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The Prince Hall Masons and the African American Church: The Labors of Grand Master and Bishop James Walker Hood, 1831–1918

DAVID G. HACKETT

During the late nineteenth century, James Walker Hood was bishop of the North Carolina Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and grand master of the North Carolina Grand Lodge of Prince Hall Masons. In his forty-four years as bishop, half of that time as senior bishop of the denomination, Reverend Hood was instrumental in planting and nurturing his denomination's churches throughout the Carolinas and Virginia. Founder of North Carolina's denominational newspaper and college, author of five books including two histories of the AMEZ Church, appointed assistant superintendent of public instruction and magistrate in his adopted state, Hood's career represented the broad mainstream of black denominational leaders who came to the South from the North during and after the Civil War. Concurrently, Grand Master Hood superintended the southern jurisdiction of the Prince Hall Masonic Grand Lodge of New York and acted as a moving force behind the creation of the region's black Masonic lodges—often founding these secret male societies in the same places as his fledgling churches. At his death in 1918, the *Masonic Quarterly Review* hailed Hood as "one of the strong pillars of our foundation."¹ If Bishop Hood's life was indeed, according to his recent biographer, "a prism through which to understand black denominational leadership in the South during the period 1860–1920,"² then

I would like to thank the Louisville Institute and the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota for supporting the research and writing of this article.

1. "Bishop James W. Hood," *The Masonic Quarterly* 1 (1919): 3.
2. Sandy Dwayne Martin, "Biblical Interpretation, Ecclesiology, and Black Southern Religious Leaders, 1860–1920: A Case Study of AMEZ Bishop James Walker Hood" in *"Ain't Gonna Lay My 'Ligion Down": African American Religion in the South*, eds. Alonzo Johnson and Paul Jerslid (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 111. I am indebted to Martin's fine recent biography of Hood for providing me with a great

David G. Hackett is an associate professor of religion at the University of Florida.

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what does his leadership of both the Prince Hall Lodge and the AMEZ Church tell us about the nexus of fraternal lodges and African-American Christianity at the turn of the twentieth century?

Scholars have noted but not substantially investigated the significance of fraternal orders for African American religious life. At the turn of the century, W. E. B. DuBois saw in these secret societies hope for the uplift of blacks through "mastery of the art of social organized life."³ In 1910, Howard Odum ranked black fraternal orders equal in membership to the black church and "sometimes" more important.⁴ In fact, according to *Who's Who of the Colored Race for 1915*, two-thirds of the most prominent African Americans held membership in both a national fraternal order and the black church. Forty-two percent of those holding joint memberships were Prince Hall Masons, one-third of whom were clergymen or church officers.⁵ Subsequent research has explored the economic, class, and political importance of these orders while continuing to document their pervasive presence in African American society.⁶ Yet none of these investigators has ventured into

deal of information on Hood's life and career: *For God and Race: The Religious and Political Leadership of AMEZ Bishop James Walker Hood* (Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

3. W. E. B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899), 221–24.
4. Howard W. Odum, *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro: Research into the Conditions of the Negro in Southern Towns* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910), 267. Booker T. Washington praised secret societies for teaching black businessmen how to create capital and thereby "greatly increase property in the hands of members of the race" (*The Story of the Negro*, 2 vols. [New York: Doubleday, 1909] 2:169). By the 1930s, Carter Woodson found that two-thirds of all black physicians and lawyers were members of fraternal orders (*The Negro Professional Man and the Community with special emphasis on the Physician and the Lawyer* [Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1934] chaps. 8 and 16). In 1967, John Hope Franklin asserted that the creation of independent fraternal organizations within the antebellum free black communities of the North was central to the struggle to achieve status in an evolving American society (*From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd ed. [New York: Knopf, 1967], 165).
5. Frank Lincoln Mather, ed., *Who's Who of the Colored Race* (1915, reprint, Detroit, Mich.: Detroit Gale Research Company, 1976).
6. The most recent analysis of the economic influence of black fraternal orders is by David M. Fahey, *The Black Lodge in White America: "True Reformer Brown" and His Economic Strategy* (Dayton, Ohio: Wright State University Press, 1994). William A. Muraskin's *Middle-Class Blacks in a White Society* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1975) emphasizes class. Other studies that to some degree include black fraternal orders and employ an analysis that weaves together economics, class, and politics include: Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991); Joe William Trotter Jr., *Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia 1915–32* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 198–213; Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865–90* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984; reprinted, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); David A. Gerber, *Black Ohio and the Color Line, 1860–1915* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 162; and the older yet still

the meaning of fraternal beliefs and rituals for their members and rarely have they explored the relationship between secret societies and the black church.⁷

In addition to the tendency among historians to underemphasize rites and beliefs, the study of the religious life of black fraternal orders has suffered from a paucity of evidence. The otherwise prolific Bishop Hood left few references to his lodge membership. Unlike the study of white lodges, which pose a problem not so much of finding materials as making sense of them,⁸ Prince Hall primary materials are harder to locate. This has partly to do with the scarcity of these records and partly with the still enforced "secrecy" of this secret society.⁹ Nevertheless, in Hood's case some of the annual proceedings of the North Carolina Grand Lodge are available and these records along with the minutes of the AMEZ North Carolina Conference allow us to observe similarities and differences between the two organizations and the role Hood played in each. Also available are several Prince Hall histories, some state by state proceedings, and a scattered national array of lodge information, members' writings, and newspaper accounts. Together these materials shed light on Hood's Masonic career, while offering insight into the relationship between the lodge and the black church.

This article will argue that for James Walker Hood the activities of the Prince Hall Masons complemented the work of the AMEZ Church. A considerable portion of the membership of Hood's North Carolina Prince Hall fraternity was drawn from the rolls of his North Carolina denomination. Though different in their beliefs and ritual lives, the two organizations were structurally similar. The origins of this relationship can be traced to the post-Revolutionary era when both mutual benefit societies and the black church provided seedbeds of autonomy and bulwarks against the racism of white society. Following the Civil War, these two interwoven social institutions came to the South offering black Southerners similar "race histories" that countered

frequently cited study by Hylan Lewis, *Blackways of Kent* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 259–76.

7. The one exception is Nick Salvatore's recent study of Worcester's Amos Webber, *We All Got History: The Memory Books of Amos Webber* (New York: Times Books, 1996).
8. Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 321.
9. Joseph A. Walkes Jr., longterm editor of the Prince Hall research journal *Phylaxis*, frequently laments, in its pages, the absence of comprehensive state-by-state records. More than once in my efforts to gain access to a lodge, I was told that the lodge building and whatever records were there were not available to me because they were "secret." Nevertheless, a fairly large, though hardly comprehensive, public collection of Prince Hall materials can be found at the Iowa Masonic Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

white racial images while providing meaning and hope for their lives. Bishop Hood appropriated from Masonry beliefs that which complemented his missionary efforts, while his fraternity's practices created bonds among black men and helped them to become responsible members of the community. This marriage between the church and the lodge was not without conflicts from outsiders in the Holiness movement, between church and lodge members, and between men and women. Still, compared to white Masons, Bishop Hood's Prince Hall members were active supporters of the church in a common struggle against racism and for the self-determination of the African American community.

I. CHURCH AND LODGE

In late November of 1874, bishop James Walker Hood presided over the week-long eleventh annual gathering of the ministers of the North Carolina Conference of the African Methodist Zion Church in New Berne, North Carolina. Reared in Pennsylvania and ordained in New England, Hood was pastor of a congregation in Bridgeport, Connecticut when he was sent by his denomination as a missionary to the freedpeople in the South. In 1864 he arrived in the city of New Berne in coastal North Carolina, was appointed bishop in 1872, and by 1874 had overseen the planting of 366 churches with over 20,000 members.¹⁰ As a northern missionary and church organizer, Hood operated in a milieu where most of the newly freed slaves were either completely unchurched or, in their exposure to religious teaching under slavery, were in need of additional structure and organization, at least from the northern perspective, in order to purify their Christianity from the distortions of southern white religion.¹¹ A religious conservative whose social activism stemmed from his belief that Christian conversion

10. *Minutes of the Eleventh Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in America* held in New Berne, N.C., 25 November to 2 December 1874 (Raleigh, N.C.: John Nichols & Co, 1875), 37-47.

11. Recent studies of African American Christianity's expansion in the South during the Civil War and Reconstruction include: Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Culture and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Reginald F. Hildebrand, *The Times Were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995); William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Katherine L. Dvorak, *An African-American Exodus: The Segregation of Southern Churches* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing Company, 1991); and portions of Forrest G. Wood, *The Arrogance of Faith: Christianity and Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth Century* (Boston, Mass.: Northeastern University Press, 1990).

would lead to the downfall of oppression and social injustice, Hood urged his followers to pursue a "profound" commitment to Christ. This was especially important for ministerial candidates, whom the Conference examined carefully for their "literary qualifications, their intemperate habits and filthy practices," and to whom the Bishop directly appealed to honor the dignity of the ministry by living "holy and spotless lives." Following these remarks Hood announced that, prior to the evening's "love feast," the Masonic fraternity would lay the cornerstone at New Berne's new brick church.¹²

Five days later, the Zion leader journeyed to Raleigh where he was fêted as "Most Worshipful Grand Master" at the fifth annual proceedings of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons for the State of North Carolina. Shortly after his arrival in New Berne in 1864, Hood followed through on his commission as superintendent of the southern jurisdiction for the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge of New York by establishing King Solomon Lodge No. 1 in the same town where he organized his first AMEZ Church.¹³ The next three lodges were organized in the towns of Wilmington, Fayetteville, and Raleigh, sites of the largest AMEZ congregations.¹⁴ In 1870, these four lodges formed themselves into the North Carolina Grand Lodge and unanimously elected Bishop Hood as their grand master. By 1874, there were eighteen Prince Hall lodges in the state with 478 members. In his address that year to his "dear Brethren," Grand Master Hood sounded notes of encouragement concerning the "state of the craft" that echoed—though in different language—the remarks he made one week earlier to the AMEZ faithful regarding the state of their church. Appealing first to the "Supreme Grand Master" to bless their gathering "within these sacred walls," the Prince Hall leader pronounced that "the state of the craft in this jurisdiction is good." Most lodges were "composed of good, solid material, and, when the master's hammer has given [them] the necessary polish, [they] will form a beautiful structure." A few, notably his namesake J. W. Hood Lodge

12. *Minutes of the Eleventh Session*, 23.

13. In an address to the North Carolina Grand Lodge in 1917, Hood stated that when he "was appointed by Bishop J. J. Clinton as Superintendent of Missions for the A.M.E. Zion Church, [he] also had an appointment by M. W. G. W. Titus, Grand Master of Masons in New York, a[s] Superintendent of the Southern jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of New York" (*Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, Forty-Eighth Annual Communication held in Salisbury, N.C., 11–13 December 1917* (Nashville, Tenn.: A.M.E. Sunday School Print, 1917), 89. See also William Grimshaw, *Official History of Freemasonry Among the Colored People of North America* (New York, 1903; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries, 1971), 258–59.

14. *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons for the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: Nichols and Gorman, 1872), 53–55; *Minutes of the Eleventh Session*, 37–47.

No. 8 in Goldsboro, "lacked Masonic ability," while the Grand Master reported that his best visit was to Pythagoras Lodge No. 6 in Smithville where most of "its members are professors of Christianity."¹⁵ In assessing candidates for "the mysteries of Masonry" Hood urged that they be "men of active minds" who have, according to the Grand Lodge By-Laws, "a desire for knowledge, and a sincere wish of being serviceable to [their] fellow-creatures." A candidate must also be "free," "of good standing as a citizen," and have no physical deformity "so as to deprive him from honestly acquiring the means of subsistence." On the last day of the gathering, Grand Master Hood prayed to the "Supreme Architect of the Universe" to "guide and govern all we do."¹⁶

Accompanying Bishop Hood in his journey from New Berne to Raleigh was a number of his ministers who also served under his direction as leaders in Prince Hall Masonry. The 1874 AMEZ Conference Minutes list 192 ministers as members. Sixty-four or one-third of these conference members also appear in the available Prince Hall Proceedings for the 1870s. These include one-third of the conference's ruling elders, some of whom held similar leadership positions within the Grand Lodge. Thomas H. Lomax, for example, was appointed Presiding Elder for the Charlotte district, one of six districts in the conference, by Bishop Hood in 1875. In that same year, Lomax was appointed District Deputy Grand Master for the Charlotte district, one of five districts overseen by the Grand Lodge, by Grand Master Hood. Similarly, R. H. Simmons, a ruling elder throughout the 1870s, was appointed Grand Pursuivant within the Grand Lodge, in charge of instructing members in the lore and practice of Freemasonry. Several elders held important committee positions within both the conference and Grand Lodge. Still others were both ministers of churches and leaders of their local lodges. In sum, in 1874 one-third of the AMEZ ministers in North Carolina were members and often leaders in Prince Hall Masonry. These sixty-four ministers, in turn, accounted for more than 13 percent of the state's 485 Prince Hall members. Since these figures do not include an untold number of church members who, like their ministers, followed their leader into the lodge, it appears that Grand Master Hood forged a substantial portion of the leadership and

15. *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge . . . Fifth Annual Communication* (1874), 5-9.

16. *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge . . . Fifth Annual Communication* (1874), 5-9; the by-laws can be found in *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons for the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: Nichols and Gorman, 1872), 14-21.

membership of North Carolina's Prince Hall lodges from the leaders and members of his North Carolina AMEZ denomination.¹⁷

Indeed there were similarities between these two organizations. Not only did they share the same leader and an overlapping membership and exist in many of the same towns,¹⁸ but they had similar organizational structures and appealed to the same broad cohort of young African American men. In both instances the annual meetings took place over several days and followed a rhythm of worship, business, and recreation. Central to each meeting was the bishop or grand master's address and report on his preceding year's visit to individual churches or lodges. Both were rational, hierarchical societies governed by by-laws and central committees. Enduring committees within the conference included Credentials, Finance, By-Laws, and Complaints, which had their parallel in the committees on Credentials, Finance, By-Laws, and Grievances within the Grand Lodge. Considerable time in each annual meeting was given over to complaints or grievances concerning existing members. AMEZ complaints revolved around intemperance, adultery, irregular credentials, and "preaching erroneous doctrine." Grand Lodge penitents were more often assailed for being "dull and inactive," holding irregular credentials, or challenging Masonic doctrine. Finally, a major concern of both groups was the

17. This statistical information was compiled from the following sources: AMEZ Church: *Minutes of the Eleventh Session*, *Minutes of the Twelfth Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (Raleigh, N.C.: John Nichols and Company, 1875), *Minutes of the Thirteenth Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (1876), *Minutes of the Fourteenth Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (1877), and *Minutes of the Fifteenth Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (1878); Prince Hall Lodge: *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons for the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: Nichols and Gorman, 1872), *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons for the State of North Carolina at its Fifth Annual Communication* (Raleigh, N.C.: Nichols and Gorman, 1874), Joseph C. Hill, Right Worshipful Grand Secretary, *Compiler, Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons for the State of North Carolina, Sessions of December 1875, 1876, and 1877* (Wilmington, N.C.: Hall, 1878), and *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Communication of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons for the State of North Carolina* (Wilmington, N.C.: Warrock, 1881).
18. Both the conference and the Grand Lodge founded societies along the routes of the new railroads that crisscrossed the state following the Civil War. Hood often pointed to the distance from railroad stations as a reason for a church or lodge's dormant state. In his 1874 report to the Grand Lodge, for example, he explained the slow growth of Rising Sun Lodge in Columbus County as due to the Lodge being situated "six or seven miles from the nearest railroad station" (*Proceedings* [1874], 8). For an insightful discussion of the relationship between the expansion of southern railroads and the development of African American social institutions, see John Giggie, "God's Long Journey: African Americans, Religion, and History in the Mississippi Delta, 1875-1915" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1997), 92-137.

recruitment of able young men with "active intellects." AMEZ ministerial candidates were particularly scrutinized for their "clean" habits and Christian learning, while "good citizenship" and adequate employment were important criteria for becoming a Prince Hall Mason.¹⁹ Taken together, the AMEZ Conference and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge were structurally similar organizations.

And yet there were fundamental differences. The AMEZ Conference was the ruling body of a denomination of Christian men and women who believed in the literal gospel and worshiped according to the practices of Methodism. The Grand Lodge, in contrast, was the governing body of a secret group of men whose beliefs stemmed from a variety of medieval, esoteric, and early Christian sources and regularly passed their members through three successive rites of initiation. Hymn-singing and sermons pervaded the Zion Conference activities. Invocations of the Supreme Architect, esoteric rites, and flamboyant public processions distinguished the Grand Lodge gatherings. Church records marked time by the Christian calendar. Lodge minutes predated the Christian calendar by 4,000 years to what Masons believed to be the beginning of time and Masonry. The December 1874 Grand Lodge Proceedings, for example, are actually dated December 5874. The lodges themselves were named Hiram, Pythagoras, Widow's Son, Morning Star, Rising Sun, and even J. W. Hood to recognize important men and moments in Masonic lore. Unlike the Christian churches which met to worship every Sunday, the lodges enacted their rituals twice a month on a weekday night, sometimes "before the full moon."²⁰ In moving from Sunday morning church services to weekday evening lodge meetings, Bishop Hood and other leading ministers left their sanctuaries, took off their ecclesial robes and entered lodge rooms decorated to resemble King Solomon's Temple, donned cloth aprons displaying the "All-Seeing Eye," embroidered collars and jeweled pendants signifying their office, and assumed positions in a rectangle of elders. Despite their apparent structural similarities there were significant differences of belief and ritual that separated the AMEZ church from the Prince Hall Lodge. How did Bishop Hood and his followers come to live in these mingled worlds? To try to answer this question we need first to consider the origins of the Prince Hall Lodge and the AMEZ Church and how each adapted to the needs and desires of African Americans.

19. *Minutes of the Eleventh Session* (1874); *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge* (1874).

20. *Proceedings* (1872), 54.

II. ORIGINS

Both the Prince Hall lodge and the AMEZ Church emerged from the distinctive social milieu of free, urban African Americans following the Revolution. The earliest African American social institutions resulted from a mixture of black initiative and white discrimination. In Philadelphia, for example, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen created the Free African Society in 1787 as a mutual aid organization as well as a nondenominational religious association. Several years later, in perhaps the most famous event in African American religious history, Jones and other black members were forcibly removed from their prayer benches in St. George's Methodist Church. Subsequently, Jones and Allen created the African Episcopal and the African Methodist Episcopal churches. This incident of discrimination has influenced historians to emphasize white racism as the reason for the development of black churches. Albert Raboteau, in contrast, points to the earlier desires on the part of Jones and Allen to create a separate religious association as equally important as white racism in the creation of the black church.²¹

The close relationship between mutual benefit societies and the black church as both resources for black autonomy and barricades against white racism continued throughout the nineteenth century. African mutual aid societies assisted the needy, especially widows and their children, in return for modest dues. They also provided social networks for a community in flux by offering information on jobs, mobilizing public opinion, and cultivating social bonds. Many of Philadelphia's societies were associated with black churches, and many of their names indicate the continuing identity of blacks with their African heritage—the Daughters of Ethiopia, Daughters of Samaria, Angola Society, Sons of Africa, and the African Lodge of the Prince Hall Masons.²² By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Christian names predominated.²³ Out of the post-1820s Baltimore Mutual Aid Society, for example, grew at least three national societies:

21. Albert J. Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1995), 79–102. See also Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 98–104. For a broader view, see William B. Gravely, "The Rise of African Churches in America (1786–1822): Re-Examining the Contexts," *Journal of Religious Thought* 41 (1984): 58–73.

22. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 210.

23. James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 153.

the Good Samaritans, the Nazarites, and the Galilean Fishermen.²⁴ By 1848, Philadelphia alone had over 100 variously named small mutual benefit societies with a combined membership of more than 8,000;²⁵ while in the South, similar groups, like the Burying Ground Society of the Free People of Color of the City of Richmond (1815), had appeared. Many of the later societies, such as the New York Benevolent Branch of Bethel (1843), grew out of churches.²⁶ Yet the example of the African mutual benefit society preceding the Christian church suggests the weaving of African and Christian, secular and sacred, within and between these two primordial social institutions of African American culture.²⁷ These mutual influences were again on display in 1797 when Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, founders of the Free African Society and founding bishops of the African Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal churches, respectively, established Philadelphia's African

24. Monroe N. Work, "Secret Societies as Factors in the Social and Economical Life of the Negro" in *Democracy in Earnest*, ed. James E. McCulloch (Washington, D.C.: Southern Sociological Congress, 1918), 343.

25. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 222.

26. James B. Browning, "The Beginnings of Insurance Enterprise Among Negroes," *Journal of Negro History* 22 (1937): 421–29.

27. The African origins of these mutual benefit societies remains a field of speculation. Certainly in the South, some of these societies evolved from the hidden, "invisible" institutions and folk culture that slaves developed within their plantation communities. Melville J. Herskovitz probably extrapolated from too little evidence when he held that they could be directly linked to African secret societies. Still, it is logical to assume that prior knowledge of African mutual aid systems would have been applied within the slave community. See Melville J. Herskovitz, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941). Furthermore, structural similarities have been identified between the organization and rituals of the early mutual aid societies and their African counterparts. See Deborah Gray White's study of the "female slave network," which contributed to the collective care of children, the sick, and the elderly, as suggestive of the African origins of this mutual aid system: (*Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* [New York: Norton, 1985], 119–41). Herbert Gutman believed that this web of social obligations reached back to family and gender responsibilities in Africa (*The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1976]). Betty Kuyk suggests an even more direct link, noting the African birth of several founders of these American societies ("The African Derivation of Black Fraternal Orders in the United States," *Comparative Studies in Societies and History* 25 [1983]: 559–94). And Susan Greenbaum argues that the earliest African-American societies existed before the European organizations had much to offer in the way of a model ("A Comparison of African American and Euro-American Mutual Aid Societies in 19th Century America," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 19 [1991]: 111). Still, the traditional emphasis on secrecy and the need to hide organized behavior from their masters has left scant evidence of the existence of these societies among slaves. In contrast, evidence for the existence of northern societies like the Free African Society of Philadelphia is much more "visible." Jon Butler's review of recent work in African American religious history, "Africans' Religions in British America, 1650–1840," *Church History* 68 [1999]: 127–28, summarizes what we know about the persistence of African religions in the United States.

Lodge of Prince Hall Masons. In 1815, Absalom Jones became Pennsylvania's first grand master.

Masonry among African Americans began in Boston and spread to Philadelphia. In 1785 Prince Hall, an Indies born artisan, along with fourteen other black Bostonians was inducted into an English army lodge. Though their Masonic credentials were legitimate, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts denied them admission, after which they applied to the Grand Lodge of England that recognized them as a valid Masonic lodge. Soon thereafter the growing number of black lodges created the African or Prince Hall Grand Lodge and, like their white counterparts had done after the Revolution, declared independence from the Grand Lodge of England.²⁸ From these beginnings, the Prince Hall lodges developed and, from the outset, both reinforced their claims to authenticity in the eyes of European Americans by largely following the beliefs and practices of European American lodges, while asserting to African Americans the ultimately African origins of the Masonic fraternity.

Whatever their differences, all Masons trace their medieval origins to the time of the Norman Conquest²⁹ when guilds of stonemasons were essential to the building carried on by kings, nobles, and churchmen. When the first Grand Lodge was formed in London in 1717, "Free," or independent, masonry³⁰ took on the character of a nobleman's club while retaining the traditional features of medieval institutions connected to an artisan culture. These included a secret brotherhood and the central importance of ritual, initiation, and myths of origin.³¹ When it migrated to the Continent and to North America, the newly formulated Masonic order continued to alter its beliefs and

28. Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 131–35.

29. Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones, *A Short History of Freemasonry to 1730* (Manchester, Ill.: Manchester University Press, 1940), chap. 1.

30. As fully qualified craftsmen, "free" to enjoy the rights and privileges of the guild, masons were referred to as freemasons much like other skilled tradesmen were sometimes called "free carpenters," for example, or men granted the rights of citizenship in a town were called "freemen." The several possible meanings of "free" include references to "freestone," a building material found in Scotland, and "freedom" from feudal serfdom. The term might also have referred to liberality (as in the seven liberal arts), though freemanship is the preferred meaning. See Dudley Wright, ed., *Gould's History of Freemasonry Throughout the World*, 6 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 1:249–58; David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590–1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 11, and Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, (London: Quatuor Coronati Lodge, 1978), 10–15. For changing meanings of the term in later Freemasonry, see Bernard E. Jones, "'Free' in 'Freemason' and the Idea of Freedom Through Six Centuries," in *The Collected Prestonian Lectures, 1925–1960* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1983), 1: 363–76.

31. Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood*, 53–83.

practices as it encountered different social and political contexts.³² By the middle of the eighteenth century, changes in the North American fraternity reflected shifting definitions of power and hierarchy embodied in the American Revolution. Beginning in the 1750s, groups of mechanics, lesser merchants and military men, some of whom had been rejected by existing lodges, transformed the social and intellectual boundaries of the fraternity. By the 1790s, as the order spread rapidly through the countryside, these ambitious and politically active men began to describe the fraternity as embodying the new republic's values of education, morality, and Christianity.³³

Like the European Americans who joined this English society and adapted it to their circumstances, African Americans found in the American Masonic fraternity a useful "tool kit"³⁴ of social forms and ideals for adaptation to their social environment. Like other mutual benefit societies, Prince Hall Masonry offered its members economic aid and social connections. Unlike most other societies, the first black Masons appear to have drawn their members from the most "respectable" black families. The men who joined Philadelphia's First African Lodge, for example, were among the most affluent and longstanding black residents, even if their occupations did not measure up to bourgeois status in their white neighbors' eyes.³⁵ Moreover, as the black equivalent of a prestigious white society, the public recognition granted to Prince Hall leaders provided a stage for addressing the larger society. Until that time, usually only black ministers received such public acknowledgment. Like the many African American religious leaders who used the Declaration of Independence's trumpeting of equality to challenge racial inequality,³⁶ Prince Hall and his followers employed the fraternity's ideals of unity and brotherhood across racial and national lines to confront racism. "Live and act as Masons," Prince Hall charged his brothers, "give the right hand of affection and fellowship to whom it justly belongs; let their color and complexion be what it will, let their nation be what it may, for they are your brethren

32. Concerning migration to the continent, Templarism, for example, originated as an aristocratic and anticapitalist version of Freemasonry in France, but it achieved its most thorough dominance in Germany, where it developed as part of a wider reaction against the rationalist values of the Enlightenment. See Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

33. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 85–162.

34. This term was coined by Ann Swidler to refer to a culture's "habits, skills, and styles from which people construct 'strategies of action'" ("Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 [1986]: 273).

35. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 217.

36. See William B. Gravely, "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808–1863," *Journal of Negro History* 67 (1982): 302–17.

and it is your indispensable duty so to do."³⁷ By asserting the egalitarian ideals of an international brotherhood, Prince Hall employed its moral authority to confront the contradictions of an American society that embraced equality yet denied rights of citizenship and humanity to black people.

At the same time, Prince Hall, the statesman Martin Delaney, and other early Masonic leaders created a history of the order that provided a powerful moral vision for the emerging African-American community. While historians see the first Masons emerging from medieval stonemason guilds, Masons themselves, both white and black, trace the mythic origins of the fraternity to King Solomon, whom, they believe, synthesized all previous wisdom into physical science and manifest it through the building of the Temple of Jerusalem. The three Masonic rites of initiation of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craftsman, and Master Mason are intended to mark a deepening knowledge of the wisdom of this temple and, by analogy, the stages of life's journey. Masons, white and black, generally agree on this basic story and the rites that accompany it. Black Masons, however, claimed that the deeper truths presented by Solomon originated in the African civilization that preceded him. It was "the Africans," said Martin Delaney, "who were the authors of this mysterious and beautiful Order."³⁸ By this interpretation, black Masons were able to claim the legacy of Masonic history as their own and to contend that it was not a slave heritage, but a glorious history in which Masonry was synonymous with freedom, liberty, and democratic government.

Though we do not know for certain when and where James Walker Hood entered into the "mysteries of Masonry," the evidence suggests that it was in 1855 when, as a young man of twenty-four, he first traveled from rural Pennsylvania to New York City and found work as a waiter. "Soon after I became of lawful age," he states in the North Carolina Grand Lodge Proceedings, "I petitioned a regular Lodge, in due form, and my prayer was granted."³⁹ In the mid-nineteenth century, New York, Boston, and Philadelphia were the principal centers of the less than thirty Prince Hall lodges then in existence.⁴⁰ In joining the fraternity, the young Hood gained entrance into an influen-

37. Prince Hall, "A Charge, Delivered to the African Lodge, June 24, 1797," reprinted in *Early Negro Writings, 1760-1837*, ed. Dorothy Porter (Baltimore, Md.: Black Classic, 1995), 77.

38. Martin Delaney, *The Origins and Objects of Ancient Masonry, Its Introduction into the United States and Legitimacy Among Colored Men* (Pittsburgh: W. S. Haven, 1853), 18; see also Prince Hall, "A Charge Delivered to the Brethren of the African Lodge on the 25th of June, 1792," reprinted in *Early Negro Writings*, 63-69.

39. *Proceedings* (1872), 27.

40. Grimshaw, *Official History*, 84-130.

tial society of African American men that encouraged his self-determination and opposed the racism of white society. Around the same time that the future grand master became a Mason, he also entered the ministry of the black church.

Hood was born in 1831 into a religious family in rural southeastern Pennsylvania. His father, Levi, was a minister in the African Union Church, the very first black denomination, and his mother, Harriet, was a member of Richard Allen's Bethel AME Church. In 1855, during the young Hood's sojourn in New York City, he joined a small congregation of the African Union Church. In 1856, the Reverend Williams Councy, pastor of the congregation, granted Hood a preaching license. During the autumn of 1857 Hood relocated once again, to New Haven, Connecticut, but this time he was unable to locate a branch of the African Union Church. So he joined a quarterly conference of the Zion connection, which accepted his license to preach. The following conference year, nearly two years after his affiliation with the New Haven Quarterly Conference, that body recommended to the June 1859 New England Annual Conference that it accept the young minister on a trial basis. The annual conference consented to this request and gave Hood an appointment of two stations in Nova Scotia. The AMEZ Church, like most independent black denominations during these years, was interested in the salvation of African people wherever they might be found. After two years in Nova Scotia, Hood assumed the pastorate of a congregation in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Then, in 1863, members of the New Haven Conference, many of whom were from New Berne, North Carolina, called on their bishop to send someone down to New Berne and surrounding areas to serve the newly emancipated people in areas captured by Union forces. Shortly thereafter, in 1864, Reverend Hood set out on his mission to the South.⁴¹

Like many black denominational leaders, Bishop Hood believed that the black church in the United States had a providential role to play in society. In his 1895 history of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Zion leader placed his denomination's story into the larger epic of the African exodus from white churches following the Revolution. The particular history of the AMEZ denomination dates from 1796, when it was organized by a group of black members protesting discrimination in the Methodist John Street Church in New York City. Their first church, Zion, was built in 1800 and from there emerged an African American denomination that continued to follow

41. James Walker Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (New York: AME Book Concern, 1895), 85–86; Martin, *For God and Race*, 22–58.

Methodist polity. Like contemporary scholars, Hood saw the emergence of the African American church as both a reaction to white discrimination and an act of black self-determination. While decrying the particular efforts of white Methodists to "maintain the inferiority of the Negro" in the John Street Church, Bishop Hood also saw the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century movement of "colored members of all denominations" into "the Negro Church" as guided by a "divine purpose." As he put it, "In the unfolding of that Providence that underlay the human meanness which produced the general exodus of the Afro-American race from the white Church, there have come and still are coming to the proscribed race benefits so rich, abundant, and glorious that the sufferings incident are not worthy of mention." Without the black church, Hood proclaimed, the black man "would have had no opportunity for the development of his faculties, nor would he have had any platform on which to exhibit his vast possibilities."⁴²

Though the founders of the new AMEZ denomination had, according to Hood, "no fault to find with the doctrine or form of government" of Methodism,⁴³ both he and other nineteenth-century "race historians" adapted the history of the Christian church to serve the needs and desires of African Americans. As Laurie Maffly-Kipp has argued, during the nineteenth century a new genre of "race history" emerged among African Americans intent on providing a significant moral and spiritual purpose to the history and future of the race. Race historians hoped to counter white racial images by reimagining the story of the African American community in such a way that their narratives would provide both prophetic indictments of contemporary racial practices and self-fulfilling prophecies of racial unity.⁴⁴ Like most black Christians during his lifetime, Bishop Hood believed in the literal truth of Scripture. Using the genealogical tables of the Bible, the Zion minister identified Ham as the ancestor of blacks and traced the origins of major, ancient civilizations, such as Egypt, Ethiopia, and Babylon, to Hamitic ancestry. Indeed, the Zionite insisted that the African race stood at the front ranks of the earliest civilizations of the world.⁴⁵ Like the Prince Hall reworking of Masonic history, Hood and other "race historians" employed their understanding of the Bible to provide a positive vision for the emerging black community.

When James Walker Hood left Connecticut for North Carolina he

42. Hood, *AMEZ History*, 2–26.

43. Hood, *AMEZ History*, 10.

44. Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Mapping the World, Mapping the Race: The Negro Race History, 1874–1915," *Church History* 64 (1995): 610–26.

45. Hood, *AMEZ History*, 27–55; Martin, *For God and Race*, 74, 134.

went as an emissary for perhaps the two most prominent and deeply interwoven social institutions of the northern African American community, the Prince Hall Masons and the black church. Both had emerged following the Revolution and each provided the emerging black society with resources for their development and a defense against white racism. Both Hood's Masonic fraternity and his AMEZ denomination continued to observe the doctrines and practices of their white counterparts, yet each adapted their society's history to remove the stigma of slavery and endow their past and future with a significant spiritual and moral purpose. Bishop Hood was among the many northern missionaries who saw the black church as a means through which God was acting in history to uplift the black race. Grand Master Hood, in turn, saw in the Masonic fraternity an opportunity to embrace the dignity and humanity of a universal brotherhood. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, both societies became southern institutions. As senior bishop of the AMEZ Church, Hood presided over the growth of his denomination from 4,600 members in 1860 to 700,000 by 1916. At the same time, Grand Master Hood contributed to the southern expansion of the Prince Hall Masons. By the turn of the century there were over 117,000 Prince Hall Masons nationally with nearly two-thirds of the membership concentrated in the South.⁴⁶ Despite the common commitment of each of these prominent social institutions to the "uplift" of black Southerners, there remained substantial differences. What was the relationship between the theology of the black church and the beliefs of Prince Hall Masons? And what was the practice and purpose of Masonic rituals? Here again, James Walker Hood's story provides some insights.

III. BELIEFS AND RITES

Bishop Hood's theology reflected the thinking of an era prior to the rise of science and the professionalization of history when biblical paradigms and sacred histories pervaded the religious worldview. By the 1880s the scientific and intellectual currents that gave rise to Protestant liberalism were filtering into black religious communities

46. Grimshaw, *Official History*, 305; by 1909, 2,600 of 3,336 Prince Hall lodges came from the South. For example, there were 340 Prince Hall lodges in Alabama compared to 70 in Pennsylvania (W. H. Anderson, *Anderson's Masonic Directory* [Richmond, Va.: W. H. Anderson, 1909]). The order continued to grow in the twentieth century, with as many as 150,000 followers in the 1920s and 300,000 by the 1950s, before beginning to decline. See William A. Muraskin, *Middle-Class Blacks in a White Society* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1975), 29. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya confirm this decline (*The Black Church in the African American Experience* [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990], 152).

through such journals as the *AME Church Review*, though these new ideas were most frequently met with apologies for Protestant orthodoxy.⁴⁷ Hood was one among many of his contemporary black denominational leaders who defended the literal understanding of the Bible and stood against all changes in Christian doctrine. During the post-Civil War period, the Zion leader opposed Darwinian scientific theories, historical and critical study of Scripture, and the idea that salvation was possible outside of Christianity.⁴⁸ By the turn of the century, the progressive "New Negro," who had little use for sacred stories and biblical world views, was gaining currency among African-American intellectuals.⁴⁹ Prior to that time, and outside intellectuals' circles continuing for some time to come, Bishop Hood and his fellow "race historians," many of whom were ordained ministers, provided their congregations with a vision of the historical world that placed the story of African American suffering into a temporal context that gave their lives meaning and hope. Emerging at a time when the power of sacred history had yet to be undercut by historical-critical methods, these histories offered African Americans representations of their race that countered disparaging white narratives.⁵⁰

Like many of these accounts, Bishop Hood's sacred history parted company with European American narratives by asserting "the ancient greatness of the Negro race." The Zion leader began by accusing "modern historians of the Caucasian race" of trying to "rob" the Negro of a "history to which he can point with pride." Against this treachery, Hood proclaimed, "the Holy Bible has stood as an everlasting rock in the black man's defense." Employing the Bible and the work of selected white historians to buttress his case, the Zion leader argued that "Ethiopia and Egypt were the first among the early

47. Moses Nathaniel Moore, "Orishatukeh Faduma and the New Theology," *Church History* 63 (1994), 64–66.

48. Throughout his career, Hood remained committed to the belief that the Bible was the pure and infallible word of God. His commentary on the book of Revelation, for example, reflects this literalist understanding (*The Plan of the Apocalypse* [York, Pa: P. Anstadt & Sons, 1900]). His sermon, "Creation's First Born, Or the Earliest Gospel Symbol," takes issue with Darwinian science (in *The Negro in the Christian Pulpit* [Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards, Broughton and Company, 1884], 105–21). For examples of Hood's understanding of the nature of the Christian church in general and the mission of the black church in particular, see *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Quarterly Review* 8 (1899): 1–9; "The Character and Power of the Christian Religion," *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Quarterly Review* 13 (1904), 11–19; and *Sketch of the Early History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Vol. 2 (New York: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1914), 66–69. Regarding Hood's position that Christianity is the unique pathway of salvation, see, for example, Hood, *Pulpit*, 105–21.

49. Henry Louis Gates, "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* 24 (1988): 155–99.

50. Maffly-Kipp, "Mapping the World," 617–19.

monarchies and these countries were peopled by the descendants of Ham, through Cush and Mizraim, and were governed by the same for hundreds of years." More than an identification of African people in a white narrative, Hood's history identified the contributions of particular African cities and heroes to ancient culture. "Caucasian civilization can point to nothing that exceeds" the "gallantry" and "generosity" of the black city of Carthage nor the "persons of St. Augustine and St. Cyprian . . . two of the ablest ministers of which the Christian Church can boast." In this way, the Zion bishop underscored an African historical legacy that refuted white beliefs that Africans were an inferior race.⁵¹

Although Bishop Hood argued that white people had misrepresented the past by portraying Africans as a degraded race, he did not advise abandoning Christianity because of its contamination by white prejudice. Rather, he outlined what he saw as God's true plan. While realizing the original greatness of the race of Ham, Hood also recognized that Ham, through his son Nimrod, "forsook God and took the world for his portion." In retaliation, God, at Babel, "confounded" the language of Ham's people and "scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth." Hood's narrative then moved to America, ignored the era of slavery, and asserted the special destiny of the black church. Though God punished the followers of Ham for their idolatry, he also gave them a "promise," Hood told his followers, that the sons of Ham "shall cast aside idolatry and return unto the Lord." The African American church was now leading the way in this redemption. "That this promise is now in the course of fulfillment," he proclaimed, "the Negro Church stands forth as unquestionable evidence." The black church, in sum, was "the morning star which precedes the rising sun," leading all Christians toward the "millennial glory."⁵²

Bishop Hood's race history must not be read as that of an uneducated man. Though largely self-taught, his writings reflect a lifetime of intelligent reading. Yet consistent with his faith in the Bible's literal truth, the Zion bishop interpreted Scripture in a manner that provided encouragement to his people. Beyond the inroads that scientific and biblical criticism were making into religious authority, the black orthodox response to these new intellectual currents was rooted in racial as well as religious concerns. Black religious leaders and other learned

51. Hood, "The Negro Race" in *One Hundred Years*, 27–52.

52. Hood, "The Negro Race," 53–55. For a discussion of similar race histories see Laurie Maffly-Kipp's forthcoming book, *African-American Communal Narratives: Religion, Race, and Memory in Nineteenth Century America*.

African Americans like James W. Hood were additionally burdened with the reality that black history was given insufficient attention by most scholars. Some feared that the Darwinian theory and biblical criticism employed in the liberal assault upon Scripture and traditional Christianity would be used to deny the humanity and rights of the black race.⁵³ In the face of these difficulties, Hood and his fellow denominational leaders turned to the Bible and found in it a more complete and compassionate presentation of the history and humanity of black people. Despite a reliance on Scripture's literal truth for accurate historical details, black traditionalists' understanding of the Bible as the inerrant word of God played a critical role in a period when there were few professionally trained African American scholars.⁵⁴ Beyond the Bible, the bishop turned especially to the race histories of his fellow black churchmen to support his beliefs. The most famous of these, the Baptist Rufus Perry's *The Cushites, or the Descendants of Ham*,⁵⁵ he endorsed as a work of "profound learning" that should become essential reading "respecting the ancient greatness of the descendants of Ham, the ancestors of the American Negro."⁵⁶ The sacred history of the Prince Hall Masons provided further support for the "truth" of the African American past.

Although Grand Master Hood left no Masonic race history of his own, the history written by Martin Delaney was likely passed down to him by Masonic orators through the lore of the lodge. Delaney's history asserts that the institution of Masonry was created by Africans and "handed down only through the priesthood" in the earliest period of the Egyptian and Ethiopian dynasties "anterior to the Bible record." These early Egyptians, Delaney continued, adduced and believed in a trinity of the Godhead which later became "the Christian doctrine of three persons in one—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Moses, "the recorder of the Bible," Delaney states, "learned all of his wisdom and ability from Egypt." "Africans," therefore, "were the authors of this

53. See, for example, Benjamin T. Tanner, *The Descent of the Negro* (Philadelphia, 1898). For an insightful discussion of the influence of Darwinian science on race and manhood, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

54. Martin, "Biblical Interpretation," 134.

55. Rufus L. Perry, *The Cushite, or the Descendants of Ham* (New York: Literary Union, 1887). The *AME Church Review* in 1899 recognized this work as fourth in a list of the most important works of the race (*Life of Frederick Douglass* was first). See *AME Church Review* 16 (1899): 631.

56. *Star of Zion*, 16 November 1893, 2. James Melvin Washington believed that Perry was not only a Mason but that his history "shows signs of his Masonic influences" (*Frustrated Fellowship: The Black Baptist Quest for Social Power* [Mercer, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1986], 75, 131).

mysterious and beautiful Order" and "did much to bring it to perfection" prior to the writing of the Bible.⁵⁷

Though Bishop Hood never addressed the African origins of Masonry in his public writings, he did import elements of the Masonic tradition into his Christian race history. In his sermon on "Creation's First-Born, or the Earliest Gospel Symbol," for example, he asserted the Masonic belief that the world began 4,000 years before the birth of Christ. "We live in a period, by all accounts, not much less than six thousand years from that in which Jehovah spake and said, 'Let their be light.'"⁵⁸ Certain turns of phrase, like the above "morning star" and "rising sun," used to herald the future of the Negro church, held such symbolic significance in the Masonic beliefs that the Grand Master gave them as names for his first North Carolina lodges. The bishop's essay on "God's Purpose in the Negro Church As Seen in the History of the Movement," moreover, refers to the "ancient and honorable" Prince Hall fraternity's maintenance of its "rites and benefits" as part of the larger effort of black people to respond to "Jehovah's plan for the Negro's development."⁵⁹ Aside from these and other occasional instances where the bishop mentions the Masonic fraternity, its catch words or ideas, the Zion leader's public writings remain silent on the relationship between his Christian and Masonic beliefs. Within the confines of the lodge, however, Grand Master Hood provided more insight.

In his 1880 annual address to the North Carolina Grand Lodge, the "most worshipful" Grand Master instructed the gathered brethren on the relationship between the beliefs and rites of Masonry and what he considered to be religion. On one hand, Hood stated that he did not believe that Masonry was a religion. Yet, on the other hand, he did hold that the fraternity was older than Christianity and Judaism and—through its oral tradition—passed on an ancient knowledge born at the beginning of time. "Most Masonic writers admit that Masonry does not claim to be a religion. I admit that it is not a religious sect, yet I am fully persuaded that it is the offspring of the only genuine religion known to man in the early history of the world. This I gather from tradition. . . . For hundreds of years tradition was the only channel through which the knowledge of events was handed down from generation to generation. . . . Oral instruction was the universal mode in ancient times. Masonry is the only Order that retains and

57. Delaney, *The Origins and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry*, 16–19.

58. Hood, *Christian Pulpit*, 107.

59. James Walker Hood, *Sketch of the Early History of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (Published by the author, 1914), 60, 62.

adheres strictly to the ancient mode."⁶⁰ Masonry, then, was heir to an oral transmission of ancient knowledge that originated at the beginning of the world. It was not itself a religion yet it was the "offspring" of the only genuine religion available to ancient peoples. Since nowhere in either his Christian or Masonic writings does Hood speak of a conflict between Christianity and Masonry, the bishop appears to have believed that the orally transmitted, ancient knowledge passed through Masonry was complementary to Christian teachings. Since the content of this knowledge constitutes that which is most "secret" in Masonry, Hood understandably does not divulge it. Yet he does begin to explain the process of its transmission.

According to the beliefs of Masonry, Grand Master Hood proceeded, King Solomon synthesized this esoteric knowledge into physical science and manifest it through the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. The Masonic lodge, in turn, symbolically represented the Temple of Jerusalem. "There are many symbols which identify the Freemason's Lodge with the city and Temple at Jerusalem. (1)—The city was built on the high hills of Zoria and Moria, and near the Valley of Jehosaphat. Our lodge is symbolically situated upon the highest hills and lowest valleys. (2)—The Temple was built due east and west. So is our Lodge. (3)—The Temple was an oblong square, and its ground was holy. Such is the form and ground of our Lodge. . . . Like the Temple, our Lodge is founded on the mercies of Jehovah: consecrated in His name dedicated to His honor; and from the foundation to the capstone it proclaims, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will to man.' "⁶¹ Masonic wisdom was, therefore, symbolically represented in the lodge's replication of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Access to this knowledge, in turn, came through an understanding of these symbols through participation in rites of initiation.

Though Hood did not believe that Masonry was either a religion or opposed to Christianity, nevertheless, he did believe that "Masonic symbolism, from beginning to end, was capable of instructing us in the truths of evangelical religion."⁶² For example, as Hood explained it, when the "candidate was initiated into the ancient mysteries" he was "invested with a white apron in token of his newly attained purity." The Grand Master then interpreted the symbolic meaning of the Mason's lamb skin or white leather apron through biblical references. "From the Book Divine we learn that it was the most ancient piece of apparel ever worn. It was worn by Adam and Eve before they were

60. *Proceedings* (1880), 10.

61. *Proceedings* (1880), 11.

62. *Proceedings* (1880), 12.

turned out of the Garden. . . . The apron, or girdle, was universally received as an emblem of truth among the ancients. Paul so styles it. 'Having your loins girded with truth.' . . . He, therefore, who wears the white apron as a badge of a Mason, is continually reminded of that innocence and purity which ought to be the distinguishing characteristic of every Mason."⁶³ How the brother came truly to understand the apron's symbolic meaning came through "the peculiar circumstances in which he receives it."⁶⁴ Here Hood appeared to be saying that the Christian idea of innocence and purity was most deeply apprehended through the Masonic ritual of initiation. The apron was not, however, a token of the initiate's entrance into the Christian community but, rather, a sign through which the novice "was made to feel his relationship to the fraternity."⁶⁵ Whether Masonic rituals deepened the candidate's understanding of Christian truths, as Hood stated, or Masonic fellowship, as his remarks might be interpreted, the fraternity's secret ceremonies clearly set the brotherhood apart from the practices of Christian congregations.

Exclusive to all American Masons, white and black, were two or more monthly gatherings on weekday evenings for long and complex rituals of initiation. The three primary rituals of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason were intended to mark a deepening knowledge of the wisdom of Solomon's Temple and, by analogy, the stages of life's journey. A 1903 Prince Hall national inventory highlighted the importance of these stages by categorizing the membership according to which of these three rites they had completed.⁶⁶ Each of these ceremonies lasted an hour or more and plunged the candidate into the mysteries of the order. At the moment the lodge was "opened," the initiate lost his sense of time. Ceremonies were said to begin at "daybreak," although meetings were actually held in the evening. While he was prepared, the evening's actors changed into costumes. Others arranged the setting, lit candles, and extinguished the lights. The lodge room itself was rectangular in imitation of the shape of the Ark of the Covenant. The Bible was placed on an altar in the middle of the room beside replicas of a craftsman's square and compass and laid open to a passage appropriate for the evening's "labor." Seated around the room were the members, in formal attire with aprons displaying a picture of the "All-Seeing Eye" (like the one on the American one-

63. *Proceedings* (1880), 12-13.

64. *Proceedings* (1880), 12.

65. *Proceedings* (1880), 12.

66. In 1903, the national total for members at each degree level was: Entered Apprentice: 30,640; Fellow Craftsman: 20,482; Master Mason: 66,365; TOTAL: 117,487 (Grimshaw, *Official History*, 305).

dollar bill). The major officers sat in designated chairs, each wearing an embroidered collar and jeweled pendant representing the special insignia of their position. Slowly the present faded from view and before their eyes an imagined scene from the past appeared.

Each major ritual took the form of a journey through the good and evil of human life. As the candidate proceeded in his travels, he was stopped at certain points to hear a lecture, to pray, or to be subjected to a dramatic presentation designed to link his mind and emotions through physical stimulation. For example, the Entered Apprentice ritual began when the partially undressed and blindfolded initiate entered the lodge room and was met by the sharp point of the drafter's compass against his exposed left breast accompanied by the senior deacon's stern words not to reveal the secrets of the order. Through similar trials the initiate was taught the history of the order and the meaning of its key symbols and instructed in his moral responsibilities as a Mason. Following the initiation the lodge was "closed" with a prayer or song and the announcement that, because the sun had set, their Masonic labors had ended. The lodge now returned to ordinary time.⁶⁷

Within each ritual, the candidate learned that the Bible was the "cornerstone" of Masonry and that he must be obedient to God, but the major thrust of the rite was to teach Masonic tenets. As the Methodist minister and Deputy Prince Hall Grand Master William Spencer Carpenter explained in a Masonic sermon, "The traveling as a Master Mason is symbolic of the journey through life to that Celestial Lodge eternal in the Heavens, where God is the Worshipful Master, Jesus Christ is the Senior Warden, and where the Holy Ghost is the Junior Warden, whose duty it is to . . . call the craft [the assembled Masons] from labor to refreshment and from refreshment to labor again at the will and pleasure of the Master."⁶⁸ As in Grand Master Hood's explanation of the Mason's apron, Carpenter is not entirely

67. Harrison L. Harris, M.D., Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, *Harris' Masonic Textbook: A Concise Historical Sketch of Masonry, And the Organization of Masonic Grand Lodges, and especially of Masonry among Colored Men in America; Also, a Compilation of the Illustrations of Masonic Work, As drawn from the Most Reliable Authorities on the subject* (Petersburg, Va.: Masonic Visitor Company, 1902), 134–93; Malcolm C. Duncan, *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor*, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: Washington Publishing Company, 1880); Grimshaw, *Official History*, 318–28; Anthony Fels, "The Square and the Compass: San Francisco's Freemasons and American Religion, 1870–1900," (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1987), 145; and Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 29.

68. Reverend William Spencer Carpenter, Right Worshipful Past Grand Master Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, Rector Bridge Street A.M.E. Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., Sermon delivered to the Masons of the Second Masonic District, 16 May 1920 (*Mason Quarterly Review* 1 [1920]: 3).

clear whether Christianity or Masonry has the upper hand. In fact, Masonic rituals contained a grab-bag of religious elements. The frequent Masonic reference to God as the "Grand Architect of the Universe" underscored the order's embrace of reason and science. Moral laws could be discerned like natural laws and it was the Mason's duty to obey them. Similarly, commitment to the brotherhood of all men and the truth of all religions suggested an opposition to sectarian divisions. At the same time, the rituals borrowed extensively from the Bible and the Judeo-Christian tradition. As a result Freemasonry contained an ambiguous religious content, open to several interpretations.⁶⁹ For many men, the fraternity's rituals succeeded primarily in creating a lasting, meaningful bond between members infused with religious overtones.

In addition to these private rituals, Prince Hall Masons conducted public parades that proclaimed the identity and dignity of the order. These processions were the highlight of the North Carolina Grand Lodge's annual meetings. Preceded by a brass band, the members of the fraternity, dressed in their regalia, marched through the town's "principal" streets usually to a Zion Methodist church. There a minister offered prayers, a Masonic anthem was sung, Grand Master Hood addressed "the Craft," the band played some music, all sang a Masonic ode, and a minister offered a benediction. After these "usual ceremonies," the "procession again was formed" and paraded back to the lodge.⁷⁰ Prince Hall parades had their origins in the practices of the European American Masonic tradition yet had particular meaning in the African American community.⁷¹ Carried out with the rehearsed

69. Steven Bullock's recent study of the early years of the fraternity in America emphasizes Masonry's "multiplication of uses" which "involved Masonry in conflicting and even contradictory activities and ideas" (*Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 2–3). Although Mary Ann Clawson's focus is on the social construction of class and gender (*Constructing Brotherhood*, 11), Mark Carnes sees Masonry providing young men with rites of passage away from the female-dominated home and to the masculine workplace (*Secret Ritual and Manhood*, ix), and an earlier work by Lynn Dumenil argues that the fraternity provided a "sacred asylum" in a rapidly changing society (*Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880–1939* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984], 32–42). All of these scholars, to differing degrees, point out that the fraternity's religious message was ambiguous.

70. *Proceedings* (1872), 34; *Proceedings* (1878), 27–28.

71. *Constitutions of the Freemasons: Containing the History, Charges, Regulations, etc. of the Most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity* (London, 1723; reprint, Philadelphia, 1734). T. O. Haunch, "The Formation, 1717–1751" in *Grand Lodge, 1717–1967* (Oxford: United Grand Lodge of England, 1967), 80. The origins of eighteenth-century public displays, in turn, have been traced to later medieval towns where large religious parades involving most of the townspeople brought together the many layers of the civic hierarchy. Following the Reformation, the civic ceremonies that survived were oriented toward processions of the ruling oligarchy of town leaders to church or court with the townspeople participating only as onlookers (Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition*,

self-consciousness of public theater complete with ornamented clothing and polished gestures, this public performance of fraternal life enacted racial dignity and pride for a people derided as unruly by some white Southerners. Louis Armstrong captured the heart of this positive function for fraternal orders when he remembered watching his father march by as the Grand Marshall of the New Orleans Odd Fellows parade: "I was very proud to see him in his uniform and his high hat with the beautiful streamer hanging down. . . . Yes, he was a fine figure of a man, my Dad. Or, at least that is the way he seemed to me as a kid when he strutted by like a peacock at the head of the Odd Fellows parade."⁷² Wearing an apron or sash and making a "show in a procession" was admittedly one of the attractions of fraternal orders but, as Virginia's Grand Master Harrison Harris remarked, "we do not want a Masonry that makes a man anxious to shine in a procession" but a "Masonry that goes into the family and makes a man a better husband, a kinder father, a more devoted patriot and . . . a more liberal and devoted Christian."⁷³ It was this understanding of Masonry that attracted James Walker Hood.

IV. COMPLEMENT AND CONFLICT

We cannot say for certain what was the significance of Masonic beliefs and rituals for Bishop Hood. We do know that he spent considerable time throughout his career attending to the fraternity's affairs and presiding over its ritual life. Following thirteen years as Grand Master, he continued to serve in such capacities as Grand Orator and supervisor of Masonic Jurisprudence, guiding the brotherhood's beliefs and practices. Late in life, when he was too feeble to attend the annual Grand Lodge meetings, past Grand Master Hood wrote letters to the assembled brethren that were printed prominently in their Proceedings. Yet despite his annual unanimous reelection, Hood chose to step down from the position of Grand Master due to his more pressing "ecclesial labors."⁷⁴ In fact, any time, effort, or output comparison of Hood's work for the church and his labor for the lodge would show that his church work was more important.

1500–1700 [London, 1976], 131–71 and E. P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *Journal of Social History* 7 [1973–1974], 389). For an overview, see Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 43, 52–56, 70, 78–79, 80–82.

72. Louis Armstrong as quoted in Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 268–69.

73. Harrison L. Harris, *The Masonic Visitor* (August 1887), 29.

74. *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Communication of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge* (Goldsboro, N.C.: Argus Publishing Company, 1889), 87.

What does seem clear is that Bishop Hood appropriated from Masonry beliefs that complemented his missionary efforts. Given his Christian conservatism, it seems unlikely that the Zion leader would have been attracted to the liberal Masonic ideals of interreligious brotherhood or scientific progress which, some scholars have argued, helped bring modernizing late nineteenth-century European American men into the order.⁷⁵ In addition to his biblical literalism, Hood remained opposed to non-Christian paths to salvation. He viewed Islam, for example, as a "corrupting influence" operating "against the Christian Church."⁷⁶ Instead, Bishop Hood's Masonic teachings emphasized universal values like "purity of heart" and "rectitude of conduct." The Mason was an honest, upright man, a good citizen and responsible member of the community. Moreover, as one member put it, Masonry, "having fewer doctrines, can reach some that Christianity cannot reach, and not until Christianity shall cover the earth . . . will the demand for Masonry cease."⁷⁷ The best lodges, the Grand Master believed, are those in which "all its members are professors of Christianity, and are men whose lives accord with their profession."⁷⁸ Further betraying his evangelical Christian ideals, Hood's Grand Lodge enforced a code of behavior forbidding alcohol, tobacco, and any illegal behavior. Similarly, The Zion leader spoke to his brothers of the need to "soften our hearts" by giving our love to Jesus. In 1885 and subsequent North Carolina Grand Lodge gatherings, Hood's Masonic hymn "The Feast of Belshazzar" was sung and ended with the following chorus:

See our deeds are all recorded,
 There is a Hand that's writing now:
 Sinners give your hearts to Jesus-
 At His royal mandate bow;
 For the day is fast approaching-
 It must come to one and all,-
 When the sinner's condemnation,
 Shall be written upon the wall.⁷⁹

In this way, Grand Master Hood emphasized the Christian teachings within Masonic beliefs. Moreover, though he did not share in the

75. See, for example, Don H. Doyle, "The Social Function of Voluntary Associations in a Nineteenth-Century Town," *Social Science History* 1 (1977): 338-43 or Rowland Berthoff, *An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 273-74.

76. Hood, *Pulpit*, 115.

77. *The Masonic Visitor* (June and July 1887), 9.

78. *Proceedings . . . Fifth Communication* (1874), 7.

79. *Proceedings* (1886), 42-43.

Masonic embrace of non-Christian religions, the Prince Hall leader did see the lodge as a vehicle for building Christian unity across black denominational lines. "It was my purpose," he reflected near the end of his life, "to invite the best men in all the Churches in this State in the Masonic Fraternity. In this our success has been all that could have been expected. Every denomination having a considerable membership has been represented in this Grand Lodge. Nearly all have been represented in the office of Grand Officers."⁸⁰ Hood's appropriation of Masonic beliefs complemented his Christian efforts to "uplift" and unite his people.

An emphasis on discipline and respectability was similarly central to both organizations. As we have seen, Hood and his fellow northern missionaries who established most Southern black churches brought with them a formal organization, governed by published rules that stipulated adherence to standards of moral conduct and punished those who transgressed. Duty-bound to teach the values of religion, education, and hard work, these "respectable" people equated restrained public behavior with individual self-respect and the advancement of the race. Prince Hall emissaries, again often the same people, imposed a similar organizational structure and had similar behavioral expectations for their members. Admissions committees were looking for intelligent, clean-living, sober, and industrious young men, preferably married and able to provide for their households. In both cases, expectations of "respectable" deportment and threats of expulsion conditioned behavior that encouraged racial "uplift."⁸¹ In these efforts, fraternal members claimed, "Masonry does not aspire to the office of Christianity. It provides no atonement, and consequently cannot save the soul; but it seeks to elevate man, to beautify and adorn his character with domestic virtues. It teaches him the lessons of sobriety, and industry, and integrity. But Christianity teaches him to prepare for a higher life, a future state, and a brighter world."⁸²

Taken together, Prince Hall lodges and Christian churches were central to the Southern institution building that was demanded by freedom. Following emancipation, African Americans quickly adopted the voluntary associational conventions of American life to suit their specific needs. Both Hood's Masonic fraternity and his AMEZ denomination continued to follow the doctrines and practices of their white counterparts, yet each adapted their society's history to remove the

80. *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, Forty-Eighth Communication, Salisbury, N.C.*, 11–13 December 1917 (Nashville, Tenn.: A.M.E. Sunday School Union, 1917), 90.

81. On "respectability," see Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 14–15 and Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 36–37.

82. *Masonic Visitor*, (June and July 1887), 9.

stigma of slavery and empower their past and future with a meaningful spiritual and moral purpose. Moreover, as an institution brought to the South by a northern AMEZ missionary, Hood's North Carolina lodges shared with his churches a desire to bring discipline and respectability to the newly freed slaves. Broadly interdenominational in membership within the framework of the post-Reconstruction South, the North Carolina lodges supported the mainstream churches in this common effort to "purify" the beliefs and "uplift" the practices of black Southerners. Though there is little evidence of regional consciousness in Hood's behavior and writings nor of tensions between the North Carolina lodges and their northern elders, further studies of southern fraternalism may reveal a regional distinctiveness and perhaps, as with the churches, disputes over resources and relative power within institutional structures that straddled the regions. Further, studies of other southern black Masonic leaders may suggest a greater willingness to follow liberal Masonic traditions though not at the expense of the church institution, given the critical role it played in the post-1865 black world.

Certainly, the marriage of church and lodge was not without conflicts. By the 1890s, leaders of the new Holiness movement emerging from the Mississippi Delta began to speak out against the involvement of the black church with fraternal orders. Responding to the social estrangement experienced by some African Americans, Holiness leaders attacked "worldly" Baptists and Methodists for their fashionable standards of consumption and their allegiance to secret societies, calling them back to the simplicity of the early Christian church. Followers of Charles Price Jones's new Church of Christ, for example, were encouraged to mark their spiritual birth as sanctified Christians by "pitching their secret order pins . . . out the church windows."⁸³ Though Bishop Hood did not directly address the Holiness attack on fraternal orders, as we have seen, his Prince Hall lodges followed stringent rules of ethical conduct. At the same time, the Zion bishop resisted a growing worldliness within mainstream black Methodism by retaining earlier emphases on a holy ministry, morally pure and free of scandal. As a participant in the holiness movement within black Methodism, Hood and his contemporaries insisted that freedom from sin was attainable in this life and that every Christian should strive for this sanctification. Since belief in the possibility of sanctification in one's lifetime was not shared by all Methodists, Hood and other bishops insisted that their candidates for ministry adhere to this

83. Charles Price Jones, as quoted in Otho B. Cobbins, ed., *History of the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A., 1895-1965* (New York: Vantage, 1966), 18.

teaching.⁸⁴ Though the rapid growth of the Holiness movement likely influenced Prince Hall membership elsewhere, Hood's emphasis on high ethical conduct and striving for sanctification may have worked against both church and lodge defections in North Carolina.⁸⁵

In addition to these attacks from outside the church-lodge nexus, there is also scattered evidence of tensions within the black church between fraternal members and church leaders. Writing in the *Indianapolis Freeman* in 1891, a Baptist minister complained that fraternal "members took more interest in their societies than their church."⁸⁶ Such behavior, echoed Methodist H. T. Keating in the *Christian Recorder*, lead secret society members to "neglect their duties" to the church "in order to be regular in their attendance upon lodge meetings."⁸⁷ These complaints were often couched in conciliatory language that recognized the power of the orders within the church. "It will be observed that we do not enter into a discussion of whether secret societies are right and good in principle," Keating continued, "but simply protest against the neglect of the church in the slightest degree for these societies. Assuming both church and society right, which is most right and worthy of support?"⁸⁸ In response, Mason and AME minister S. H. Coleman writing in the *AME Church Review* defended the lodge as "not a substitute for the church but an handmaid of religion." The teachings of the order, he claimed, supplemented rather than replaced the truths of the Bible by teaching "us our social and political duties."⁸⁹ Other Prince Hall members pointedly rebuked the church for its criticisms. G. L. Knox specifically warned that "[d]id it so desire, [the lodge] could destroy the power of the pulpit." He then added "but such is not its mission. . . . Instead of being in antagonism with the church, it is content to draw its inspiration from God's holy house, and as an humble handmaiden, to do its Master's work, as it shall see it and understand it."⁹⁰ Though this evidence suggests some power struggles in the black church between lodge members and church leaders, these differences can hardly be compared with the

84. Martin, *For God and Race*, 17–18. For Hood's evangelical and Holiness views, see his *The Negro in the Christian Pulpit*, esp. 33–48 and 247–59. On the emergence of the Holiness movement, see Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 345–47.

85. For the Holiness attack on secret societies, see Giggie, *God's Long Journey*, 196–218.

86. Reverend Leonard of Olivet Baptist Church, as paraphrased in an article entitled "An Immense Congregation" in the *Indianapolis Freeman*, 6 June 1891.

87. H. T. Keating, "Secret Societies Among the Negroes" *The Christian Recorder* (Philadelphia: African Methodist Episcopal Church) 12 April 1883.

88. H. T. Keating, "Secret Societies Among the Negroes."

89. S. H. Coleman, "Freemasonry as a Secret Society Defended," *AME Church Review* 14 (1898): 327, 337.

90. G. L. Knox as quoted in "An Immense Congregation," *Indianapolis Freeman*.

successful evangelical effort to shut down the white Masonic order during the Antimasonic campaign of the 1820s or the late nineteenth-century threat of excommunication posed by conservative white churches against those members who dared join fraternal orders.⁹¹ In comparison with white Masons, who were far less likely than black Masons to be church members,⁹² fraternal orders and the black church were deeply interwoven social institutions.

Gender tension between black lodge members and women was another potential area for conflict but, here again, compared to white Masons, there is less evidence of strife. Not only did the rituals of the Prince Hall Masons set them apart from the African American church, exclusive male membership separated the brothers from black women. In his study of the late nineteenth-century black Oddfellow Amos Webber, Nick Salvatore remarks on Webber's relationship with his wife: "It was not that Amos thought Lizzie unimportant or that, after thirty years of marriage, he did not care for her. Rather his formal distancing from her suggested the overwhelming maleness of the world he inhabited."⁹³ In bearing witness to the "powerful influence" of nineteenth-century gender roles, black fraternal members inhabited a distinctly male sphere. Fraternal rites, unlike those of the Protestant churches, celebrated a man's bonds with his brothers while neglecting the event of his marriage. Even within the predominantly female churches these distinctions continued, with men controlling the visible, public positions of authority and women providing for the church's social activities through Sunday school, prayer meetings, missionary work, social events, and care for the needy.⁹⁴ And yet underlying both the lodge and the church was a tangled thicket of male-female relations, intimately joined by kinship ties between sisters and brothers, wives and husbands, that formed a common social

91. See Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 24–26, 74–76 and *The History of the National Christian Association* (Chicago: Ezra Cook and Co., 1875), 28–29. In contrast to white Masonry, there is no evidence of an Antimasonic campaign against Prince Hall Masons, nor of a decline in membership during the 1830s. To the contrary, the 1830s was a period of growth and prosperity for the order. As one Prince Hall historian put it, "perhaps" for the Prince Hall Mason "his subordinate and inconspicuous position permitted the storm [of Antimasonry] to pass over his head" (Harry E. Davis, *A History of Freemasonry Among Negroes in America* [Published under the Auspices of the Scottish Rite, Northern Jurisdiction, 1946], 187–88).

92. Most white Masons regarded the lodge as their only religious institution. One study of late nineteenth-century San Francisco reported that an overwhelming majority of all Masons, more than two-thirds, did not belong to any religious institution (Fels, *Square and Compass*, 435). See also Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 77–79.

93. Salvatore, *We All Got History*, 262. See also James Oliver Horton, "Freedom's Yoke: Gender Conventions Among Antebellum Free Blacks," *Feminist Studies* 12 (1986): 51–76.

94. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 114–15.

framework for community activities. Within the church, acceptance of male religious leadership did not prevent women from creating their own influential networks; while within the lodge, women's auxiliaries participated in social activities and found meaning in the order's larger purposes.⁹⁵

James Walker Hood was instrumental in efforts to include women in both lodge and church activities. As Mark Carnes has shown, late nineteenth-century white Masons were very reluctant to include women in their affairs, even going so far as to threaten members with fearful punishment if they should "tell their wife the concerns of the order."⁹⁶ In contrast, shortly after founding the North Carolina Grand Lodge, Hood encouraged the establishment of a ladies' auxiliary—the Order of the Eastern Star⁹⁷—which became involved in the maintenance and support of the Order.⁹⁸ At the same time, Bishop Hood supported the full ministerial rights of women within the AMEZ denomination. He acted on this conviction first by ordaining Mrs. Julia A. J. Foote as deacon at the New York Annual Conference in 1894, and then, during the ultimately successful struggle for women's ordination that engulfed the denomination at the turn of the century, Hood was a leader among those who supported full equality for women in all aspects of church life.⁹⁹ All of this is not to deny the probability of gender tensions in an African American community where the male role remained dominant. Evelyn Higginbotham and others have identified some of these tensions within the black church.¹⁰⁰ Doubtless there were conflicts as well between some black women and the Prince Hall Masons. Yet, in contrast, most white Masons were not members of their wives' churches and discouraged the creation of ladies' auxilia-

95. Salvatore, *We All Got History*, 66, 162, 207, 275.

96. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 79.

97. *Grand Lodge Proceedings* (1876), 29.

98. Late in life, Hood stated that "[t]here are three important organizations in this State in which I have taken special interest, namely: The A.M.E. Zion Church, the Masonic Fraternity, and the Eastern Star" (*Grand Lodge Proceedings* [1917], 89). In the 1920s the Prince Hall historian Harry A. Williamson remarked that "[u]nlike the whites, [his emphasis] Negroes do not appear to understand the great line of demarcation between the two [male and female orders]" ("The Adoptive Rite Ritual," undated, Williamson Papers, Schomburg Library, New York City). Other black orders, like the True Reformers, incorporated women from the outset. See David M. Fahey, "Class, Gender and Race in Fraternal Ritualism: A Review Essay," *Old Northwest* 14 (1988) and *The Black Lodge in White America*, 7.

99. Martin, "The Women's Ordination Controversy, the AMEZ Church, and Hood's Leadership," *For God and Race*, 163–75.

100. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*. See also Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "The Politics of 'Silence': Dual-Sex Political Systems and Women's Traditions of Conflict in African-American Religion," in *African-American Christianity: Essays in History*, ed. Paul E. Johnson (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1994), 80–110.

ries.¹⁰¹ Compared to the separation of the male lodge and the female church among the white Protestant middle-class, there was substantially more interaction between the male world of Prince Hall men and the activities of black women.

V. CONCLUSION

James Walker Hood believed that his labors for the Prince Hall Masons complemented his work for the AME denomination in a common effort to provide encouragement and hope to black Southerners facing debilitating circumstances. In Bishop Hood's view the church was more than a means for spiritual renewal but a providential movement acting in history to uplift the black race. As part of this larger movement of God, the Zion leader appropriated from Masonry beliefs and practices that complemented his missionary efforts. In the effort of African Americans to respond to the indignities and racial violence that formed the fabric of everyday life, the fraternity provided a mediating institution to defy the racism of American society. Membership in the order provided responsible and industrious men with public recognition, moral authority, and an alternative history with which to buffer and respond to potentially disabling images of the black man. Denied all but the most menial jobs and pushed to the margins of white society, the fraternity recognized each man's dignity and nurtured his growth by providing outlets for leadership and avenues for gaining status. At the same time, rites of initiation secured a lasting, meaningful bond with other men, while the fraternity's eclectic ideology provided a framework for a moral commitment that drew broadly upon the spiritual values of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Though rarely recognized by white Americans, after the Civil War the Prince Hall Masons flourished among African American men providing, alongside the black church, a separate male sphere that reinforced a collective sense of African American identity and pride.

As a fraternal organization whose beliefs and activities intermingled with those of a Christian denomination, this study of the Prince Hall Masons and the AMEZ church has larger implications for the study of Christian history. Since the early 1700s, masonically inspired fraternal orders spread throughout European and American Christianity providing men with an eclectic "tool kit" of cultural resources for adapting to their social world. Recent scholarship has begun to explore the ways in which fraternal beliefs and rituals have paralleled, supported, and subverted the activities of Christian churches. From the appropriation

101. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 81-89.

of Masonic practices by upstart Mormons to the creation of a separate "male" sphere of sympathetic feeling, scholars have argued for the inclusion of Masonic resources in efforts to broaden our understanding of the "Christian" religious world.¹⁰² Bishop Hood's Christian conservatism had no difficulty including Masonic beliefs and rites into this larger worldview. More importantly, Hood's racial identity shaped relationships between lodge and church to serve a larger racial purpose. By including fraternal beliefs and rituals into a larger understanding of religious culture, students of Christianity may continue to find a rich resource for insight into the gender, racial, and ritual dynamics of post-Enlightenment Christianity.

102. For the Mormon appropriation of Masonry see John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Steven Bullock explores the Masonic male private sphere in *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 239–73. Beyond Christianity, Daniel Soyer has recently explored the relationship between fraternalism and American Judaism in "Entering the 'Tent of Abraham': Fraternal Ritual and American-Jewish Identity, 1880–1920," *Religion and American Culture* 9 (1999): 159–82.