

Teage's writings to construct an intellectual profile, he does not draw from them to give readers insight into how Teage actually experienced the events and how his ideas played out in his personal life, his faith, and his relationships. In fact, one does not get a sense of the man himself. All that is known of his personal life is that he was married to "Eliza M." but, apparently, remained childless—a lacuna that Burrowes explains by saying that "nineteenth-century standards of privacy and decorum served to obscure his private life" (50). One wonders if there were other reasons for this lack of information regarding his personal life.

Burrowes is to be commended for his portrayal of an important African Christian pioneer that fills a gaping hole in the historical record. However, this important piece of African and colonial history deserves a more fulsome account using a chapter structure and a more leisurely prose that better interprets for the reader the importance of various events, ideas, and individuals.

Overall, this story left me hungry for more—for example, better understanding of Teage's influence on women's economic status at that time. The groundbreaking ideas and pioneering leadership of this remarkable man deserve further scholarly research.

Michèle Miller Sigg  
Boston University

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***Bonds of Salvation: How Christianity Inspired and Limited American Abolitionism.* By Ben Wright. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2020. x + 253 pp. \$45.00 hardcover.**

Ben Wright is an assistant professor of history at the University of Texas at Dallas. He tells his readers that *Bonds of Salvation* "explores how both religious ideas and religious institutions inspired and limited the antislavery movement from the Revolution until the dissolution of the major national Protestant denominations in 1837, 1844, and 1855. Tracking the intersection of Christianity and slavery reveals how the bonds of salvation made and unmade the American nation" (7–8). *Bonds of Salvation* has a primarily intellectual and cultural focus but makes occasional forays into political history. It examines numerous sermons, pamphlets, and denomination records, as well as the personal papers of key antebellum church leaders. Many of the book's main strengths, but possibly some of its weaknesses, come from Wright's attempt to analyze the debate over slavery inside the churches of both sections simultaneously, while most earlier historical literature focused on religious developments in either one region or the other. While the views of Black Christians are examined for context, their influence on the debate over slavery is mostly minimized. *Bonds of Salvation* also devotes only passing attention to the significant portion of nineteenth-century Christians belonging to non-evangelical faiths, such as the Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Unitarians, and Quakers. Instead, Wright's analysis is heavily centered on just the nation's three largest evangelical denominations: Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians.

*Bonds of Salvation's* guiding thesis accentuates important ideological competition between belief systems that Wright labels "purificationism" and "conversionism" within

American churches from the colonial era to the Civil War on the issue of slavery. Purificationist Christians believed national salvation could not occur until the moral blight of slavery was removed. Wright demonstrates this position's strength among white Christians in the Revolutionary era, when many denominations issued powerful moral condemnations of slavery. In probably the book's most important argument, Wright attributes the decline of purificationist antislavery sentiment in the nation's evangelical churches to the early national era's "optimistic expectation that an imminent, millennial expansion of salvation and enlightenment would inaugurate the kingdom of God and age of reason" (11). Such conversionists believed the United States was chosen by God to be the vanguard of an international wave of salvation. Thus, the spread of the Christian faith would ensure the eventual elimination of the most egregious sins, including slavery. Confidence in inexorable moral progress undergirded conversionism. The condemnation of slave owning became viewed as an undesirable obstacle to saving souls. As conversionism gathered strength, denominations compromised earlier antislavery professions, and abolitionists were increasingly excluded from positions of leadership.

Perhaps the strongest section of *Bonds of Salvation* is Wright's explanation of how the American Colonization Society employed conversionist theology to attract widespread support from the churches of both sections. To Christians still possessing guilt over human bondage, colonization was viewed as a way to redeem white Americans for their role in the slave trade. More broadly compelling, however, was the role colonization could play in winning the world for Christ. According to Wright, "In the minds of early nineteenth century white conversionist Christians, colonization promised to do more good than abolition, as the salvation of a continent [Africa] weighed heavier than the emancipation of several million" (87). Wright undercuts his own theologically based analysis, however, when he attempts to link it with the long repudiated mid-twentieth century status anxiety theory to explain how social and economic trends rallied support for colonization from among political and religious elite.

*Bonds of Salvation* correctly acknowledges that most African Americans were loud critics of conversionists' support for colonization, as well as a major inspiration for the new generation of white abolitionists that emerged in the 1830s. Both groups charged that colonization had been co-opted by proslavery Southerners. Wright notes that abolitionist critics could also point out that conversionist success in spreading the gospel across the nation had failed to make inroads upon the sin of slavery. Wright's portrayal of abolitionists overlooks that movement's deep ideological divisions by conflating all abolitionists with the political disunionism and religious comeouterism of the followers of William Lloyd Garrison. This characterization strangely echoes antebellum Southerners who falsely charged that abolitionists' higher law arguments against slavery were proof of that movement's idolatrous nature. As a consequence, Wright minimizes the influence of abolitionist church members in awakening the conscience of Northerners, largely calmed by the false promises of the conversionists. Although a majority of Northern Christians never fully accepted the moral perspective of immediate abolitionists, they had by the 1850s adopted an antiextensionist position that the spread of human bondage must be halted.

Ultimately, *Bonds of Slavery* is better at explaining the behavior of Southern than Northern Protestants in addressing the moral problem of slavery. Wright demonstrates how growing proslavery sentiment among Southern church leaders co-opted conversionism, contending that the controls and supervision inherent in that institution

were needed to instill African Americans with Christianity. As the abolitionists' influence inside Northern wings of the major evangelical denominations grew, proslavery Southerners no longer remained satisfied with the efforts of moderates to silence internal debates. The collapse of the conversionist consensus helped provoke sectional divisions in the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist denominations. Wright bemoans that those sectional schisms of the largest evangelical denominations destroyed "the best hope of avoiding war, and the nation hurled headlong into an increasingly rancorous sectional crisis" (19). This conclusion seems at variance with the modern historical opinion that nothing less than such a bloody conflict was likely to rid the nation of slavery. It also contradicts Wright's own conclusion that church unity based upon adherence to the conversionist ideology had stood in the way of emancipation. The breaking of those religious bonds instead seems to have been a necessary step in provoking the violent confrontation to end the immorality of human bondage.

John R. McKivigan  
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis  
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***African American Readings of Paul: Reception, Resistance and Transformation.* By Lisa M. Bowens. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2020. xix + 309 pp. \$40.00 hardcover.**

Lisa M. Bowens's monumental monograph unearths hidden or even neglected African American voices from the 1700s to the mid-twentieth century who found Paul and his letters empowering and liberating, an ally in their protest against slavery, racism, and other oppressive structures. In the midst of the sea of books and articles on African American biblical interpretation of Paul, Bowens's work stands out for two reasons. First, Bowens expands the African American dialectical experience of reading Pauline letters by tracing African American interpreters who embraced Paul and his letters as companions in their struggle for liberation and justice (296). For racially minoritized persons, critiquing Paul and his letters has been the primary epistemological lens for obvious reasons. Bowens acknowledges this critique by starting her book with Howard Thurman's grandmother, Nancy Ambrose, and her disdain for Paul (1). And yet, Bowens courageously and cautiously invites her readers to realize that there are countless other African American voices who actually embraced Paul and his letters (broadly construed) as useful tools for protest and liberation. In their sermons, autobiographies, speeches, and other media, Bowens argues that many black voices were engaged in *counterreception*, or "They did not allow the way Paul was presented to them by whites to be the way they received the apostle, so they engaged in their own counterreception [*sic*]" (305). As Frederick Douglass puts it, "you press it to your bosom all the more closely; you read it all the time more diligently; and prove from its pages that it is on the side of liberty—and not on the side of slavery" (297). Second, Bowens extends the "canon" of must-read African American biblical interpreters by including Jupiter Hammon, Lemuel Haynes, Zilpha Elaw, and Maria Stewart, to name a few. Bowens actually undersells her work by calling it as an "introductory volume to the field of African American Pauline Hermeneutics" (13). This monograph is