vs Warley*, deemed such residential ordinances unconstitutional, but white Baltimoreans were undaunted in their efforts to maintain residential segregation and engaged in racially restrictive covenants.¹²⁸ These covenants were racially exclusive deeds which stipulated that only members of a particular race, usually white, were allowed to purchase, rent or lease said property. In so doing, the residents, who were usually white, hoped to exclude African Americans and Jews and thus maintain the racially homogenous character of their community in perpetuity.¹²⁹ Such covenants were deemed unconstitutional in 1948 when attorney and civil rights activist Thurgood Marshall successfully argued *Shelly v. Kraemer* before the US Supreme Court.¹³⁰

Despite this civil rights victory, for poor and working-class African Americans residential segregation spurred over-crowding and created or exacerbated extant problems

¹²⁶ Dennis P. Halpin, "The Struggle for Land, 2.

¹²⁷ Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*, 17.

¹²⁸ Garret Power, "Apartheid Baltimore Style: The Residential Segregation Ordinances of 1910-1913," *Maryland Law Review* 42, no. 2 (1983): 313, Antero Pietila. *Not in My Neighborhood*, 17.

¹²⁹ Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*, 48.

¹³⁰ Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood*, 143.

in health, housing and crime. Indeed, in 1910 there were between 84,000 to 88,000 African Americans living in Baltimore City with approximately 15%, roughly 12,800, living in an area that “extend(ed) about a quarter of a mile from east to west and a mile north and south.”¹³¹ Officially this area was designated as Ward 17, according to Baltimore’s early administrative districting system. Unofficially, this district was infamously dubbed the “lung block” due to the extremely high incidence of tuberculosis in this area.¹³² According to a study published in 1907 by the Baltimore Health Department, there was not one house on Biddle Alley which did not have at least one member who had contracted tuberculosis.¹³³ The Hughes Street Alley District was also a part of this study and it was deemed a poor and densely populated black district noted for its poverty, incidence of tuberculosis and ill living conditions. Structurally, many of the houses in these two districts were two and three-story dwellings with few rooms. Historian Cynthia Neverdon-Morton stated that some homes contained at least “six members living in one room.”¹³⁴ These dwellings were also handicapped by poor lighting, ventilation and sanitation, as well as flooding. The basement area was the source of flooding in many of these homes, despite also being used as a kitchen, an apartment or a dumping area. It was noted at the time that one cause of flooding was an antiquated drainage system. This system consisted of a series of water troughs that were suspended from the basement ceiling. They were designed to

¹³¹ Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood*, 295.

¹³² Janet Kemp, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore: Report of the Special Committee of the Association of the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor and the Charity Organization Society* (Baltimore: Federated Charities, 1907), 71.

¹³³ Janet Kemp, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore*, 19.

¹³⁴ Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, “Black Housing Patterns in Baltimore City, 1885-1953,” *The Maryland Historian*, xvi, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 1985): 25.

catch incoming water from the exterior of the home and funnel it through the interior trough system, finally displacing it on the exterior of the home. However, a hole, crack or blockage in the interior troughs would naturally result in water displacement in the basement area.¹³⁵ Such flooding, when combined with refuse in the basement, resulted in a filthy area which was prone to disease. Indeed, one flooded basement that was inspected revealed, “. . . old bedding, pieces of carpet, rags and paper and every kind of litter, water soaked, rotten, and filthy.”¹³⁶

While this scene was not uncommon, it was not the primary cause of flooding in poor black alley districts, as there were larger forces at play. Indeed, Baltimore’s slow march to modernize its antiquated sewer system and systemic racism were the main factors. To be sure, Baltimore did not get a modern sewer system until 1915, making it the last major American city to do so.¹³⁷ Prior to this time, Baltimore relied upon its steep topography for surface drainage and privy vaults to address the collection and disposal of excreta and other sewage. Topographically, Baltimore’s hilly terrain allowed for a downward progression of water from reservoirs or storm waters that would carry the offal and refuse, that was customarily thrown into the streets, into the gutter that, in turn, emptied into the harbor basin. This system of surface drainage was ill-suited to contend with Baltimore’s fast-growing urban population during the late 19th century. From 1860 to 1900

¹³⁵ Janet Kemp, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore*, 47.

¹³⁶ Janet Kemp, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore*, 45

¹³⁷ Stanley K. Schultz/Clay McShane, “To Engineer the Metropolis: Sewers, Sanitation, and City Planning in Late Nineteenth-Century America,” *The Journal of American History*, 65, No. 2 (Sep. 1978), 397.

¹³⁷ Samuel Kelton Roberts Jr, *Infectious Fear: Politics, Disease, and the Health Effects of Segregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 81.

Baltimore's population grew from 106,000 to well over 200,000. A large portion of this population was newly emancipated slaves who in 1865 migrated from various parts of rural Maryland. Many settled in a section of southwest Baltimore called Pig Town, which was adjacent to the harbor basin, the waste receptacle of the city. As many affluent whites lived in the northern most parts of the city, their waste matter was designed to flow on a downward gradient toward the most impoverished sectors of the city which were located in the south near the docks of the harbor basin. Hence, the racial and class hierarchy ascendant during the mid to late 19th century, which placed whites at the top and blacks at the bottom, was reflected in the very topography and system of waste management in Baltimore.

Thus, while all Baltimoreans were affected by poor sanitation and the effects of a large-scale population explosion, the impact on the black community was acute. With such a robust population growing at such an exponential rate meant a much larger volume of offal and refuse to contend with. Sadly, some of this refuse found a ready niche in the many cracks, crevices and potholes that lined cobblestone streets and made surface drainage a challenge. Thus, offal and excreta festered in the alley districts and contaminated the environment. According to historian Samuel Kelton Roberts Jr., in his work, *Infectious Fear: Politics, Disease, and the Health Effects of Segregation*, the city allocated money to pave, level and widen cobblestone and dirt streets in 1905 as part of a revitalization project, but alley districts were passed over. Part of the reason for this oversight may lie in racial perceptions of poor black Baltimoreans who resided in alley districts. Indeed, in 1901 City Health Commissioner James Bosley noted that persons in

alley districts were “generally the most careless people” who “would allow privies to overflow obviating any benefit from paving.”¹³⁸ Interestingly, privies in poor white neighborhoods also overflowed. Indeed, privy vaults, which were small outhouses that contained large pits or vats in the ground i.e. dry toilets, were not well managed. According to Janet Kemp, in one poor, white immigrant community on Albemarle St, “There were four compartments (privy toilets) used by thirty families, living in four houses, belonging to the same landlord . . . the vault was overflowing and two of the compartments were indescribably foul.”¹³⁹ Similarly, several black families in alley districts might utilize one or two privies and on occasion privies would overflow “ankle-deep” in these poor black wards.¹⁴⁰ Despite the congruence of these conditions, Kemp referred to African Americans as “gregarious, light hearted, shiftless, irresponsible alley dwellers” and implied that they were violent and sexually promiscuous, but did not refer to white immigrant groups by such derogatory epithets.¹⁴¹ In fact, she juxtaposed the derogatory view of poor blacks as “irresponsible” with German immigrants who she said were “clean, hard-working, [and] thrifty.”¹⁴² Such racist juxtapositions had real social consequences for as late as 1917 when many sewer lines were connected “more than two times as many houses in poor white wards were connected to sewer lines than those found in poor black wards.”¹⁴³

Such racism was not solely relegated to public housing as it was integral to the crime and unemployment that plagued some of these same poor black communities. In

¹³⁸ Samuel Kelton Roberts Jr, *Infectious Fear*, 81.

¹³⁹ Janet Kemp, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore*, 62.

¹⁴⁰ Samuel Kelton Roberts Jr, *Infectious Fear*, 82.

¹⁴¹ Janet Kemp, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore*, 16.

¹⁴² Janet Kemp, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore*, 16.

¹⁴³ Samuel Kelton Roberts Jr, *Infectious Fear*, 82.

1908 a study was conducted on these communities by *The Colored League for Law and Order* (CLLO). This organization, composed of prominent black attorneys, clergymen, educators and doctors, was formed to curb crime and what they perceived to be immoral behavior in black communities.¹⁴⁴ Their study found that many of these communities were inundated with brothels, and saloons, primarily owned by white men, which were in close proximity to schools and churches. In the lower portion of the Druid Hill District, which encompassed Biddle Alley, it was reported that there were “42 saloons, 15 churches, twelve schools” and the Reverend George Freeman Bragg’s orphanage for Friendless Colored Children.¹⁴⁵ This structural pattern of schools being located in a sea of brothels and/or saloons in poor black communities was not an anomaly. School No. 105, which was located at the corner of Caroline and Bank Streets, was surrounded by “9 saloons and no less than 47 houses of ill repute.”¹⁴⁶ On Rogers Avenue in south Baltimore many students had to walk through a virtual gauntlet of brothels to get to their school.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, as a result of the proximity of many of these “houses of ill repute” to schools, many children were enticed by the seedy allure of these dens. This situation was further compounded by the fact that some dens, which were in the immediate vicinity of schools and churches, were also couched within residential communities where these children lived and played. Hence, some children had little or no respite from the constant images of vice and crime

¹⁴⁴ James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law and Order League: Baltimore, Md.* (Cheyney, Pa: Committee of Twelve for the Advancement of the Interests of the Negro Race, 1908), 3.

¹⁴⁵ James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law*, 9.

¹⁴⁶ James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law*, 6-7, Booker T. Washington, “Law and Order and the Negro” *Outlook*, November 6, 1909, 547 <https://babel.hathitrust.org>.

¹⁴⁷ James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law*, 7-8.

which pervaded their immediate environs. Thus, their socialization process included “daily object lessons in prostitution, gambling, drunkenness, profanity, and thieving.”¹⁴⁸ It was not surprising then that the league found girls as young as 13 years old in such dens, schooled in the trade of prostitution.¹⁴⁹

Such girls and African American women in general were much sought after by some white Baltimoreans for sexual purposes. According to historian Sherry Olson in her work, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City*, red light districts in black communities were there primarily to satisfy the sexual fetishes of white clients¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the brothels and saloons in alley districts, as a result of their secluded locations, were ideal for traveling white men who wanted to maintain their anonymity as they engaged in sex across the color line.¹⁵¹ Members of the CLLO considered those saloons in the black community that were owned by white men “for colored trade” to be “the lowest possible type of saloon.”¹⁵² It is not far-fetched to assume that some brothel and saloon owners used coercion and nefarious methods to entice African American girls and young women into a life of prostitution. This is not to suggest that some women, out economic deprivation, did not engage in prostitution willingly. Nonetheless, there is data to suggest that some were coerced. According to the *Afro American Ledger*, the Baltimore branch of the *National League for the Protection of Colored Women*, which was founded in 1906 believed there were “rascals, both white and colored” who attempted to coerce unsuspecting, destitute young, migrant girls seeking

¹⁴⁸ James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law*, 15.

¹⁴⁹ James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law*, 7,9.

¹⁵⁰ Sherry Olson, *The Building of an American City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 274.

¹⁵¹ Sherry Olson, *The Building*, 274.

¹⁵² James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law*, 11.

employment, into a life of prostitution.¹⁵³ Some of these young migrant women, who were enroute to New York and Philadelphia, found themselves in dire straits by the time they reached Baltimore, for they were often financially destitute. This course of events placed them in a desperate situation and may have made certain kinds of coercion, which involved offers of shelter and financial stability, appear palatable.¹⁵⁴

However, migrant girls weren't the only ones susceptible to such kinds of coercion, as young girls who had been in trouble with the law were also targets of such predatory behavior. According to an *Afro* article entitled, "Gets Eight Years: Girls in Slave Flats, Forcing Them to Give Him Prostitution Money," an individual named Claud Barbary coerced two young girls, a Miss Mary Duncan and Miss Edith Barbary [who had been in trouble with the law] into a life of prostitution. According to the article, Mr. Barbary routinely paid the criminal fine(s) of attractive young girls who were in trouble with the law. Such an act, while seemingly charitable, may have come with an expectation of remuneration in the form of prostitution. If women were entrapped in this situation, they were subjected to draconian conditions. These young women were physically abused, compelled to take only "white clients" and their earnings were confiscated by Mr. Barbary. Such actions are similar to those taken by many sex traffickers and might suggest a larger pattern involving some brothels and saloons in Baltimore during the Progressive Era. Nonetheless, such acts don't seem to have pricked the conscience of Baltimore's white progressive reformers during this period. However, according to Jayme Hill in her thesis, *From the Brothel to the Block: Politics and Prostitution in Baltimore During the*

¹⁵³ "For Protection of Women," *Afro-American*, Jun 07, 1906, 4, ProQuest.

¹⁵⁴ "For Protection," 4.

Progressive Era, white progressive reformers who wanted to eradicate prostitution in Baltimore, were well aware of the practice of prostitution in the black community. But in their official report of the practice in Baltimore there was “little emphasis [placed on] race” which suggested to Hill “a reflection of prejudice that would have prevented the investigators from being concerned about prostitution among the black population.”¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, members of the CLLO attempted to acquire police assistance with brothels and saloons, but soon discovered that the police were a part of the problem. Truly, some police acted as lookouts for the saloons and updated their owners on possible police raids of their establishments.¹⁵⁶

Such corruption was not unusual but normative as police malfeasance manifested itself in racist police practices and brutality against black Baltimoreans. The *Afro American Ledger* was relentless in its coverage of incidents of racist police behavior and brutality during the Progressive Era. On the 30th of April 1927 it was reported in the *Ledger* that a black man named Henry Simuels, who resided at 804 North Stricker St., was arrested by police for not moving fast enough when ordered by police to move off the street. As a result, Simuels was knocked into the gutter and brutally clubbed with a wooden baton on the head and face by the arresting officer. This resulted in Simuel’s hospitalization as he had several teeth knocked out of his mouth, and required stitches to his face and bandages to his head.¹⁵⁷ On the 25th of April 1924 Ms. Ellie White, a black woman, who resided at

¹⁵⁵ Jayme Rae Hill, “From the Brothel to the Block: Politics and Prostitution in Baltimore During the Progressive Era,” (Master’s thesis, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 2008), 55.

¹⁵⁶ James H. N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law*, 3, 11-12.

¹⁵⁷ “Raise Protest Over Police Brutality,” *Afro-American*, April 30, 1927, 6 ProQuest.

245 S. Spring St was brutally clubbed on the head with a wooden baton and dragged through the street by a white police officer, while handcuffed.¹⁵⁸ Such violence, while disproportionately meted out to poor blacks, was not solely reserved for the poor as those with celebrity status could be a beacon for racist police action. Baltimore native and world light weight boxing champion, Joe Gans is a case in point. Gans was repeatedly called a “nigger” and assaulted by a white police officer with his police baton, for merely waiting for a streetcar in Baltimore.¹⁵⁹ Such incidents of brutality and discriminatory policing were a part of a much larger context of racial bias in the south. It should not come as a surprise that the *Ledger* noted:

The South is engaged in the wholesale manufacturing of Negro criminals . . . For the slightest infraction of the law no mercy is shown but off to the chain gang, or stockade or workhouse they are sent for not less than thirty days while white men and boys are given a chance to recover themselves if possible and are let out on a very light fine or possibly a reprimand.¹⁶⁰

Reverend E.W. White of the Baptist Ministerial Alliance of Baltimore believed that the racist brutality of police in Baltimore exceeded that found in the south.¹⁶¹

Such bold assertions by the *Ledger* and White were radical positions as the *Ledger* readily admitted, but they believed their claims were supported by evidence. Historian Dennis Halpin in his article, “Manufacturing Criminals: The Roots of Baltimore’s Racialized Criminal Justice System,” provided circumstantial evidence which may lend credence to accusations by black Baltimoreans of discriminatory treatment by the

¹⁵⁸ “Neighbors Protest Police Brutality,” *Afro-American*, April 25, 1924, 16, ProQuest.

¹⁵⁹ Jill Watts, *God, Harlem U.S.A. The Father Divine Story* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 15.

¹⁶⁰ “Manufacturing Criminals,” *Afro-American*, Sep 23, 1906, 4, ProQuest.

¹⁶¹ “Baptist Minister's Meeting in Protest Against Police Brutality,” *Afro-American*, November 08, 1930, 20, ProQuest.

Baltimore Police Department. Halpin noted that both police officers and police magistrates were unabashed in their willingness to met out harsher sentences to African Americans.¹⁶² He referenced a *Baltimore Sun* article entitled, "Adopts Sterner Method: Justice Loden Determined to Curb Lawlessness Among Negroes," wherein Baltimore Police Magistrate Loden stated that African American repeat offenders do not reform their behavior by light fines and penalties. Thus, he resigned himself to impose stiffer sentences on African American repeat offenders in an effort to curb their criminal behavior.¹⁶³ On the surface this may seem to be a conservative method to reduce crime, but it should be read in the context of Loden's position on race for he believed, "The Negroes are getting mighty bold . . . The only place for a nigger is in jail. They can educate him and all that, but it doesn't amount to much."¹⁶⁴ But being sent to jail was not the only problem which beset poor African Americans.

Unemployment may have been the most pressing problem affecting African Americans in Baltimore.¹⁶⁵ But this was not always the case. According to the census of 1860, out of 120,000 artisans in the south, 100,000 were African Americans.¹⁶⁶ In Baltimore, African American artisans were involved in most trades and had a virtual monopoly on caulking in Fells Point. African American proficiency in the trades was so strong that, it was not unheard of for African Americans to be the foremen of whites prior

¹⁶² Dennis Halpin, "Manufacturing Criminals: The Historical Roots of Baltimore's Racialized Criminal Justice System" *Perspectives on History*, July 1, 2015. 4.

¹⁶³ "Adopts Sterner Method," *The Baltimore Sun*, Nov 18, 1907, 14, ProQuest.

¹⁶⁴ "Loden Turns Prophet," *The Baltimore Sun*, Oct 26, 1911, 16, ProQuest.

¹⁶⁵ Suzanne Ellery Greene, *An Illustrated: Baltimore* (Woodland Hills: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1980), 166.

¹⁶⁶ William George Paul, *The Shadow of Equality: The Negro in Baltimore, 1864-1911* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972), 171, note 2.

to the Civil War.¹⁶⁷ Such earned the ire of white immigrants and native-born whites who wished to break the monopoly through violence and intimidation. Hence, with immigration of more Europeans in 1865 and returning soldiers from the Civil War, white Baltimoreans, wrest control from African Americans through the formation of unions and apprentice programs. These unions were expressly designed to keep blacks out of the job market.¹⁶⁸ As a result, African Americans were increasingly unemployed and thus once again the African American community in Baltimore was thrust onto its own resources to remedy a problem borne of racism. Hence, Isaac Myers, a Baltimore based caulker, created the Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Company in 1866 to safe guard skilled black workers. However, this venture lasted twenty years and African Americans lost out in the job market.¹⁶⁹

As late as the 1930s some white Baltimoreans, particularly Jewish Americans, established businesses in densely populated portions of the African American community such as Pennsylvania Avenue. But this arrangement did not necessarily lead to employment options for African Americans.¹⁷⁰ This should not be surprising as African Americans had long complained of the racist treatment, they received from retail establishments in downtown Baltimore.¹⁷¹ According to Walter Sondheim, a former

¹⁶⁷ William George Paul, *The Shadow of Equality*, 171, 381, Note 2, Suzanne Ellery Greene, *An Illustrated*, 166.

¹⁶⁸ William George Paul, *The Shadow of Equality*, 129, 347-348.

¹⁶⁹ William George Paul, *The Shadow of Equality*, 137-38, Suzanne Ellery Greene, *An Illustrated*, 166.

¹⁷⁰ Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood*, 155, Andor Skotnes, *A New Deal for All? Race and Class Struggles in Depression-Era Baltimore* (Duke University Press, 2013), 144, 281.

¹⁷¹ Andor Skotnes, *A New Deal for All?*, 279.

manager at Hothschild Kohn's Department Store, African Americans were dissuaded from shopping at such department stores. When they were allowed to shop at such stores, they were not allowed to try on clothing items and once purchased, they were not allowed to return said items. If they wanted to purchase shoes African American customers had to draw an outline of their foot on a brown bag and present it to the store clerk for proper sizing.¹⁷² While it should be noted that conditions on Pennsylvania Avenue weren't as severe as those in downtown establishments as African Americans were at least allowed to shop in businesses on Pennsylvania Avenue. Indeed, it would seem that the express purpose of establishing businesses in densely populated black communities was to attract black business. However, as previously stated, such businesses were not immune to Jim Crow practices as they did not allow African Americans to work at these same establishments. As a result, African Americans in Baltimore, like African Americans in other cities before them, engaged in a 'Buy Where You Can Work Boycott' in 1933.¹⁷³ They boycotted white Jewish businesses on Pennsylvania Avenue which did not hire African Americans despite said businesses being located in a predominantly African American community.¹⁷⁴

In conclusion, it is hoped that this historical overview of Baltimore's racial history provided the reader with some of the historical events and social issues that went into the making of Baltimore's racialized character during the Progressive Era. Hence, when Bragg, an energetic civil rights leader, moved to Baltimore in 1891, it was expected that

¹⁷² Andor Skotnes, *A New Deal for All?*, 279-280, Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood*, 154-55.

¹⁷³ Andor Skotnes, *A New Deal for All?*, 145, Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood*, 156.

¹⁷⁴ Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood*, 155.

he would engage in the fight against Jim Crow in Baltimore. However, it might not be expected that certain aspects of his thought mimic in subtle and not so subtle ways, various aspects of the logic of white supremacy he fought so vigorously to overturn in Baltimore. Hence, the following chapter will critically examine certain aspects of Bragg's thought that may have been commensurate with racist stereotypes prevalent during the Progressive Era.

CHAPTER V: Conservative Ideas in the Thought of Bragg

The thought of George F. Bragg Jr. encompassed both conservative and race conscious ideas, which were expressed in his views about race, religion and class. Sometimes in his conservative guise Bragg ordered and arranged these concepts in a manner that both reflected and contributed to divisions within the African American community. For instance, arguments among black Christians over what constituted proper rituals within the Black Church, reflected class and cultural fissures within the larger black community. Church denominationalists were not merely spectators but also contributed to these class divisions. Hence the specter of religion within the African American community, did not mute the divisive nature of class but rather reflected and contributed to it.

Eurocentrism and racism were also integral to notions of class during the Progressive Era. Racial uplift gave expression to these ideas especially in the minds of black elites. Indeed, during the progressive period the plethora of racist stereotypes that were directed toward African Americans by the white body politic were redirected toward the black underclass by many black elites. In so doing black elites propped themselves up as the exemplars of the highest standards of western civilization in contradistinction to the black underclass. While this scheme of things was not so simple in the complex thought of Bragg, he was a black elite and thus such notions did find expression in some of his writings. But elitism was not the only factor that influenced some of Bragg's conservative ideas. His southern upbringing and fondness for various aspects of southern culture may have separated him from some of the perspectives of some northern, black elites, steeped

in the culture of northern white liberalism. Hence, in an effort to flesh out some of Bragg's conservative ideas, the following chapter will define racial uplift ideology and using one example from religion as a template, examine some of Bragg's views of the black underclass. Lastly this chapter will also examine Bragg's support of certain aspects the southern Lost Cause Movement.

Eurocentrism was a central feature of racial uplift ideology during the Progressive Era. Historian Kevin K. Gaines informs us that there were two distinct understandings of racial uplift. One, which had its origins in the antebellum and post Emancipation periods, involved collective racial uplift. This view was premised on the collective acquisition of a formal education by Freedmen. Hence, Freedmen vigorously partook of the "New England classical liberal curriculum" offered to them during the post Emancipation period.¹⁷⁵ Once acquired, Freedmen were obligated, by bonds of racial boundaries, to give of their newly acquired knowledge and expertise to their kinsmen in an effort to elevate the race. This vision of racial uplift then, had a pronounced "democratic" or populist connotation. It respected the work and contributions of African Americans in various occupations who were committed to the collective task of racial uplift.¹⁷⁶ Hence, it was egalitarian in nature. However, it should be not be concluded that the democratic character of this understanding of racial uplift, precluded a Eurocentric orientation. Indeed, Freedmen, under the auspices of their "liberal New England teachers," had a Victorian "bourgeois morality drummed into" them. They were also imbued with the missionary culture with its desire to spread the

¹⁷⁵ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 33.

¹⁷⁶ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 32.

gospel of western cultural ideals.¹⁷⁷ Racism was also a part of “the most principled expressions of liberalism” during this period.¹⁷⁸ Such expressions, while extreme, may not have been as aggressive as those experienced in the Deep South.

Indeed, while all racism is abhorrent and debilitating there were some differences in the overt degree and intensity of racism depending on one’s geographical location. It is the opinion of this writer that southern racism was decidedly more virulent and intense than that expressed in the north during the Progressive Era. One means to determine the soundness of this conclusion is to compare the incidence of “racial terror lynchings” in various regions to one another.¹⁷⁹ In doing so the number of “racial terror lynchings” in a particular region will reflect the intensity of racism in that region. According to the most recent data, most lynchings of African Americans by white mobs occurred in the Deep South during the Jim Crow Era which overlapped with the Progressive Era. According to the report released by the Equal Justice Initiative entitled, *Lynching in America Report: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, from 1877 to 1950 there were 4, 084 racial-terror lynchings of African Americans by whites in twelve southern states.¹⁸⁰ Of those states Mississippi accounted for 654 lynchings, Georgia 589, Louisiana 549, Arkansas 492, Alabama 361, Texas 335, Florida 311, Tennessee 233, South Carolina 185, Kentucky 165, North Carolina 123, and Virginia 84.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 33.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, xiii.

¹⁷⁹ *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org>, 39.

¹⁸⁰ *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org>, 39

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 40.

Points further north accounted for far fewer racial terror lynchings. Indeed, those non-southern states which accounted for the highest number of racial-terror lynchings accounted for little more than 300 total.¹⁸² Such lynchings were virtually unknown in most northern states. Hence, the further north one trekked the fewer incidents of “racial terror lynchings” they encountered.¹⁸³ As these murders were inseparably linked to the system of Jim Crow and the racist subordination of black bodies in the South, the paucity or absence of such killings in the North suggests the presence of a less virulent form of American racism. This is not to suggest that racism in the North was benign or genteel only that it was less virulent than that practiced in the South.

The second view of racial uplift, which appeared during the late nineteenth century, was decidedly hierarchical and stratified according to class. This view was premised on the upper classes or black elite’s view, that it was their responsibility to uplift the unassimilated black underclass. This view had its origins in the educational philosophy of Samuel C. Armstrong, founder of Hampton College and his protégée Booker T. Washington. According to Gaines the industrial educational philosophy espoused by Armstrong and taught at Hampton was geared toward the whims of “unreconstructed southerners.” They did not desire any education for blacks that smacked of social equality with whites.¹⁸⁴ The Hampton-Armstrong educational philosophy also eschewed politics and catered to “post bellum white industrialists who desired a racially segmented

¹⁸² Ibid, 45.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 39.

¹⁸⁴ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 33.

[segregated] labor force.”¹⁸⁵ The term “segregated” means “segmented” here. Hence, Hampton’s educational philosophy did not lend itself to the social and educational aspirations of Freedmen prior to its rise as it was apolitical, racially segregated and fostered a racial hierarchy which placed whites at the top.¹⁸⁶ This is partially evidenced by Native American and African American students and graduates of Hampton who cheerily noted that they “learned of the noble work being done by the white people for the *lower races of mankind* [Emphasis Mine].”¹⁸⁷ Gaines juxtaposed this state of affairs at Hampton with blacks who were imbued with a northern classical education. Such an education led, educator and civil rights leader Richard R. Wright, among others to assert, “These differences of race, so called, are a mere matter of color and not of brain.”¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, it was this notion of a superior race, combined with a Eurocentric worldview and the concept of class that formed the basis of a “racialized [black] elite.”¹⁸⁹ Hence, the black elite racialized the notion of class and viewed the black underclass in a way similar to the racially deprecating manner that white Americans viewed African Americans.

Unsurprisingly this notion of racial uplift promulgated by black elites folded pejorative and dehumanizing portraits of the alleged uncouth and uncultured black underclass into its fight for racial liberation. This was readily seen in black elites demeaning assertions about the religious practices and decorum in churches of the black underclass. Unsurprisingly, Bragg as a rector and devout member of the Episcopal Church,

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 33.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 32-33.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 33.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, xv.

which was a prime destination of black elites, was not immune to such demeaning portraits. However, there seems to be disagreement among some researchers as to whether Bragg expressed pejorative views about the black underclasses in his writings. According to Delmita Reid in her thesis, “For Zion’s Sake, I Will Not Hold My Peace, George Freeman Bragg, Jr. 1863-1940” Bragg:

Did not emphasize in his writings the poverty, ignorance, or deprivation which affected the lives of black Americans. Moreover, he used his pen and printing press to accentuate the positive leadership of blacks, especially those clergymen in the Episcopal Church and those in his state of Maryland.¹⁹⁰

Thus, for Reid Bragg did not express pejorative views of the black underclass in print. She maintains that it was Bragg’s intention to uplift the race, not demean it.

A similar view was maintained by Mildred Louise McGlotten in her thesis, “Rev. George Freeman Bragg, A Negro Pioneer in Social Work.” Unlike Reid, McGlotten did not specifically address whether Bragg expressed negative opinions about the poor in his writings. However, it can be assumed based on McGlotten’s positive portrayal of Bragg and his relationship to the poor that she did not believe he wrote condescending portraits of the black underclass. Indeed, in her work McGlotten painted Bragg as one who cared deeply about children and the black underclass. She stated that he walked among all people in Baltimore city including the poor. And when the “better class [upper class]” of members of Bragg’s church wanted to oust the poor from their congregation because of classism Bragg “set out to make all people welcome, and befriended the weak, poor and the outcast

¹⁹⁰ Delmita P. Reid, “For Zion’s Sake, I Will Not Hold My Peace, George Freeman Bragg, Jr. 1863-1940” (MA thesis, Morgan State University, 1983), 92.

members.”¹⁹¹ Based on these and other statements in McGlotten’s work, Bragg was a saintly figure whose mission it was to help the poor and downtrodden. It can thus be surmised from this interpretation that because McGlotten believed Bragg would not hesitate to protect the poor from classism in his church or the city, it is doubtful that he would have victimized them by berating them in print. Thus, both McGlotten and Reid believed that Bragg did not disparage the black underclass in his writings. However, historian Heyward Farrar in his work, *The Afro American: 1892-1950* stated that Bragg’s:

Editorship of the *Afro-American* in its early years made its racial uplift editorials shrilly denunciations of black misconduct. These editorials usually had titles such as ‘The Race Does Not Take Itself Seriously,’ ‘Do We Really Desire Civil Rights,’ and ‘White People Not All the Blame.’ The Newspaper characterized lower class blacks as worthless and beyond redemption. According to *The Afro* the racial subordination of blacks stemmed from the moral and spiritual lethargy of the black masses.¹⁹²

Based on Farrar’s view Bragg did print articles and editorials “of lower-class blacks as worthless and beyond redemption.”¹⁹³ This is completely opposite of what Reid explicitly stated about Bragg and what was surmised from McGlotten’s portrait of Bragg. Thus, Farrar’s views stand in stark contrast to those of Reid and McGlotten. This disagreement provides ample insight into the complex thought of Bragg and thus echoes the underlying theme of this paper. For Bragg’s writings and persona provide ample evidence for very different and divergent portraits of him. Farrar, McGlotten and Reid speak to Bragg’s

¹⁹¹ Mildred Louise McGlotten, “Rev. George Freeman Bragg, A Negro Pioneer in Social Work,” (Master’s thesis, Howard University, 1948). 27-29.

¹⁹² Heyward Farrar, *The Afro American: 1892-1950*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 132.

¹⁹³ Heyward Farrar, *The Afro American*, 132.

complex thought and character. However, a review of some of Bragg's works seems to indeed reveal the presence of certain pejorative views of the black underclass.

Indeed, in his most popular and well-known work, *History of the Afro American Group*, published in 1917, Bragg goes on the offensive against the religious practices of the black underclass. In this book, Bragg introduces readers to Daniel Alexander Payne, who was bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church from 1852 to his death in 1893. Bragg endorses Payne's crusade to excoriate certain rituals and worship practices from the African Methodist Episcopal Church that were not consonant with the *Victorianism of New England*. For both Payne and Bragg, a stoic, northern, Eurocentric version of Christianity, which extolled New England Victorianism, was the only viable expression of Christianity. In their view folk and/or African cultural expressions, such as the ring shout or the singing of the spirituals, were anathema to proper Christian worship. In his writings, Payne noted that the "ring shout," which Freedmen considered an indispensable part of Christian worship, was demonized by Payne. Payne unapologetically asserted, "To the most thoughtful and intelligent I usually succeeded in making the 'Band' [ring shout] disgusting; but by the ignorant masses...it was regarded as the essence of religion."¹⁹⁴ In Payne's view the ring shout was an "incurable religious disease" practiced by "the most stupid and headstrong" which made "them easy prey for Satan."¹⁹⁵ His solution was to form "... an intelligent ministry to cure this fanaticism." He wrote:

¹⁹⁴ Daniel A. Payne, *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Nashville: Publishing House of the A.M.E. Sunday School Union, 1888), 254.

¹⁹⁵ Daniel A. Payne, *Recollections*, 256.

We need a host of Christian reformers like St. Paul, who will not only speak against these evils, but who will also resist them, even if excommunication be necessary. The time is at hand when the ministry of the A. M. E. Church must drive out this heathenish mode of worship or drive out all the intelligence, refinement, and practical Christians who may be in her bosom.¹⁹⁶

Bragg enthusiastically endorsed this denunciation and crowned Payne as “the Negro apostle of education” and consequently affirmed:

We do not believe that a more useful, educated Negro, than Bishop Daniel A. Payne has ever lived . . . Everywhere, and upon all occasions he was militantly aggressive with his onslaughts on ignorance and "Baptized superstition," as he characterized it. He was, preeminently, not only learned, but a man of God, absolutely bold and fearless.¹⁹⁷

Bragg also congratulated Payne on his reform of Bethel AME Church in Baltimore, as it “abounded in numbers and ignorance” prior to his arrival in 1843. Payne, according to Bragg, characterized Bethel “as the struggle between darkness and light, between ignorance and knowledge, between baptized superstition and Christianity, that shall never end till victory shall sit perching upon the banner of the one or the other; and we are certain that God will defend the right and crown it with most glorious success.”¹⁹⁸ Such an inflexible and inhospitable characterization of Freedmen was sure to culminate in hostility. Consequently, in his *Recollections*, Payne related that his effort to purge Bethel of its “extravagances in worship” i.e. the singing of spirituals, resulted in “bloodshed” as he was accosted by “an infuriated woman with a club.” Payne was not seriously injured in this incident and those who opposed him were excommunicated.¹⁹⁹ Nonetheless, despite such

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 254.

¹⁹⁷ George F. Bragg, *The History of the Afro American Group of the Episcopal Church*. (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1922), 96.

¹⁹⁸ George F. Bragg, *How The Black Man Found The Church* (Baltimore: The Church Advocate Press, 1917), 7.

¹⁹⁹ Daniel A. Payne, *Recollections*, 92.

bloodshed and hostility, Bragg approved of Payne's crusade as, Payne's "whole noble and inspiring life was spent in the crucifixion of ignorance," according to Bragg.²⁰⁰ It is also interesting that Bragg approved of Payne's assessment of Bethel AME Church and its subsequent transformation, through the eyes of white Americans, for Bragg stated:

Up to that time they [Bethel congregation] were regarded by the white community as the most ignorant, most indolent and most useless body of Christians in the city. Since then they have been commended as one of the most interesting and enterprising in it.²⁰¹

This passage implies that both Bragg and Payne considered white perceptions and standards of respectable behavior the litmus test which defined socially acceptable, refined behavior. Indeed, what writer Toni Morrison has called the "white gaze" seemed to be ever present in the mind of some black elites, policing black behavior even in the absence of white people. This state of affairs resulted in a class hierarchy which pervaded all aspects of African American life, including religion. Based on Bragg's repeated endorsement of Payne's excoriation of ritual practices within churches of the black underclass, it would appear Bragg held some pejorative views of the black poor.

Bragg's pejorative views toward certain aspects of the black underclass do not exhaust his conservative viewpoints. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, Bragg displayed a fondness for certain aspects of white southern history and culture which on occasion placed him at odds with the general sentiment of the black community. It also placed him at loggerheads with some black elites of northern liberal sensibilities such as W. E. B. Du Bois. The issue of *The Lost Cause* was one such issue that illustrated this

²⁰⁰ George F. Bragg, *How The Black Man*, 7.

²⁰¹ George F. Bragg, *The History of the Afro American*, 96.

division. The Lost Cause was an effort on the part of some white southerners to “vindicate” the defeat of the Confederacy by the Union Army during the American Civil War.²⁰² Lost Cause propaganda appeared early in the wake of the Civil War defeat of the Confederacy.²⁰³ The guiding motif of Lost Cause propaganda was based on the racist myth that the antebellum South was an idyllic place of benevolent slave masters and happy go-lucky slaves who shared a genuine fondness of affection for one another.²⁰⁴ It was even stated that such slaves risked their lives to protect their slave masters during the Civil War.²⁰⁵ Other iterations of this myth stated that faithful slaves protected the family of their slave owners while they were away contributing to the Confederate war effort. Such was the myth of the ‘faithful slave’ and the ‘black Mammy’ of Lost Cause lore and these mythical creations, along with the veneration of former Confederate General Robert E. Lee, were articles of faith of the Lost Cause.

But it wasn’t until the late nineteenth century that the movement of the Lost Cause blossomed due primarily to the efforts of “the United Confederate Veterans [UCV], founded in 1889, the *Confederate Veteran* magazine founded in 1893 and the United Daughters of the Confederacy [UDC] founded in 1894.”²⁰⁶ Indeed, these organizations engaged in a massive propaganda campaign during the late nineteenth century which

²⁰² Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (University Press of Florida: Florida, 2003), 5, David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War American Memory* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2001), 266.

²⁰³ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 78-79.

²⁰⁴ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 2-3, David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 260.

²⁰⁵ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 287.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 272.

consisted of three interconnected strategies. One strategy was to control the historical narrative about the Civil War in academia and popular culture. Second, they endeavored to inundate American cities with monuments to fallen Confederate heroes and faithful slaves. And thirdly, they wanted to control the textbooks of grammar schools and indoctrinate young children with the racist mythology and ideology of the Lost Cause.²⁰⁷ In doing so they hoped to redeem and vindicate the Confederacy and white south. According to historian Karen Cox in her work, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, the UDC were almost single handedly responsible for “the impact the Lost Cause had on the (sic) South in the twentieth century.”²⁰⁸ They, in consultation with the USCV, sought to erect monuments not just to Lee, but to the ‘faithful slaves’ and black mammies because of these slaves allegedly unwavering faithfulness toward the cause of the Confederacy. The reality was quite different and African Americans, with few exceptions, stood against the erection of such monuments.²⁰⁹ Historian David W. Blight in his work, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, stated that, “African Americans reacted to the Lee cult and the Richmond monument [of Lee] with a combination of silence and defiance.”²¹⁰ According to a 1923 article published in *The Afro* entitled, “The Mammy Monument,” the proposed erection of a black Mammy monument in Washington, D.C. “had drawn a storm of opposition from colored people everywhere on the ground that it is an effort to glorify the

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 273.

²⁰⁸ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 5.

²⁰⁹ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 459, note 57

²¹⁰ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 270.

type of ante-bellum Negro slave who did not aspire for national citizenship.”²¹¹ Despite this outpouring of opposition from the African American community toward such monuments, Bragg stood in favor of such monuments.

Indeed, on the 10th of October 1933 Bragg supported and attended the unveiling of the Hayward Shepherd Memorial, which was sponsored by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the Son Confederate Veterans (SCV). Shepherd was a free African American who was an employee of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company in the 1850s. He was also the first person killed by John Brown in Brown’s raid on the Harper’s Ferry Federal Armory in Virginia in 1859. According to accounts of the time, Shepherd was approached by two of Browns men at the train station at approximately 1:30 am. Shepherd then turned to run and was shot in the back by the men. He died later the next day. From a historical perspective, the reasons for his death are unclear. According to one speculative account of the time, Shepherd was given prior knowledge of Brown’s intention to raid Harper’s Ferry’s Federal Armory but refused to join the insurrectionists. His refusal to join was interpreted as a rejection of their plans which resulted in his death. Another account suggested that Shepherd was initially a part of Brown’s plan for insurrection but attempted to back out when it seemed failure was imminent. This allegedly resulted in his death. However, in Shepherd’s death bed confession he stated that he was simply checking on the whereabouts of an employee when he was shot.²¹²

²¹¹"The Mammy Monument," *Afro-American*, December 28, 1923, 1.

²¹² Mary Johnson, "An 'Ever Present Bone of Contention': The Heyward Shepherd Memorial," *West Virginia History* 56 (1997): 2.

Such complexity notwithstanding, Shepherd came to be associated with loyalty to the antebellum South. It was evidently assumed that Shepherd was opposed to the plans of Brown, which resulted in his death. Indeed, the UDC/SVC viewed Shepherd as a moral exemplar of what an African American should be and his memorial “reflect[ed] its sponsors’ fond memories of loyal slaves, in particular those who did not flee or take up arms against the South during Brown’s raid and the Civil War but remained in faithful service to their masters.”²¹³ Many African Americans saw the memorial as a deliberate affront to the legacy of John Brown who fought to abolish slavery.²¹⁴ African American residents of Harper’s Ferry, incredulous at Bragg’s “ridicule of his own people” hoped he would stay away.²¹⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, in a January, 1932 editorial for *The Crisis Magazine* entitled, “John Brown,” concurred with the “Editor of the *Afro-American* that it [Heyward Shepherd Memorial] was disgraceful for the President of Storer College and Dr. Bragg to have any part in this travesty.”²¹⁶ Indeed, the *Afro-American* denounced the event as Bragg was said to have been “hoodwinked” by Confederate white women.²¹⁷ In his defense, Bragg wrote Du Bois a terse letter stating that it was his Christian duty “as a Christian minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” to attend the event and offer the benediction as all

²¹³ Mary Johnson, “An ‘Ever Present,” 2.

²¹⁴ Calhoun E. Green, “Harpers Ferry Hopes Dr. Bragg Will Stay Home,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, October 17, 1931, 23.

²¹⁵ Calhoun E. Green, “Harpers Ferry,” 23.

²¹⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, “John Brown,” *The Crisis*, January 1, 1932, 467.

²¹⁷ “Barbara Frietchie in Black Harpers Ferry,” *Baltimore Afro American*, October 17, 1931, 6, “Speeches Made Dedication of Uncle Tom-Pappy Monument at Harpers Ferry,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, October 17, 1931, 7.

in attendance were God's children, regardless of race.²¹⁸ However, this justification for his attendance is problematic for it must be remembered that Robert E. Lee was responsible for halting John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859. Consequently, if Bragg supported John Brown and his raid on Harper's Ferry, it is doubtful that he would have glorified as "a great and good" person, Lee the man responsible for halting his advance.²¹⁹ It is also doubtful that Bragg would have attended and bestowed his blessings, on such an event sponsored by those hostile to the legacy of John Brown.

Despite Bragg's view of Brown, his relationship with Lee was one based on fondness and respect. This is interesting as Lee was a symbol of the Lost Cause and darling of the UDC. Indeed, on several occasions Bragg honored the memory and legacy of Lee.

In 1918 Bragg asserted:

The Greatest help the white man can render the black man is a continuation of the helpful and constructive touch of that same class, as represented by General Lee with the black man. Such contact in days that are passed has produced a superior class of black people, whose life and energy are visibly present in the great progress the black race has made.²²⁰

In 1921 in his article "Robert E. Lee and Race Relations," Bragg stated:

What kind and quality were the Lee group of southern whites, unmistakably appears in the quality of the black men produced who lived in and reflected their highest ideals . . . a class (however small they may have been) of superior blacks had been produced through personal contact and touch with the Lees.²²¹

²¹⁸ George Freeman Bragg, *Letter from George F. Bragg, Jr. to W. E. B. Du Bois*, December 29, 1931, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, <http://credo.library.umass.edu>, accessed September 10, 2017.

²¹⁹ George Freeman Bragg, "Letters to the Editor: The Old South and the Negro," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 17, 1936, 12.

²²⁰ George Freeman Bragg, "A Colored Minister Says the Negro Cannot Get Along Without the White Man to Hold Him Up," *The Baltimore Sun*, May 5, 1918, 10.

²²¹ George Freeman Bragg, "Robert E. Lee and Race Relations," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 23, 1921, FS2.

By such comments Bragg stated that black elites were groomed at the feet of Lee and his associates. Thus, it would be reasonable to find ideas in Bragg's ideology that were out of sync with those of most African Americans of the period. Indeed, his admiration and respect for Lee strongly suggests that Bragg was inured to some of the history, culture and symbols of the Lost Cause. Bragg's affirming appraisal of the black Mammy, a central myth and symbol of Lost Cause propaganda is evidence of his adoption of aspects of Lost Cause mythology.

Indeed, in 1923 the UDC endeavored to place a monument to the black Mammy in Washington, D.C. to the consternation of the African American community.²²² The black Mammy was in many ways a figment of the UDC's and other supporters of the Lost Cause's, imagination. This figure was seen as a benevolent caretaker who willingly and lovingly cared for the white children of her slave owner. She was said to be an integral part of her slave master's family. Indeed, Leopold Bahshinsky, then president of the UDC, who spoke at the Hayward Shepherd Memorial Service, praised "black mammies" for not raising sons that would take up arms against their masters.²²³ Interestingly, Bragg seemed to echo similar sentiments. In 1927 in the "Afro Readers Say" section of the *Afro*, Bragg stated, "The greatest production of the negro race, in this country as well as the greatest contribution to American civilization was and is 'the Negro woman.'"²²⁴ Affectionately referred to by whites as "Mammy" she was:

²²² "The Mammy Monument," *Afro-American*, December 28, 1923.

²²³ "Speeches Made at Dedication of Uncle Tom-Pappy Monument at Harpers Ferry," *Afro-American*, October 17, 1931, 7.

²²⁴ George Freeman Bragg, "Afro Readers Say," *Afro-American*, December 17, 1927, 6.

Introduced in the 'great house' the center of the best culture and civilization and they so quickly, and effectively, assimilated from their environment and were entrusted to children of the household.²²⁵

Such sentiments were echoed throughout the remainder of his life as evidenced by his articles, "Letters to the Editor: The Old South and the Negro" published in *The Baltimore Sun* in 1936 and "Tributes to the Negro" also published in *The Baltimore Sun* paper in 1938, just two years before his death in 1940. Indeed, Bragg was so fond of the black Mammy that he desired to have a monument erected to the black Mammy in front of his Home for Friendless Colored Children. He believed the monument would be a "means of training the moral and spiritual powers" of the orphans and truant African American children in the orphanage. The monument would be "a testament of the excellence and superiority of the virtue and moral powers of black women yet in slavery and yet who were entrusted with the raising of white children in the very best families of the South."²²⁶

Bragg's support of such large-scale efforts on behalf of the black Mammy such as the erection of monuments means that he concurred with the use of the very term 'Black Mammy' which, unsurprisingly brought him into sharp agreement with some *Afro* readers. Bragg knew that the term 'Mammy' rankled the feathers of many blacks as they considered it a term of derision. As far back as 1910 when white Americans in Galveston, Texas, proposed to erect a monument to the black Mammy, Bragg defended the use of the term and argued that some whites of "high honor and refined qualities" really did adore the

²²⁵ George Freeman Bragg, "Afro Readers Say," 6.

²²⁶ George F. Bragg Jr, "The Black Mammy of the South," *The Baltimore Sun*, February 16, 1923.

“black Mammy.”²²⁷ In response, one reader of the *Afro American Ledger* sharply retorted, “The men to which he [Bragg] evidently refers were the slaveholders of the South. Slavery, concubinage, and degradation are not found in any community contaminated by a ‘sense of high honor.’”²²⁸

Reid in her thesis, suggested that Bragg’s acceptance of the black Mammy was not without qualification. She argued that Bragg criticized the *Morning Sun* for its racist treatment and depictions of African Americans in its news stories. Reid noted that the *Sun* repeatedly referred to African Americans by their names but always provided the proper moniker when referencing a white person. She also noted that the *Sun*, utilized its ‘Aunt Priscilla’ column to portray African Americans as using “poor and broken English” as a way to ridicule them. The “Aunt Priscilla” columns in the *Sun* newspaper depicted an “Aunt Jemima”-like figure who provided cooking recipes for patrons of the paper. The broken English they attributed to the black Mammy or Aunt Priscilla is what disgruntled Bragg according to Reid. Hence, he proffered a solution. Bragg, according to Reid, sought to “rectify this derogatory caricature” by suggesting “the building of a statue to symbolize the contributions of black women including black mammies.”²²⁹

However, the article that Reid cited to prove her contention did not completely align with her assertions. In the *Sun* article published on April 16th, 1923 entitled, “The Black Mammy of the South,” that Reid used to buttress her contention, Bragg stated that he

²²⁷ George Freeman Bragg, “The Black Mammy,” *Baltimore Afro-American* May 7, 1910, 10.

²²⁸ Thomas Clarke, “The People’s Forum: Another View of the Black Mammy Question,” *Afro-American* May 14, 1910, 4.

²²⁹ Delmita P. Reid, “For Zion’s Sake, I Will Not Hold My Peace: George Freeman Bragg, Jr., 1863-1940” (Master’s thesis, Howard University, 1983), 72.

wanted to have a “Chapel of the Syro-Phoenician Woman” built on the grounds of his orphanage, not to solve a problem of racist a stereotype, but simply to honor “the loving memory of the black mammies.”²³⁰ Indeed, the entire article appears to be an ode to the black Mammy. It also appears to be a follow-up to an article by the same name published two days prior, although Bragg is not listed as the author. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Reid’s interpretation is still plausible for it is quite possible that Bragg intended his Chapel to the Syro-Phoenician Woman as a compromise but did not make his intention overtly.

What is the basis of Bragg’s undying fidelity to this view of the South? For Bragg, his sentiments were not the result of brainwashing or Uncle Tomism for when “we speak in words of the highest praise of the elect class of Southern white men we deal not in *flunkeyism*, but in truth. We speak that we do know.”²³¹ Bragg further implied that “Colored people who have come to birth some time since the closing of the Civil War” have a different “viewpoint” than those who were born before. For those who were born well after the close of the Civil War have been “forced along a line of race separateness.”²³² “Race separateness” is most likely an allusion to the segregated structure and spirit of the Jim Crow Era into which those persons born well after the close of the Civil War, were born. Bragg seemed to imply that such persons viewed interactions between blacks and whites through the segregated lens of their experience. And thus, they viewed issues like

²³⁰ George F. Bragg Jr. “The Black Mammy of the South,” *The Baltimore Sun*, February 16, 1923, 16.

²³¹ George Freeman Bragg, “The Church Advocate and Its Editor,” *Church Advocate*, May 1918, 1.

²³² George F. Bragg Jr, “The Black Mammy of the South,” 16.

the proposal for a black Mammy monument “as just one more symptom of Jim Crow treatment.”²³³

What Bragg implied by such statements was that the state of affairs between some blacks and whites prior to the Civil War and immediately after its conclusion was not based on “Jim Crow treatment.” Bragg asserted that “that particular class of whites who could afford the luxury of the black mammies were of such elevation of character as rendered them *immune to vulgar treatment of black people* [Emphasis Mine].”²³⁴ This begs the question: If their treatment of black mammies was not based on “vulgar treatment” then what was it based on? Bragg suggested it was based on true feelings of mutual respect, admiration and even love. Indeed, he provided several examples from his personal experience of loving relationships between former slave owners who were of this “elect class” and their long-time former slaves. Hence, he noted that on the death of one such slave the slave owner’s entire family was “deeply affected and moved as was possible between friend and friend.”²³⁵ In another instance he noted that the daughter of a long time servant was to be married and “there with the colored guests were the white people with their presents, amiability, gentleness and cordiality to all.”²³⁶ He also noted that if a long time slave had a son or daughter who upon “graduating from Hampton” wanted to secure a position as a teacher, the father of the graduate would simply inform the slave master of the situation. This would ensure that the son or daughter of the slave got the position. Bragg confidently assures the reader that there were many more examples of such

²³³ George F. Bragg Jr, "The Black Mammy of the South," 16.

²³⁴ George F. Bragg Jr, "The Black Mammy of the South," 16.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

interactions between former masters and slaves.²³⁷ Thence, when Bragg stated that “we speak that which we know” he was referring to those African Americans, like himself, who had experienced such allegedly genteel relationships with the “elect class of whites” first-hand.²³⁸ It was only such persons who would understand the alleged truth of his words in regard to the character of those relationships. Thus, Bragg spoke of a generational difference in perspective and validated his view from the vantage point of personal experience.

What’s interesting about this assertion is that Bragg, in trying to prove the kindness and genteel nature of “a particular class of whites” seems to justify slavery.²³⁹ Indeed, by attributing a benign and beneficial character to the enslavement of the black Mammy Bragg suggests that her experience of slavery or what he referred to as “nominal bondage” was not bad.²⁴⁰ In fact, he suggested on many occasions that it was a caring and loving environment for those in “the big house.”²⁴¹ He also noted how much they benefitted from their enslavement as they were “daily in touch with the best manners etc.”²⁴² When one couples this perspective with the belief on the part of whites and black elites that Africa was a benighted and barbarous continent and western knowledge was the epitome of civilization, then black mammies were in a better situation as enslaved chattel in the “Big

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ George F. Bragg, “From Darkness into Light,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 10, 1920, 9.

²⁴² George F. Bragg, “From Darkness,” 9.

house” then they were in Africa.²⁴³ In this vein Bragg reiterates a portion of the Lost Cause argument about the idyllic character of slavery and its alleged benefit to the enslaved. Bragg is keenly aware of this conclusion based on his view and asserts, “I am far from justifying slavery. I am just stating a fact.”²⁴⁴

While the truth of Bragg’s claim is debatable, it’s plausible to assert that the social incubator for his views evolved out of his childhood and young adult experiences in the South just after Emancipation. Bragg’s writings provide ample evidence that his childhood experiences included what he interpreted as positive social encounters and relationships with some southern ex-Confederates and former slave owners that carried over into his adult life. According to Episcopal historian, J. Carlton Hayden in his article, “‘For Zion’s Sake I Will Not Hold My Peace’ George Freeman Bragg, Jr. Priest, Pastor, and Prophet,” Bragg “at age six” Bragg desired to be “just like Reverend Gibson.”²⁴⁵ Reverend Churchill J. Gibson was the Episcopal rector of Grace Episcopal Church in St. Petersburg, Virginia. He was also a former Confederate officer under the leadership of General Robert E. Lee. Lee proved to be a prominent and influential figure in Bragg’s life. In 1936, just four years before his death, Bragg reminisced that “ever since [he] was a boy of 8 or 10 years of age, to this very day, he has lived in vital contact and delightful intercourse with the life of this group . . .” “This group” that Bragg speaks of so fondly, consisted of “two members

²⁴³ George F. Bragg Jr. "The Black Mammy of the South," 16.

²⁴⁴ George F. Bragg Jr. "The Black Mammy of the South," 16.

²⁴⁵ J. Carleton Hayden, “‘For Zion’s Sake I Will Not Hold My Peace’ George Freeman Bragg, Jr., Priest, Pastor, and Prophet,” *Linkage* 6 (1986), 10-11, 23.

of the staff of General Robert E. Lee . . . Major Cooke, our old teacher and pastor and Col. Walter E. Taylor adjutant, the faithful and inspiring friend of our early ministry . . .”²⁴⁶

It was at the very beginning of his ministry, at the age of twenty-four, that Bragg believed “it was his great fortune” to have formed a close bond with “Col Walter H. Taylor, the adjutant of General Robert E. Lee.” He believed that Taylor and General Lee exemplified “that particular class of southern people” that he considered, ““kind, generous, humane, and fatherly, they were noblemen.””²⁴⁷ It is on the basis of such traits, which represented the “real character of the southern people,” that Bragg believed slaves remained loyal to their southern, Confederate slave masters.²⁴⁸ At the age of fifty-three Bragg reminisced about his “boyhood days in old Virginia . . . and recalls our personal touch with a group of white people who were without superiors in the elements of true Christianity, nobility of character and mental worth.”²⁴⁹ Based on these and other evidences it is plausible to conclude that Bragg’s fidelity to the South is partially based on fond experiences during his childhood and young adult years.

In conclusion, it is clear that Bragg harbored some pejorative views of the black poor as seen in his castigation of their religious practices. He also supported aspects of the Lost Cause evidenced by his use of demeaning terms like the ‘black Mammy’ and his strident defense and support of the black Mammy monument movement of the UDC and

²⁴⁶ George Freeman Bragg, “Letters to the Editor: The Old South and the Negro,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 17, 1936, 12.

²⁴⁷ George Freeman Bragg, “Letters to the Editor: The Old South,” 12.

²⁴⁸ George Freeman Bragg, “The Negro in the Confederate Army,” *The Baltimore Sun*, July 29, 1919, 8.

²⁴⁹ George Freeman Bragg, Writings 1916, Box 1 Folder 3, Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, St. Petersburg, VA.

USCV. He also supported and participated in the inaugural ceremonies of the Hayward Shepherd Memorial in Harper's Ferry, Virginia sponsored by the UDC. Shepherd was one of the many 'faithful slave' monuments that the UDC wanted to highlight and proliferate as it promulgated the racist myth that slaves lived an idyllic existence with their allegedly benevolent slave owners. Such was in keeping with the UDC's effort to vindicate the South.

Such conservative aspects of Bragg's thought should give pause to any hagiographic portraits of him which ignore questionable, if not troubling aspects of his thought. At the same time, we should not make any snap judgements about Bragg's character before we have had an opportunity to examine other more radical dimensions of his thought. For as stated at the beginning of this work, Bragg was not unidimensional and thus his thoughts did not all fit neatly into one ideological box. As such Bragg was not merely of man of conservative ideas and opinions but he was a man inured of radical sensibilities. Indeed, Bragg was a man imbued with a strident race pride and racial consciousness. He was also a fierce opponent of white supremacy. As a result, the following chapter will examine Bragg's racial consciousness as manifested in his thought.

Chapter VI: Racial Consciousness in the Thought of Bragg

Racial Consciousness in this chapter refers to an ideology steeped in ideas of racial pride and solidarity. It also incorporates ideas of racial separatism and political agitation against racial oppression. It may not appear from the last chapter that Bragg possessed a sense of racial consciousness. Such an opinion would be understandable and plausible. But it would fail to take into account writings and works of Bragg which paint a very different portrait of him. Indeed, Bragg's civil rights resume bespeaks a veteran of numerous civil rights struggles on behalf of African Americans during the Progressive Era. But he was not merely concerned with legal rights as he also built or supported institutions designed to improve the quality of life in the black community. Ideologically some of his ideas may have even bordered on a moderate form of Black Nationalism. As such the following chapter will discuss Bragg's racial consciousness as well as its possible origins and relationship to his conservative ideas.

One of the main aspects of black consciousness is an acknowledgement and love for African American history. Bragg was a historian and journalist who wrote incessantly about black history, specifically as it affected Marylanders. Many of Bragg's articles in the *Afro American Ledger*, later the *Afro* and the *Sun Newspaper* were inundated with historical facts and incidents related to the life of African Americans, and corrections of historical inaccuracies.²⁵⁰ Bragg also believed knowledge of one's history was essential if

²⁵⁰ "Dr. Bragg Lectures," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Feb 15, 1930, ProQuest, George F. Bragg. "The Forum," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Jun 20, 1925, ProQuest.

one was to have a positive sense of themselves and their people.²⁵¹ Thus, it was not merely Bragg's intent to present history for correction or general knowledge but to celebrate the struggles and accomplishments of African Americans. In so doing he sought to bolster the self-esteem of African Americans in general and African Americans in Maryland in particular. His book, *Men of Maryland* was an effort in this direction. This work provided affirming portraits of African American Marylanders who were pivotal in the freedom struggle for civil rights. Hence, Bragg took pride in the accomplishments of African Americans and this indicates the presence of a racial consciousness.

In the previous chapter it was noted that Bragg had fond memories of his southern childhood in Virginia. He praised and honored southern luminaries such as Thomas Jefferson, William Mahone and Episcopal priest Churchill J. Gibson who he wanted to emulate as a priest. He considered these men instrumental in his moral and social development. He also considered Robert E. Lee and members of his staff to be mentors and true friends of the African American community. However, Bragg's fondness for such persons and his general Anglophilism was in tension with his racial consciousness that could be critical of white Americans and some white southern religious practices. This is evidenced by Bragg's belief that those he deemed white progressives "really didn't understand black people."²⁵² Bragg made this assessment two times in his autobiography. In one discussion of it Bragg wanted to "emphasize, that white Bishops and white people

²⁵¹ "History Week Gives Pride In Past-Bragg." *Baltimore Afro-American*, Feb 12, 1927. <https://search.proquest.com>, George Bragg, "Needed in Schools," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Jan 04, 1936, ProQuest.

²⁵² George Freeman Bragg, *A Bond Slave of Christ* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1912), 2.

generally, just don't quite understand us. They don't understand aspiring and intelligent colored people, and only those who thoroughly understand us can really lead and successfully accomplish constructive work among us."²⁵³ This assertion suggests that Bragg could be critical of white Americans maybe even those he respected and admired.

This statement and its implications are in tension with Bragg's praise of a certain class of whites. One way one might wish to reconcile this tension is to suggest that Bragg, like many African Americans during this period, hid his true feelings and thoughts from whites and outwardly presented himself as an accommodationist. Such a posture would be in accord with ideas expressed by Paul Laurence Dunbar in his famous poem, *We Wear the Mask* published in 1896. While Bragg may have engaged in this on occasion, in general it does not appear that he attempted to hide his true feelings or thoughts under a cloak of accommodationism. Reid in her thesis noted that Bragg could be quite critical of white Americans as evidenced by some of his articles in the *Sun* newspaper. One of his most critical articles was entitled, "Toussaint L. Ouverture Quoted in Reply to Dr. Ainslie" Dec 13, 1933" wherein he attributed wayward crime in the black community not to the alleged criminality of the black underclass, as dictated by racial uplift, but to racism and white men. Indeed, Bragg forthrightly asserted:

The 'bad negro' is the creation of the reflection of bad white men. Through a series of degradations, segregation, unfair treatment, opposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ the 'bad negro' has been produced.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ George Freeman Bragg, *A Bond Slave*, 8.

²⁵⁴ George F. Bragg Jr, "Toussaint L'Ouverture Quoted in Reply to Dr. Ainslie," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 13, 1933, 12.

Such critical assessments do not appear to be late developments in the thought of Bragg. Similar views were present in Bragg's thinking as a young man in St. Petersburg, Virginia. In 1882 when Bragg was 19 years old, he established St. Petersburg's first black newspaper called, the *Lancet*.²⁵⁵ He used it to support the Readjuster Party in St. Petersburg, Virginia in the 1880s. This party which was led by Confederate war hero William Mahone was a populist party composed of dissident members of both the Republican and Democratic parties as well as African Americans.²⁵⁶ In exchange for votes the party promised to stand up for the rights of African Americans. For this reason, Bragg personally admired Mahone and spoke of him in messianic terms as, "The Hero of Jerusalem, who brought political and civil deliverance to the suffering of the sons of Ham."²⁵⁷ Many blacks in St. Petersburg also had a profound respect for Mahone. But Bragg was also critical of Mahone's party despite his tremendous support for it. Indeed, in 1882 in reference to the Readjuster Party Bragg had this to say:

We desire to state that we do not endorse the rascality and meanness in the Readjuster party no more than we endorse the hide-bound meanness and proscriptive policy of the Bourbons. The Readjuster Party, just like the Republican Party, has shown a disposition to ignore the negro in the distribution of patronage.²⁵⁸

Braggs' biting critique of Mahone and the Readjuster party was also illustrated in the Congressional Primary of 1884 in St Petersburg, Virginia. In this election Bragg supported an African American candidate named Joseph P. Evans for the congressional seat and

²⁵⁵ Lawrence L. Hartzell, "The Exploration of Freedom in Black Petersburg, Virginia 1865-1902," in *The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia*, eds. Edward L. Ayers and John C. Willis (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 140.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 140.

²⁵⁷ George F. Bragg, *The Hero of Jerusalem*, 3.

²⁵⁸ Lawrence L. Hartzell, "The Exploration of Freedom," 141.

Mahone supported a white candidate named James D. Brady. Despite Bragg's best efforts Brady won the nomination and went on to beat the Democratic Party's candidate for office. As a result, Bragg withdrew his support from the Readjuster party, believing political corruption was partly responsible for the defeat of Evans.²⁵⁹

Such incidents clearly reveal Bragg's sense of racial consciousness. Indeed, Bragg supported Evans who was a black candidate for congress in St. Petersburg as opposed to Brady who was the white candidate supported by Mahone. This was racial solidarity in action. And when Evans did not emerge victorious, Bragg withdrew his support from the Readjuster party and began to investigate notions of black economic development as a means to racial liberation. Notions of economic development and institution building to further the aims of black liberation are not merely evidence of racial consciousness. Such is indicative of Black Nationalist thought as economic development is a core tenet of many forms of Black Nationalism. However, such ideas were stated at a time when Bragg claimed to have friends and mentors who were former Confederates. His fond memories of them in later life complicate his strident race consciousness as exhibited in St. Petersburg and later in the pages of the *Sun* and *Afro* newspaper.

Nonetheless, Bragg's racial consciousness also pervaded his views about the religious practices found in churches of the black underclass. It was previously noted that Bragg was unapologetic in his view that the ring shout and other such religious practices in many Black Churches, were idolatrous and indicative of ignorance. Many contemporary anthropologists and scholars of religion have deemed such practices to be African

²⁵⁹ Lawrence L. Hartzell, "The Exploration of Freedom," 143.

American retentions of traditional African religious rituals. However, Bragg did not attribute such practices to African ancestral religion, but to white Methodism. Indeed, Bragg believed such practices emanated from Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening during the 18th and 19th centuries. Bragg argued that members of the black elite were the valiant bulwarks “who fought with all their might this *white influence* of ‘the Great Awakening’ upon our group [Emphasis Mine].”²⁶⁰ Hence, such practices were seen as a social plague on the African American community that some black elites, led by Daniel Alexander Payne, fought to stop. While this is evidence of Bragg’s racial consciousness as he refused to attribute what he perceived to be a culturally backward ritual to black people, it is also a symptom of class. According to historian Willard Gatewood, black elites were just as critical of ostentatious displays of religiosity on the part of southern whites as they were of southern blacks because of elitist notions they acquired from bourgeois Victorianism. Thus, Bragg’s sense of elitism, which was based in Victorian ideals extended to white behavior just as it did to black behavior.²⁶¹ Hence, Bragg was not so enamored of white liberals or white southern culture that he was uncritical of their behavior.

Bragg’s sharp critique was not solely reserved for white Americans, however. He could also be critical of black elites who refused to engage in the struggle against racism or who too closely identified with white Americans. Bragg referred to them as that “small contingent of dandiacal colored people” who self-identified with “Miss Susie and Marster

²⁶⁰ George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1922), 149.

²⁶¹ Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 284.

Charlie” and “desired to get as far as possible from the ordinary Negro.”²⁶² This indicates that Bragg’s understanding of racial consciousness encompassed the psychological trauma of self-hate on formerly enslaved Africans.

Bragg also chastised the black upper classes for their financial exploitation of the “ordinary negro.”²⁶³ In his 1918 publication, *How the Black Man Found the Church*, Bragg castigated what he called the “army of educated race leaders” who flocked to predominately Black Churches for financial gain.²⁶⁴ Bragg unabashedly referred to their financial pursuits as “selfish” and opportunistic stating that their only reason for being in Black Churches was to foster their own individual “success in business and other worldly promotion(s).”²⁶⁵ He made this point more explicit on January 2nd, 1926 in an *Afro* article entitled, “Dr. George F. Bragg says Afro Missed Real Point of Detroit Trial in Its Editorial Last Week Contrasting Darrow and Christianity.” Here Bragg emphatically stated that, “the financially successful among the race must cease exploiting the race and capitalizing ‘race prejudice.’”²⁶⁶ In this same article Bragg chastised the black aristocracy for abnegating what he considered their fiduciary obligation to the civil rights struggle. He contextualized their obligation in theological terms and thus asserted:

²⁶² Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 285.

²⁶³ Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 285.

²⁶⁴ George F. Bragg, *How The Black Man*, 13.

²⁶⁵ George F. Bragg, *How The Black Man*, 13.

²⁶⁶ George Freeman Bragg, “Dr. George F. Bragg says Afro Missed Real Point of Detroit Trial in Its Editorial Last Week Contrasting Darrow and Christianity,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, January 2, 1926, 9, ProQuest.

God hateth iniquity and hypocrisy and when the materially prosperous among us turn to the Lord with all their hearts they will show it by that kind of love to their brethren as will dispose them to willingly and cheerfully use their means and talent in a genuine effort to decrease 'race prejudice.'²⁶⁷

Thus, Bragg characterized wealthy members of the black aristocracy who withheld their financial support from the freedom struggle, as being opposed to the will of God and thus workers of “iniquity” and “hypocrites.”²⁶⁸ However, the way to repentance was for those “whom He has given money, influence and opportunity to go down in their pockets and come up with the hundreds and thousands of dollars” and use such monies for “the children of Israel.”²⁶⁹ Unsurprisingly, Bragg implied that much of the stagnation of the civil rights movement was due to the black aristocracy’s withholding of funds from pivotal civil rights organizations. Indeed, if they had used their financial means to support the civil rights struggle “the National Association of Colored People and kindred organizations would have all of the money they needed.”²⁷⁰

Such a searing indictment of some in the black upper classes begs the question, Did Bragg consider this contingent of “hypocrites” within the black aristocracy to be just as guilty of holding the race back, as the “backward” members of the black underclass? Indeed, Gatewood noted, that some black elites considered racial uplift of the black underclass the means by which the race would be liberated.²⁷¹ It was the alleged ‘backwardness’ of the black underclass, as perceived by black elites and white Americans that held the black race back from full acceptance by whites and thus liberation. As a

²⁶⁷ George Freeman Bragg, “Dr. George F. Bragg say,” 9.

²⁶⁸ George Freeman Bragg, “Dr. George F. Bragg say,” 9.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats*, 191.

proponent of uplift ideology, Bragg partially adopted this view. Bragg's discussion of the black upper classes seemed to imply that they had an essential obligation to the black freedom struggle which was just as pivotal as that of racial uplift. In essence, if they did not hold up their responsibility, black liberation would not be possible. In some ways Bragg's indictment was similar as both he and the Baptist Women's Convention led by Nannie Helen Burroughs believed many black elites were bulwarks toward black liberation. Indeed, the black Baptist Women's Convention, which was composed of working-class women, utilized biblical language and deemed black elites "the giant Anakite people (white America *and the black elite*)" their sworn enemies.²⁷² Hence, Bragg and the Women's Convention had certain commonalities in regard to the black elite. They both couched their disapproval of black elites in theological language acquired from the Judeo-Christian tradition. They also placed whites and many black elites in the same category as being bulwarks toward racial liberation. Bragg while not indicting all elites definitely saw some as a hindrance to liberation.

Separatism was also an aspect of Bragg's racial consciousness. However, Bragg's understanding of separatism was not consonant with some Black Nationalist notions which more extreme and encompassed all areas of life. Bragg's notion was moderate and confined to religion. Hence, his idea of separatism was found in the Missionary District Plan which was promulgated by the Conference of Church Workers Among Colored People (CCWCP) in 1883. Some historical background of the CCWP and its concept of separatism is necessary to flesh out Bragg's understanding of separatism. More importantly

²⁷² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 208.

juxtaposing the separatist response of the CCWP to racism with the Episcopal Church with other responses by black Episcopalians will help to contextualize Bragg's understanding of racial consciousness.

The CCWCP came into existence as a result of the Sewanee Conference held in Sewanee, Tennessee on July 25, 1883. This conference was a meeting of southern white Episcopal bishops and clergy who, following the secular segregationist patterns of the Jim Crow era, wished to totally disenfranchise Black Churches within the Episcopal denomination. This meant that black Episcopal churches would be segregated within the denomination, being devoid of a vote or input in church polity and they would be governed by a white bishop, without any possibility of acquiring a black bishop. Hence, Episcopal priest and Elder Statesman Alexander Crummell organized the CCWCP in 1883 to protest this proposal. As a result of their agitation the measure was rejected by the General Conference of the Episcopal Church in 1883 but its spirit lived on. Following the Jim Crow example of their secular counterparts, southern white Episcopalians “eliminated the Negro from its Diocesan Council.”²⁷³

As a result of the entrenched nature of racism within the church, the CCWCP sought to carve out a space for black Episcopalians within the Episcopal Church. They attempted to do this by way of the Missionary District Plan. Dubbed the ‘Whittingham Canon’ after its founder, the former Bishop of Maryland, William Rollinson Whittingham, this plan sought to implement a black missionary district which would be governed by a black

²⁷³ George Freeman Bragg, *Afro American Church Work and Workers* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1904), 8.

bishop. Said bishop would have a seat and vote at the General Conference of the Episcopal Church. This essentially meant that African American Episcopalians who resided in the various dioceses or administrative districts throughout the country would be governed not by the bishop of that particular diocese but by an independent black bishop.

It can be effectively argued that the Missionary District Plan (MDP) was only put forward by the CCWCP, when efforts to acquire genuine equality and thus integration within the Episcopal Church were thwarted. Hence, separatism does not appear to have been a part of his general ideology. This may have been the case, but the mere fact that Bragg supported this plan is evidence of his separatist sensibility. As it was not inevitable that he would accept such a plan. Indeed, other black Episcopal clergymen, such as his protégé C.M.S. Mason of All Saints Episcopal Church in St. Louis, were ardent assimilationists, who disagreed with the plan calling it a form of self-segregation.²⁷⁴ In 1937 his “good friend, the Rev. Dr. [George Frazier] Miller of Brooklyn, N.Y.” who was also the President of the Conference of Church Workers in 1902, also disavowed the plan.²⁷⁵ In this same year the General Convention of the Episcopal Church commissioned the Joint Commission on Negro Work to “investigate the desirability of the MDP and report back in 1940.” The results were mixed as some blacks, including the first suffragan bishop for the Episcopal Church, Edward Demby, disavowed the plan. This indicates that there was not unanimous agreement among African American Episcopalians for the plan. According to historian David M. Reimers, “negro Episcopalians” had a “divided mind”

²⁷⁴ Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 286.

²⁷⁵ George Freeman Bragg, “Racial Episcopate,” *The Living Church* 96, no. 24 (June 12, 1937): 743-744. H.Y. Satterlee, “Washington,” *The Churchman* 86, No. 19 (November 8, 1902): 587.

regarding the plan.²⁷⁶ Some like Mason, disapproved of the plan based on an ideology of assimilation, while others disapproved based on a radical, separatist ideology. The separatist idea of Reverend George McGuire was such a radical separatist ideology.

McGuire was an Episcopalian who was an early proponent of the MDP but eventually became disillusioned with the prospects of the plan's adoption by the church. Thus, in 1911 he left the Episcopal Church and in 1918 he joined Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The UNIA was a pan-Africanist organization founded by Black Nationalist leader Marcus Mozhiah Garvey in August of 1914. Garvey believed the solution to the race problem during the early twentieth century was found in the idea of African nationhood or what he referred to as the "United States of Africa."²⁷⁷ Such thinking deeply resonated with McGuire and culminated in his founding of the African Orthodox Church (AOC) in September of 1921. This church, in contradistinction to the MDP which wished to remain tethered to the Episcopal Church "declar[ed] itself to be perpetually autonomous and controlled by Negroes." McGuire also desired a majority black membership.²⁷⁸

This notion of "perpetual autonomy"²⁷⁹ in McGuire's understanding of separatism placed him at odds with Bragg and the CCWCP's understanding. For while Bragg was an ardent proponent of black independence, he was inseparably wedded to the Episcopal

²⁷⁶ David M. Reimers, "Negro Bishops and Diocesan Segregation in the Protestant Episcopal Church: 1870-1954," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 31, No.3 (September 1962): 239.

²⁷⁷ Marcus Mozhiah Garvey, *The Tragedy of White Injustice* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1972) 20-21.

²⁷⁸ Warren C. Platt, "The African Orthodox Church: An Analysis of Its First Decade," *Church History*, 58, No. 4 (Dec. 1989): 483-484.

²⁷⁹ Warren C. Platt, "The African Orthodox Church," 483-484.

Church. Thus, the notion of black independence was at best construed as a “temporary suspension” of the idea of integration.²⁸⁰ At base, Bragg was an integrationist. McGuire on the other hand was a black nationalist who believed separation was a permanent solution. This difference was not a small issue to Bragg, as he derisively referred to McGuire as a “schismatic” for leaving the Episcopal Church and viewed the AOC and the “Missionary Episcopate” as rival plans. According to historian Gavin White, in his article, “Patriarch McGuire and the Episcopal Church,” Bragg considered the AOC a “necessary evil” with its only redemptive value being in possibly “forc[ing] the hand of the Episcopal Church” to adopt the MDP. Nonetheless, Bragg still considered the AOC “evil because it was schismatic.”²⁸¹ In 1930 Bragg also sternly admonished McGuire to “tend to his own business” as he accused McGuire of trying to get “negro priests of the Episcopal church to abandon the church of their choice and come to the African Orthodox church.”²⁸² This difference in separatist ideology is also illustrated in the very names of the respective organizations themselves. According to Bragg the CCWCP was an integrationist organization which was initially an all “Negro Conference” but the presence of two white clergymen in their ranks precipitated an immediate change in the name of the organization

²⁸⁰ George Freeman Bragg, “Rev. Geo. F. Bragg Answers Critic Who Opposes His Views on Segregation,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, January 18, 1924, 9, ProQuest.

²⁸¹ Gavin White, “Patriarch McGuire and the Episcopal Church,” in *Black Apostles: Afro-American Clergy Confront the Twentieth Century*, edited by Randall K. Burkett and Richard Newman (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1978), 170.

²⁸² “Are There Too Many Churches? Asks Hosley: The Churchman H.U. Week,” *Baltimore Afro American*, February 1, 1930, 4, ProQuest.

to “Church Workers Among Colored People.” This was done to graciously accommodate the presence of these white workers.²⁸³

No such accommodation was forthcoming from the African Orthodox Church as its founding constitution strongly suggested. Hence, Bragg’s notion of separatism was not synonymous with black nationalists like McGuire and the AOC, nor were Bragg’s ideas synonymous with assimilationists like C.M.S. Mason who were staunchly opposed to any idea of ecclesiastical separation, temporary or otherwise. Hence, Bragg’s ideas on separation seemed to place him in between the two ideological extremes of Mason and McGuire. This illustrates that Bragg’s notion of racial consciousness was inseparable from his Anglophilism. Indeed, while he fought to acquire a modicum of independence it was within the racist confines of the Episcopal Church. A church that he seemed inseparably wedded to. Hence, his racial consciousness must be understood as perpetually in tension with his Anglophilism.

Once again Bragg’s notion of racial consciousness has roots in his childhood. While his family was faithful to Episcopalianism, which was a predominantly white Christian denomination, they were not blind or immune to all forms of racism which pervaded that institution. According to Bragg’s sister, Carrie Bragg, who wrote *A History of St. Stephens*, after the Civil War many black Episcopalians migrated from Warrenton, North Carolina where they were members of the Emmanuel Episcopal Church, to St. Petersburg, Virginia. There they were allowed to worship in the “gallows of Grace Episcopal Church,” which

²⁸³ George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore, Church Advocate, 1922), 162.

was a white Episcopal church.²⁸⁴ This statement suggests that Grace Episcopal Church had a segregated seating arrangement for African American congregants. However, such a seating arrangement was not solely germane to Grace Episcopal Church. During the nineteenth-century most white churches, in the north and south, engaged in some form of segregated seating for African Americans. These segregated spaces were often referred to as “nigger pews” or “nigger heavens” and they sent a clear message of racial inferiority.²⁸⁵ According to the *Colored American* newspaper, which was cofounded by Samuel Cornish in 1837, “The practice of seating colored people in separate places...in the church of Jesus Christ” was considered “anti-Christian,” “pharisaical” and “heathenish oppression.”²⁸⁶ It is quite possible that such treatment over a prolonged period of time is what propelled most Freedmen to abandon mainline churches during the period of reconstruction. Such may have also propelled Caroline Wiley Bragg, Bragg’s grandmother, to push for construction of a separate congregation.

Indeed, the desire for independence seemed to be a desire on the part of most freemen in St. Petersburg. In 1868 Mrs. Thomas P. James, President of the Pennsylvania Freeman’s Bureau, had this to say about African American Episcopalians in St. Petersburg, “A great deal of interest was manifested by the colored people that they had at last a church

²⁸⁴ A hand written history of the Saint Stephens Episcopal Church in Petersburg, Virginia, 1890, box 1, folder 1, Papers of Carrie Bragg Campbell, The Special Collections and Archives of the Johnson Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

²⁸⁵ Wilbert L. Jenkins. *Climbing Up to Glory: A Short History of African Americans During the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002), 85.

²⁸⁶ “The Slave Gallery at St. Augustine’s Church and the Architecture of Segregation,” http://staugsproject.org/Articles/LucienSonders_FinalReport.pdf (Accessed: September 6, 2017), 17.

and they hoped, at no distant day, to have a minister of their own.”²⁸⁷ When an arsonist destroyed the freedman’s first Episcopal Church in St. Petersburg in 1867, Freedmen’s Bureau teacher Amanda Aiken, stated, “The keenest disappointment is felt by the little flock who after so many longing years rejoiced at last in having a church of their own.”²⁸⁸ Based on such sentiments, it would seem the desire for a separate religious institution was a long-cherished dream of many black Episcopalians in St. Petersburg. Nonetheless, Bragg and the Freedmen of St. Petersburg were not alone in their efforts to acquire a separate religious institution for Freedmen. The Protestant Episcopal Freedman’s Commission, the Freedman’s Bureau and northern Freedmen Bureau teacher Amanda Aiken were instrumental in working to establish a separate Sunday school and church for Freedmen in St. Petersburg. Former Confederates, Churchill J. Gibson, his son Robert A. Gibson, Giles B. Cooke and Alexander W. Weddell also worked closely with Caroline Bragg to establish a separate church for Freedmen.

But racism was also ever present and may have played a role in Bragg’s decision to form a separate church for blacks. For instance, Episcopal priest Giles B. Cooke, who Bragg claimed was one of two ex-Confederates, “who had much to do in shaping and directing his life,” was a racist who believed schooling for African Americans was not designed to make them equal to white men, but to make them easier to control and manage.²⁸⁹ Education historian Ronald Butchart, in his work, *Schooling the Freed People:*

²⁸⁷ George Freeman Bragg, *The Story of Old St. Stephens, Petersburg, VA* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1906), 12.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 19.

²⁸⁹ George Freeman Bragg, “Letters to the Editor: The Old South and the Negro,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 17, 1936, 12.

Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876, reproduced an excerpt from a 1935 *Baltimore Sun* article entitled, “The Last Survivor of General Lee’s Staff.” In this article the writer stated, “ ‘Giles Buckner Cooke was the pioneer in the ‘New Deal’ for liberated Negroes in the matter of education [for] he realized that the welfare of both white and black depended on proper training of the latter.’ ”²⁹⁰ The “proper training” of African Americans for Buckner meant “a schooling free of the overtones of social equality that he associated with carpetbaggers and scalawags, a schooling that would retain as much of antebellum hierarchical race relations as possible.”²⁹¹

Thus, while Caroline Bragg may have formed close bonds of friendships with some southern white Episcopalians, including Cooke, such racist undercurrents may not have been entirely lost on her. Indeed, such racism may have helped her decide to form a separate Black Church. Historian Edgar Toppin believes she was the “driving force behind this effort to establish a black congregation.”²⁹² The black congregation that she eventually helped to found was St. Stephens Episcopal Church, which was founded in 1867. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by fire that same year, as a result of white opposition to the school. Nonetheless, it was rebuilt in 1868 and the Bragg family composed about half of the membership and occupied most of the leadership posts within the church.²⁹³ The congregants also got their wish for a black rector in the person of Joseph S. Atwell, who was an Episcopal priest from Barbados. Atwell became the first rector of this

²⁹⁰ Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina: 2010), 75.

²⁹¹ Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 75.

²⁹² Edgar Toppin, “St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, 1867-1992,” *The Voice* 39 (2013), 1.

²⁹³ Edgar Toppin, “St. Stephen’s,” 2.

congregation.²⁹⁴ Hence, while Bragg was fundamentally an integrationist, he had some semblance of a separatist strain built into his consciousness at an early age.

In conclusion, it can be asserted that Bragg had a racial consciousness which had roots in the Black Church founded by his grandmother and staffed primarily by his family. Bragg's racial consciousness could be critical of whites and black elites but was not an extremist form of racial consciousness as evidenced by his separatist ideology. His understanding of separatism was forced into existence by racism and did not bear the extreme notions of McGuire's AOC which placed Africa at the center of its ideology. It also made a clean break with the Episcopal Church. This was something that Bragg was unwilling to do and his testy exchange with McGuire illustrates his fidelity to the Episcopal Church and the limits of his racial consciousness. Indeed, Bragg's race consciously existed in tension with a strident Anglophilism.

²⁹⁴ George Freeman Bragg, *The Story of Old St. Stephens* (Baltimore: Church Advocate, 1906), 31.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be asserted that Bragg was an accomplished historian, journalist, priest and civil rights activist. But he was also a complicated person whose thoughts and ideas seemed to defy easy categorization. Indeed, Bragg held conservative and race conscious ideas which seemed to be in tension with one another. On the one hand Bragg endorsed and defended racist ideologies such as the Lost Cause. As a consequence, he supported racist organizations such as the UDC and the UCV as they erected monuments to the myth of the black Mammy and the faithful slave. He paid homage to southern racists, like Robert E. Lee, celebrating him, his inner circle and other southern whites as the height of moral and social refinement. His conservatism also encompassed denunciations of the religious practices of the black underclass. As a proponent of racial uplift ideology, which blamed the persistence of racism on the foibles of the black underclass, Bragg leveled biting denunciations toward the black underclass. This can be seen in his ridicule of rituals in churches of the black underclass.

At the same time that Bragg held these views he also expressed a strident racial consciousness. Indeed, Bragg was a historian who reveled in black history. He believed black history was a source of pride and infused African Americans with a sense of purpose, self- esteem and racial dignity. In the same vain Bragg chided black elites for a lack of racial pride and deemed some of them enemies of racial progress. Bragg could also be sharply critical of the religious rituals of some southern whites as he deemed their practices uncouth and backward. Upper class and allegedly progressive whites were not shielded from Bragg's critique as illustrated by his sharp break with William Mahone and the

Readjuster Party in St. Petersburg, Virginia. In general Bragg believed that most whites truly did not understand the mind and true aspirations of educated blacks. Bragg also held separatist ideas as evidenced by his struggle to implement the Missionary District Plan in the Episcopal Church. Such contrasting ideas in the mind of Bragg can be traced to his upbringing in the postbellum south, just after Emancipation.

This analysis of the thought of Bragg provides us with many insights the least of which is the historical reality of contradiction as a feature of serious critical thought. If Bragg is used as a template or representative example of what results from prolonged critical engagement with ideas, then we can assert with confidence that contradiction and complexity are constituent elements of cognition. Indeed, the bidirectional character of Bragg's thought does not fit neatly into fixed categories prescribed by liberals or conservatives, or democrats or republicans. Indeed, human beings are complex beings and while one maybe decidedly liberal or conservative ideologically there may be important aspects of their thought that fit comfortably within opposing social, political or theological ideas.

The results of this study should also caution against jaundiced or hagiographic portrayals of our historical heroes and heroines. For on close historical examination we might discover troubling aspects or ideas that our iconic heroes harbored that disturb the pristine, triumphal narrative that has been weaved around their life and works. As Bragg is a religious as well as a civil rights figure, such a position has particular salience for historical investigations within the field of religious studies in general and of religious historical figures in particular.

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