

---

Slavery Papers and Speeches Collection  
MS/146-034

---

1909

# Religious Folk-Songs of the Southern Negroes

Howard W. Odum

---

For this and additional works see: <https://vtext.valdosta.edu/xmlui/handle/10428/718>

**UUID:** 425DF310-A5E8-9792-490F-B4BE30977EA3

**Recommended Citation:**

Odum, Howard W. "Religious Folk-Songs of the Southern Negroes." PhD. diss., Clark University. *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, vol.3, pp 265-365. July, 1909. <http://hdl.handle.net/10428/2992>.

This item is free and open source. It is part of the Civil Rights Papers Collection at Odum Library Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections. If you have any questions or concerns contact [archives@valdosta.edu](mailto:archives@valdosta.edu)

# Religious Folk-Songs

OF THE

## Southern Negroes

BY

HOWARD W. ODUM

*Fellow in Psychology, Clark University*

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
CLARK UNIVERSITY, WORCESTER, MASS., IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, AND ACCEPTED  
ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF G. STANLEY HALL

Reprinted from the AM. JOUR. OF RELIGIOUS PSY. AND ED.

July, 1909. Vol. 3, pp. 265-365.

ML  
3556  
C32F  
1849  
ANAC

# Religious Folk-Songs

OF THE

## Southern Negroes

By

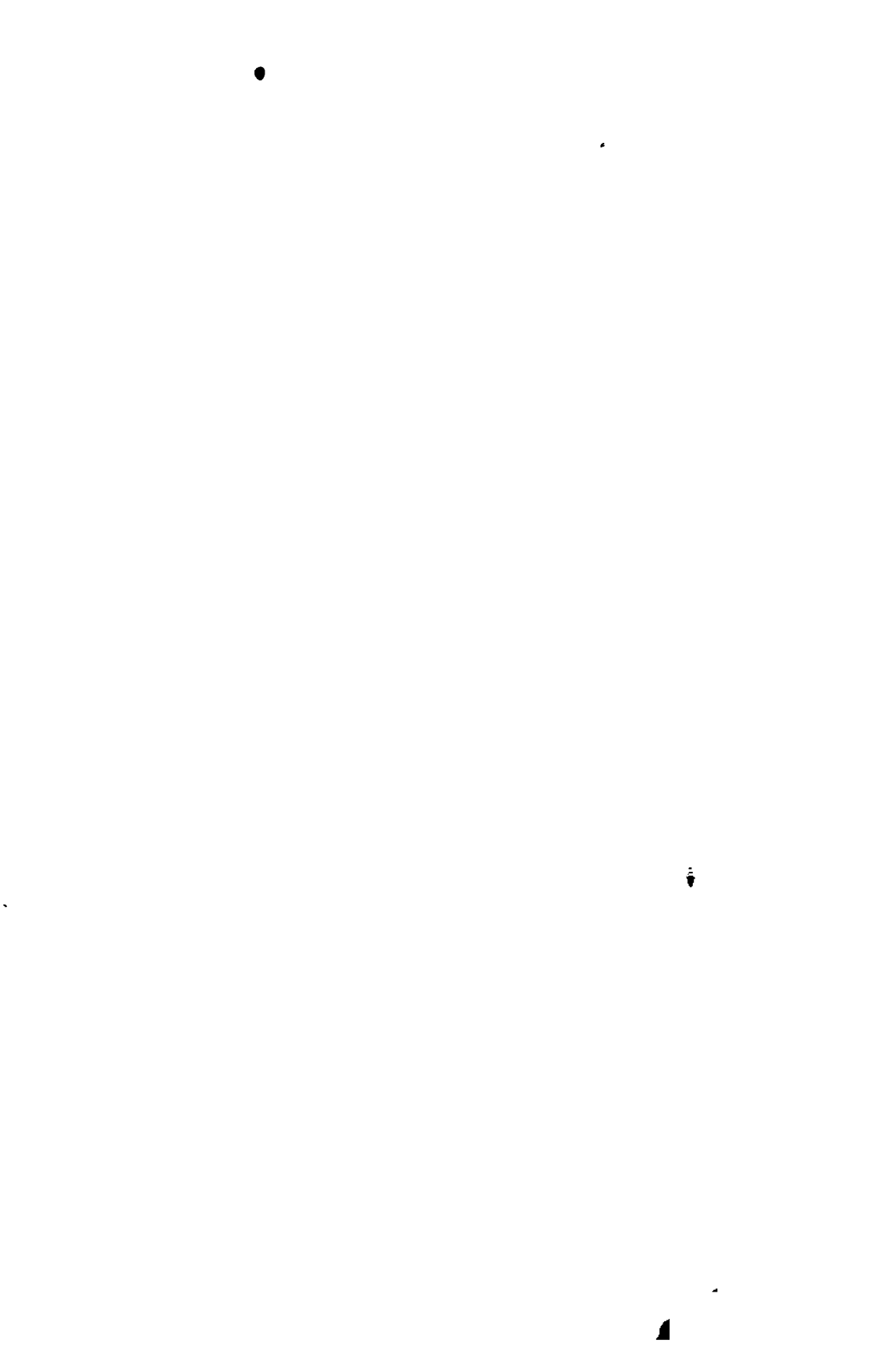
HOWARD W. ODUM

*Fellow in Psychology, Clark University*

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
CLARK UNIVERSITY, WORCESTER, MASS., IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, AND ACCEPTED  
ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF G. STANLEY HALL

Reprinted from the AM. JOUR. OF RELIGIOUS PSY. AND ED.

July, 1909. Vol. 3, pp. 265-365.



# RELIGIOUS FOLK-SONGS OF THE SOUTHERN NEGROES<sup>1</sup>

BY HOWARD W. ODUM

*Fellow in Psychology, Clark University.*

To know the soul of a people and to find the source from which flows the expression of folk-thought is to comprehend in a large measure the capabilities of that people. To obtain the truest expression of the folk-mind and feeling is to reveal much of the inner-consciousness of a race. And the knowledge of those evidences which are most representative of race life constitutes the groundwork of a knowledge of social and moral tendencies, hence of social and moral needs. The student of race traits and tendencies must accept testimony from within the race, and in the study of race character the value of true expressions of the feelings and mental imagery cannot be overestimated. Thus it is possible to approximate knowledge of a race. To bring a people face to face with themselves and to place them fairly before the world is the first service that can be rendered in the solution of race problems.

To preserve and interpret the contributions of a people to civilization is to add to the science of folk-history. Posterity has often

<sup>1</sup>This paper presents in substance the contents of Chapters I and II of a study on "Negro Folk-Song and Character," with other chapters as follows: Chapter III, The Negro's Social and Secular Songs; Chapter IV, Types of Social Songs among the Negroes; Chapter V, Work Songs and Phrases; Chapter VI, The Negro's Mental Imagery; Chapter VII, Negro Character as Revealed in Folk-Songs and Poetry.

judged peoples without having so much as a passing knowledge of their inner life, while treasures of folk-lore and song, the psychic, religious, and social expression of the race, have been permitted to remain in complete obscurity. Likewise peoples have lived contemporaneously side by side, but ignorant of the treasures of folk-gems that lay hidden and wasting all about them. The heart and soul of the real people are unknown, science is deprived of a needed contribution, and the world is hindered in its effort to discover the full significance of the psychological, religious, social and political history of mankind. That which is distinctly the product of racial life and development deserves a better fate than to be blown away with changing environment, and not even remain to enrich the soil from which it sprang. Justice to the race and the scientific spirit demand the preservation of all interesting and valuable additions to the knowledge of folk-life. The successful study of the common development of the human intellect in primitive thought is thus advanced. The exact form of expression itself constitutes a contribution to knowledge and literature.

The value and importance of folk-lore are gladly recognized. Its successful study and a more comprehensive recognition of its worth have revealed new problems and new phases of thought. Not only its relation to civilization as an historical science and as it bears definitely upon peoples of modern cultural areas is recognized, but its essential value in the study of psychological, anthropological, and sociological conditions has called forth the most careful study that has been possible to give it. On the scientist's part, knowledge has been increased, while on the other hand, the peoples of the world have become more united in the appreciation of the kindred development of human thought. The vast contributions to folk-science and their relation to scientific interest, bear testimony to this truth. And perhaps even more with *folk-song*, a greater work is to be done. As a part of folk-lore it represents less of the traditional and more of the spontaneous. Its collection and study is now being pursued with more zeal and with marked success. And the hope may well be expressed that with the growing interest in folk-song may come an increased knowledge of all that is nearest and truest to the phyletic as well as the genetic concept of a people, and that with this knowledge may come effective efforts toward race adjustment and new aids in the solution of race problems.

The situation of the Southern negro is unique. His problems are peculiarly intricate. The problem of the relations between the whites and blacks is far-reaching. Social conditions are changing and it is of paramount importance that every step taken shall be well founded and in the right direction. The political, the social, and the economical position of the negro, his education, his religion, his tendencies—these are themes that demand definite and accurate comprehension above all else. Truths have too often been assumed. Passion and prejudice have often hindered the attainment of noble ends which were earnestly sought. A true knowledge of actual conditions, if properly set forth, must convince the sincere observer as to the proper relations which should exist between the two races. Nothing else should do it; nothing else can do it. And any evidences that will assist in fixing the real status of the negro should be welcomed by both the whites and the blacks; progress may then be encouraged from the proper starting point. In revealing much of what he *is* rather than what he *appears to be*, the folk-songs of the Southern negro are superior to any superficial study made from partial observations. The insight into negro character gained from their folk-songs and poetry accompanied by careful and exhaustive concrete social studies may be accepted as impartial testimony. And on the other hand, the changing economic and educational conditions, the increasing influence of the white man upon the negro, and the rapid progress that is being made on every hand in the South indicate that if the present-day folk-songs of the negro are to be preserved, they must be collected now. Should they be permitted to become a lost record of the race?

In the present work some of the popular songs that are current among the negroes of the Southern States are given. They are highly representative. They may be classified into two general divisions: The religious songs or spirituals, and the secular songs. The secular songs are again divided into two classes, the general social songs, and work-songs, phrases and “shanties”. For the most part collections of negro folk-songs in the past have been limited to the old spirituals. The present-day religious songs and the social productions are equally interesting and valuable. The particular nature and characteristics of these songs are discussed in connection with the examples. They are flexible and have various forms, they consist of broken and unbroken melodies, they have stately and rapid minor cadences. Musical notes

can give only a skeleton of the real melody that accompanies the words; the peculiar qualification of the negro singers to render their melodies defies art to exactly symbolize it. The words of the songs are given as they are sung, and the reader must needs employ an imagination kindred in vividness to that which is reflected in the songs themselves if he would comprehend their essential qualities. The characteristic quality is often found in an improvised arrangement of words which makes the dominant feeling that of mingling words and cadencies successfully. The meaningless phrases and refrains do not hinder the expression of feeling through the minor chords. Simple emotion, inherent melody, and colloquial language are combined with fine and differentiating imagery and humor in an under-meaning common to the folk-song. An element of melancholia may be felt underlying many of the songs. But with all alike, vigor of expression, concreteness and naturalness of mental imagery, and simplicity of language and thought are combined with striking folk-art. The negro's projective mental imagery assumes that the hearer's comprehension can easily grasp the full picture of description, moral maxims, and dramatic dialogues, all combined in a single verse, and that he can do it without confusion. Here may be seen much of the naked essence of poetry with unrefined language which reaches for the negro a power of expression far beyond that which any modern refinement of language and thought may approach. Rhythm, rhyme, and the feeling of satisfaction are accompanying inherent qualities. The natural poetic spirit and the power of the imagination in the negro are worthy of study.

In addition to these general qualities of the negro folk-songs, it need only be suggested here that the best conception of his religious, moral, mental and social tendencies is reflected in them. That which the negro will not reveal concerning his religion, his religious songs tell better than he could possibly do. His social nature and unconscious ideals bubble out from his spontaneous social songs. In the expression of his natural feelings and emotions he gives us the reactions of his primitive thought with environment. That which is subsequently treated at length may be anticipated in the approach to a careful consideration of the fullest spirit of the negro folk-songs, namely, that it is important to note that the faculty of the negro to think, not exactly as the white man, or to think in terms of modern



science and literature, but in terms of his own psychological conditions, is pronounced. The negro is a part of a nation at the same time that he is a distinct people; he, perhaps, has more anthropological importance than historical standing. His present status is an essential consideration of each of these relations to the civilization of to-day. The emotions, the religion, social aspirations and ideals—in fine, the character of a people is accustomed to be expressed in their literature. The negro has no literature save that of his folk-song and story. May these not speak for him, both the good and the bad, in the following chapters?

The work here presented is not exhaustive but representative. The songs are not those of a single plantation, community or section of the Southern States. They are not the songs of the coast negroes or of the river type. But they are sung popularly as much in Georgia as in Mississippi, as much in Florida as in Tennessee. They are distinctly the representative average songs that are current among the common mass of negroes of the present generation. They belong to the negroes who have been constantly in contact with the whites and to those who have had less association with the refinement and culture of the white man. They have been collected carefully and patiently under many difficulties. Many of them are sung only when the white man does not hear; they are the folk-song of the negro, and the negro is very secretive. Not only are they not commonly known by the whites but their existence is only recognized in general. They are as distinct from the white man's song and the popular "coon songs" as are the two races.

The scope of investigation is large and the field is a broad one; the supply of songs seems inexhaustible. Yet the student may not collect them hurriedly. He who has not learned by long observation and daily contact with Southern conditions the exact situation will make little progress in gathering valuable data. While all contributions to the total of negro folk-songs have been very valuable, still it is true that they have been too long neglected and the studies made have been too partial. The nature of the negro's songs is constantly changing; the number is continually increasing. They should be studied as the conditions of the negroes are investigated. They are the product of our soil and are worthy of a distinct place in literature. In the following work the effort is made to present the best of the negro's

songs and to interpret impartially the exact spirit of their essential qualities. In the following pages the effort is made to note many of the negro's mental characteristics as studied in the interpretation of the scope, meaning and origin of his songs, and the essential qualities of his religion as found in the analysis of his

*Religious Songs and Spirituals.*

The religious songs of the negro have commonly been accepted as characteristic music of the race. The name "spirituals" given them long years ago is still current, while these songs, composed by the negroes, and passing from generation to generation with numerous modifications, retain many of their former characteristics. In former days the spirituals were judged to be the most beautiful production of the race and the truest representation of the negro's real self. Some of these songs have been published, and for a time their emotional beauty and simplicity of expression won for the negro a definite place in the hearts of those who had not hitherto known him. He was often judged by these songs alone, reported only imperfectly and superficially, and forthwith came many expressions of delight and enthusiasm for the future possibilities of the negro. These expressions indicate not only the power of the singing of negro spirituals upon those who heard them, but also many of the characteristics of the old and present-day spirituals.

The following expressions represent a summary of past judgments and criticism of negro spirituals.<sup>1</sup> The hymns of a congregation of "impassioned and impressible worshippers" have been "full of unpremeditated and irresistible dramatic power." Sung "with the weirdest intonations", they have indeed appeared "weird and intensely sad"—"such music, touching and pathetic, as I have never heard elsewhere", "with a mystical effect and passionate striving throughout the whole." And again, "Never, it seems to me, since man first lived and suffered, was his infinite longing and suffering uttered more plaintively." Besides being a relaxation to the negroes these quaint religious songs were "a stimulus to courage and a tie to

<sup>1</sup> See *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XIX, pp. 685 seq., *Scribners*, Vol. XX, pp. 425 seq., *Lippincott's*, Vol. II, 617 seq.

heaven." Or again, "I remember that this minor-keyed pathos used to seem to me almost too sad to dwell upon, while slavery seemed destined to last for generations; but now that their patience has had its perfect work, history cannot afford to lose this portion of the record. There is no parallel instance of an oppressed race thus sustained by the religious sentiment alone. These songs are but the vocal expression of the simplicity of their faith and the sublimity of their long resignation." Such songs "are all valuable as an expression of the character and life of the race which is playing such a conspicuous part in our history. The wild, sad strains tell, as the sufferers themselves could, of crushed hope, keen sorrow and a dull, daily misery, which covered them as hopelessly as the fog from the rice swamps. On the other hand the words breathe a trusting faith in rest for the future to which their eyes seem constantly turned. The attitude is always the same, and, as a comment on the life of the race, is pathetic. Nothing but patience for this life—nothing but triumph for the next." "One can but feel that these quaint old spirituals with their peculiar melodies, having served their time with effectiveness, deserve a better fate than to sink into oblivion as unvalued and unrecorded examples of a bygone civilization." Many have thought that these songs would pass away immediately with the passing of slavery and that the old system of words and songs "could not be perpetuated without perpetuating slavery as it existed and with the fall of slavery its days were numbered." And "if they be found neither touching in sentiment, graceful in expression, nor well balanced in rhythm, they may at least possess interest as peculiarities of a system now no more forever in this country."

The negro found satisfaction in singing not only at church but perhaps even more while he performed his daily tasks. Those who heard the old slaves sing will never forget the scenes that accompanied the songs. After the lighter songs and brisk melodies of the day were over the negroes turned toward eventide to more weird and plaintive notes. The impressions of such singing have been expressed: "Then the melancholy that tinges every negro's soul would begin to assert itself in dreamy, sad and plaintive airs, and in words that described the most sorrowful pictures of slave life—the parting of loved ones, the separation of mother and child or husband and wife, or the death of those whom the heart cherishes. As he drove his lumbering ox-cart

homeward, sitting listlessly upon the heavy tongue behind the patient brutes, the creaking wheels and rough-hewn yokes exhibiting perhaps his own rude handiwork, the negro slave rarely failed to sing his song of longing. What if his words were rude and its music ill-constructed? Great poets like Schiller have essayed the same theme, and mighty musicians like Beethoven have striven to give it musical form. What their splendid genius failed adequately to express, the humble slave could scarce accomplish; yet they but wrought in the same direction as the poor negro, whose eyes unwittingly swam in tears, and whose heart, he scarce knew why, dissolved in tenderness as he sang in plaintive minor key one or another of his songs."

The above quotations have been given promiscuously, and while others might be added, these suffice to give the general attitude toward the songs of the negroes in the ante-bellum days and since. One other will be added, giving the expression of a present-day negro leader toward the songs of the slave, as the best interpretation that has come from within the race. In his introduction to *Twenty-four Negro Melodies* by Coleridge-Taylor in *The Musicians Library*, Booker Washington says: "The negro folk-song has for the negro race the same value that the folk-song of any other people has for that people. It reminds the race of the 'rock whence it was hewn,' it fosters race pride, and in the days of slavery it furnished an outlet for the anguish of smitten hearts. The plantation song in America, although an outgrowth of oppression and bondage, contains surprisingly few references to slavery. No race has ever sung so sweetly or with such perfect charity, while looking forward to the 'year of Jubilee.' The songs abound in scriptural allusions, and in many instances are unique interpretations of standard hymns. The plantation songs known as the 'Spirituals' are the spontaneous outbursts of intense religious fervor, and had their origin chiefly in the campmeetings, the revivals and in other religious exercises. They breathe a child-like faith in a personal father, and glow with the hope that the children of bondage will ultimately pass out of the wilderness of slavery into the land of freedom. In singing of a deliverance which they believed would surely come, with bodies swaying, with enthusiasm born of a common experience and of a common hope, they lost sight for the moment of the auction-block, of the separation of mother and child, of sister and brother. There is in the plantation songs a

pathos and a beauty that appeals to a wide range of tastes, and their harmony makes abiding impression upon persons of the highest culture. The music of these songs goes to the heart because it comes from the heart."

It will thus be seen that emphasis has been placed almost entirely upon the emotional beauty of the negro songs. They have been portrayed as the exponents of sadness in the race, and the feelings of the black folk have been described with no little skill. Observation for the most part has been made by those who have heard the negro songs but have not studied them. No careful analysis has been attempted. Perhaps casual observers have been mistaken as to the intensity of the emotions expressed and have given undue emphasis to its practical relation and effect upon the individual and upon the race. The judgment of those who have not known the negro, and to whom his singing is a revelation, leads to sweeping generalizations. On the other hand, those who have known the negroes in many walks of life, and have come to know him better than any others, have often emphasized a single phase of the negro folk-song. There can be no doubt as to the beauty and weirdness of the negro singing, but a careful analysis of the general emotional feeling predominating, together with careful interpretation of all things concerned, make comparisons less dangerous and expressions less extravagant. Slavery has passed, four decades of liberty for the slave people have signalized the better civilization, and there still remains among the negroes the same emotional nature, the same sad, plaintive, beautiful, rhythmic sorrow-feeling in their songs.

Some of the qualities of the negro's emotions as seen in his singing will be noted subsequently. Omitting for the present this feature of his songs, and qualifying the statement by interpreting his nature and environment, it may be affirmed that all that has been said of the spirituals is true. They are beautiful, childlike, simple and plaintive. They are the negro's own songs and are the peculiar expression of his own being; much may be said concerning them. Many of the spirituals are still popular among the negroes, and often take the place of the regular church hymns. The less intelligent negroes sing them, and they are sung freely by the more intelligent class. Ministers of all denominations take advantage of their peculiar power to sway the feelings of the negroes into accustomed channels. Many of the old

spirituals that were common in slavery are still current and are sung with but little modification ; others are greatly modified and enlarged or shortened. Traces of the slave songs may be found in the more modern spirituals that have sprung up since the war. The majority of the songs have several versions, differing according to localities, and affected by continual modification as they have been used for many years. Some have been so blended with other songs, and filled with new ideas, as to be scarcely recognizable, but clearly the product of the negro singers. Besides the old and the mixed songs, there are many that are entirely new, arising out of various circumstances and developing with successive renditions.

The spirituals current among the Southern negroes to-day are very much like those that were sung three or four decades ago. The differences may be seen in the comparisons that follow in the examples given : There are more rhymed words in the present-day negro song than there was in the earlier ones ; consequently there is often less meaning in a line or stanza. The tendency seems to be more toward satisfactory sound *impression* than for spontaneous feeling *expression* as in the older spirituals. Meaning and words in general are often sacrificed in the effort to make rhyme, to make the song fit into a desired tune, to bring about a satisfying rhythm, or to give prominent place to a single well-sounding word or phrase. It would thus seem that the religious songs composed in the usual way by the negroes of the present generation have less conviction, and more purposive features in their composition. The dialect of the older songs is purer than those of the present-day negro. One finds little consistency in the use of dialect in the songs that are sung now ; rarely does one hear the lines repeated in exactly the same form. Dialect or the common form of the word, it would seem, is used according as feeling, the occasion, or the necessity for rhyme or rhythm permits or demands. Many of the negro songs that are the most beautiful in their expression would appear expressionless were they robbed of their dialect and vividness of word portrayal. The imagery and dialect give the songs their peculiar charm ; the more mechanical production that is apparently on the increase may be sung to the same melody, but the song itself has little beauty. However, the negroes themselves prefer the old songs and almost invariably return to the singing of the more primitive ones that have become a part of their heritage.

In those cases where the tunes differ from the old melodies, the song has assumed a characteristic nature, either from its origin and composition, from constant usage by the negroes, from local qualities, or from unusual combinations. And in these original creations of the negro religion are found the truest expression of nature and life as it is reflected in the negro of to-day; it is not the expression of complex life, but of simple longing. In the outbursts of joyous song and melody the note of victory is predominant; in the sadder-toned songs, sung in "plaintive, rhythmic melody", the prevailing note is that of appeal. In either case there is some sort of conviction back of the song, and it becomes the expression of primitive human life. They set forth the more simple thoughts of an emotional and imaginative worship. They magnify the personal and the spectacular in religion. They satisfy the love of melody, rude poetry, and sonorous language. Simple thought is expressed in simple rhyming phrases. Repetition of similar thoughts and a single chorus, with simple and pleasing music which lends itself easily to harmonious expression, are characteristic. The music is specially adapted to the chorus-like singing which is produced by the clever and informal carrying of many parts by the singers. The song often requires a single leader, and a swelling chorus of voices take up the refrain. It is but natural that these songs should be suited to protracted services as good "shoutin' songs" or "runnin' speerichils." The same rhythm makes them pleasing to the toilers who are disposed to sing religious songs while they work and promotes a spirit of good fellowship as well as being conducive to general "good feelin'." The united singing of children is also beautiful. Throughout these characteristic songs of the negro, the narrative style, the inconsequential, disjointed statements, the simple thought and the fastidious rhymes are all expressive of the negro's mental operations.

All of the negro's church music tends to take into it the qualities of his native expression—strains minor and sad in their general character. The religious "tone" is a part of the song, and both words and music conform to the minor key. The negroes delight in song that gives stress and swell to special words or phrases that for one reason or another have peculiar meanings to them. For the most part, all religious songs are "spirituals" and easily merge into satisfying melodies when occasion demands. With the idea gained from

the music of the songs must be joined the church scenes and its personalities freely mingled with the music. The preaching, praying, singing and with it shouting and unity of negro worship—perfection of rhythmic sing-song, these with the throbbing instinct of the people make the negro music what it is. The negroes sing their regular denominational hymns with the same feeling, often, as they do the spirituals, and while mention must be made of their church hymns as such, they often reach in singing them a climax similar to their most fervent outbursts, and freely mingle them with the old songs. In addition to the tune in which the hymn is written the negro puts his own music into the singing, and his own interpretation into the words. This together with the “feeling-attitude” which is unconsciously his, and the satisfaction which he gets from his singing, places negro church music in a class of its own. A glance at the part which singing plays in the negro’s church services will aid in the interpretation of his songs.

Church services are opened with song; a leader may occupy his place at a central table or chair, select a song and begin to sing. Or they may wait for the “speerit” and a leader from the pews may begin to sing, others join in the song, while the congregation begins to gather in the church. The leader often lines his song aloud, reading sometimes one, sometimes two lines, then singing. He often puts as much music-appeal into the lining of the song as he does in the singing. The rhythmical, swinging tone of the reader adds zest to the singing which follows. Most of the negroes who sing know a great many songs—in fact, all of their regular songs—if they are given a start by the leader. On the other hand, the congregation often gives the leader a start when he lags, and both together keep the song going until they are ready to stop singing or to begin another song.

If the service is prayer meeting or a class meeting the leader usually continues the songs throughout the singing part of the exercises; at regular preaching services the preacher reads the regular hymns and leaves the beginning and the final songs to the leaders. In the class meeting, the general congregation led by song-leaders sing, as a rule, while the class leaders are engaged with their classes. Now a woman on this side, now a man or woman on the other side of the church begins the song and others join in the doleful tunes; so too, while collections are being made the singing is kept up continuously. The



process is the same : a leader begins to sing, another joins in the singing, then another and another until the majority of those present are singing. Most negroes who attend church participate in the singing, although many will not do so regularly, preferring to remain quiet for a time, then to burst out into song. The negroes have been proverbial for their good singing, and undoubtedly they have won a deserved reputation. A group of five or ten negroes singing at a mid-week prayer meeting will often appear the volume of song equivalent to that of many times their number of white people singing. The comparison, however, is not a fair one, for the music is entirely different. One can scarcely appreciate the singing of the negroes until he has heard them on various occasions and in different capacities. Let him listen on a quiet Sunday evening from a position on a hill to the singing of four negro congregations, each clearly audible. It would appear to be the rhythmical expression of deep human feeling and longing in an unrestrained outburst of ten thousand souls. Inside the church one may watch the leaders as they line the songs and listen to their rich, tremulous voices ; he may see the others respond and listen to the music of each peculiar voice. The voice of the leader seems to betray great emotions as he reads the lines and begins to sing. He appears literally to drink in inspiration from the songs while his soul seems to be overflowing as he sings the words telling of grace and redemption. However, he manifests the same kind of emotion when he sings one song as when singing another, the same emotion when he reads the words wrongly as when he has read them correctly ; it makes little difference to him. He is consumed with the music and with the state of feeling which singing brings to him. After all, perhaps one feeling dominates his whole being while he sings, and there can be no song to him which does not accord with this.

A complete analysis of the negro church music in its detail is worthy of the efforts of any one who could describe it. And while the folk-song is of more importance in the present work than the music of these same songs, a few further details that are apparently characteristic of the negroes will not be amiss. The singing begins slowly and with time-honored regularity but is followed by the agreeable and satisfying effect made by the joining in of varied voices. Many times the singers begin as if they would sing a simple subdued song, or a hymn with its written music. But in a short while, apparently not

being able to resist the impulse to give their feelings full sway, their voices fall into that rhythmical swing peculiar in a large degree to the negroes; all measures alike become stately. The average negro is proud of his stylish choir because it represents a step towards a model which the negroes wish to follow; but they do not like the choir's *singing* as well as their own informal song. In general the negro's song will characterize his natural self wherever he sings or hears it sung; he is loath to give it up. And while some pastors have testified that there were no members in their church who would not sing the church songs, it is very evident that many of the younger negroes do not enter fully into the spirit of the old songs and they must necessarily undergo radical changes and rapidly pass away.

Before coming to the further study of the negro spirituals, it will be well to inquire into the nature of the favorite standard church hymns commonly used by the negroes in their church services. A comparison may then be made with the popular folk-songs. The favorite songs and most common themes sung by the negroes may best be seen at their prayer meetings or class meetings, or at such gatherings as require no formality. One may attend week after week and hear the same songs and feel the same pathos emanating from the songs which the worshippers have learned to sing and love. They enjoy singing of *heaven* and *rest* and *luxury* where *ease* abounds and where *Sabbaths* have no end. They love to sing the praises of the Deliverer who shall free them from life's toils. They have chosen the "good old" songs that have vividness and concrete imagery in them; they have placed a new feeling into them and a different interpretation. The meaning of the words and the sentiment of the song are transcended by the expression in the singing. The accustomed manner, together with their responsive feeling, absorb whatever of pure devotion might have existed in their attitude—the singing itself becoming devotion. The negro looks always to some future state for happiness and sings often :

This earth, he cries, is not my place;  
I seek my place in heaven.

The negroes sing with a peculiar faith the common stanzas of their hymns: "We've seen our foes before us flee," "We've seen the timid lose their fears", "We've seen the prisoners burst their chains",

“We’ve seen the guilty lose their stains.” So, too, they conceive, as of old, of the eternal rest and sing, with its full stanzas :

How sweet a Sabbath thus to spend,  
In hope of one that ne’er shall end.

The singing of these hymns is beautiful and impressive, testifying to the truth that their favorites appeal to the fitness of worship and accord with the ideal of rhythmical perfection as expressed in the feeling of the worshipper.

The general state of feeling which accompanies the song thus has much to do with the song itself. The singing with its results is the most satisfying and agreeable part of the worship to the negro’s nature. It satisfies his social wants and relieves to some extent his child-like psychophysical cravings. His worship is music to his soul, whether it be in the word-music of the sermon and prayer, or in the natural outburst of his song, or in the rhythm of all combined. It is all freedom from restraint and the gratification of impulse and the experience of sustained languor. Although the negro expends a great deal of energy in his singing, it is nevertheless rest for him as he feels it. Unrestrained expression goes far toward relieving him of his troubles, sometimes real, sometimes imaginary. What the negro imagines to be total confession and contrite submission has a very soothing effect upon him; the songs reach the climax of this state of feeling. Many negroes may be seen, with their heads resting backward and eyes closed, singing vigorously their favorite songs; often they lean forward, sway back and forth, apparently in a complete state of passivity. Tears and shouts of joy are not inconsistent with the saddest strains of pathos. Their senses are all turned toward the perception of one attitude, and besides a wonderful tranquility of feeling, they also feel and see visions. At such a time the negro is at ease and is at liberty to give full expression to his feelings among his own people, without incentive to action and without interruption. Is it surprising that after a day’s work, while he has passed the hours away in emptiness of thought or in misguided thinking and with perverted notions, he finds sweet rest in some melodious songs and rhythmic verses as he rests his body in the pew? Is it surprising that he is unwilling to leave the church until a late hour or that he does not tire of singing? For what has he to attract him at home where he

unwillingly begins to think of work again? It is little surprising that after the outburst of song and shouts which reveals so much of the negro's nature that his attitude is one of listlessness and apathy when he has finished.

This revelation of emotions which the negro shows in his singing but manifests the reality of his religion. And although the greater part of his feeling in religion is pleasurable excitement, it is, nevertheless, for this very reason the one reality in life to him. A study of the emotional element does not, then, detract from the beauty and value of the negro's song; it does aid in interpreting that part of his songs that arise spontaneously and also shows something of their origin and growth. Indeed without a knowledge of the negro's nature and environment, one would scarcely realize the fullest appreciation of his folk-songs. In proportion as the investigator becomes acquainted with the people and circumstances which have furnished unique folk-songs, to that degree will he be eager to search out their origin and be able to interpret them intelligently as they are fundamentally related to the race.

The negro has found much material upon which to base his songs and many sources from which he has selected a wide range of subject-matter. His religion is often synonymous with his song, and he has sung with little restraint the various religious experiences common to such a religion. The sermon and prayers, even the songs themselves suggest new themes for an imaginative and religious being to sing. So, too, the Church, the Christians and the "world" have furnished themes for his song. Sin, evil and the devil are ever-present subjects for religious thought. The scenes of everyday life form continuous allegories to be imaged with the assistance of the negro's definite self-feeling. But perhaps nowhere has the negro found more acceptable subject-matter for his song than in the Scriptures; his songs abound in references to scriptural characters and often portray individuals and scenes with unusual concreteness. A perusal of the negro's songs thus reveals the most common themes, but it is more difficult to locate the accidental circumstances which gave rise to particular forms of a song, or to ascertain the temperamental nature which originated many of the best known spirituals. In general, it may be said that the folk-song of the negroes has found its rise in every phase of negro life. It is scarcely possible to trace the origin of the first spirituals and plantation songs.

The American negroes appear to have had their own songs from the earliest days of slavery. And while their first songs were undoubtedly founded upon the African songs as a basis, both in form and meaning, little trace of them can be found in the present songs: negro folks produce spontaneous song. The linguist and the anthropologists are able to find the parallel and apparent origin of many words, that have been used by the Southern negroes in their lore and song, among the peoples of Africa, but there is now no practical relation between these words and the meaning of the words in their present usage. The origin of folk-song has always been an interesting theme, proving full of fascination for him who finds it, nymph-like, vanishing from his grasp. Still the song of a people is ever present and appear, almost like myths, to have sprung into life in some way and at some time which no one can exactly tell. Many a bard of the common life has intensified their meaning and made them a part of that life.

However, many of the negro folk-songs may be explained when one has observed the negro in many walks of life, or has found the origin from which they arose. Many of the old spirituals were composed in their first forms by the negro preachers for their congregations; others were composed by the leaders of the church singing; others were composed by the slaves in the various walks of life, while still others were first sung by the "mammies" as they passed the time in imaginative melody-making and sought harmony of words and music. A great many of these songs never became current because they lacked the pleasurable features that appealed most to the negroes. Those that proved satisfactory were seized upon and their growth and popularity dated from the moment they were heard. With the negroes of to-day songs have arisen in much the same way. The difference of environment must necessarily make a difference in the nature of the songs; at the same time the coloring of present-day life is much in evidence in some of the old songs composed by the slaves but sung by the negroes of the present generation. Some suggestions as to the natural origin and growth of negro songs may be both interesting and valuable.

The negroes have always been known as full of feeling and very expressive. Their natures demand not only some expression of their emotions but this expression must be easy and rhythmic, at the same time that it is intense and continuous. The negro's musical nature

easily turns these expressions into melody, and a word, phrase or exclamation becomes a song in itself. The song is completed by the imaginative mind and the sense of fitness in sound. Worshippers often follow the preacher through his sermon in a mental state of song and when he has finished they burst out into song, singing no other than an elaborate sentence which the preacher has used in his sermon. When this is joined to a familiar chorus and tune, and then varied, a song has originated. Sometimes the song is remembered and sung again; sometimes, like the words of the preacher, it simply becomes a part of the satisfaction of the hour and is forgotten. A negro preacher recently reached a climax in his discourse in the phrase, "Oh, with the wings of the morning, I'd fly to that heavenly land." He repeated this a number of times and made gestures with his arms suggestive of flying. His black robe added to the forcefulness of the suggestion and the impression became a part of the song of that church. So with praying, the pathetic appeal and word-music of a *p-l-e-a-s-e My Lo-rd* is often the inspiration for a song when a happy phrase from the prayer becomes an addition to a song that follows. Even more than preaching and praying, shouting gives rise to song among the negroes; during exciting times in worship the negroes often sing unheard of songs nor do they ever recall them again. It is indeed a mixed scene of song and motion, each contributing largely to the other, while the spectator looks on in wonderment at the astonishing inventiveness of the worshippers. The general motion, expressions of the face, words and harmonies, rests and rhythm, sense of fitness and even of humor, repetition—these make an occasion that defies limitation to its expression. If a single personality dominates the whole in an expression that appeals to the present sense of fitness, he is the author of a new song. Such a personality in the person of a visiting minister recently shouted out during such a scene: "Oh, the hearse-wheel a-rollin' an' the graveyard opening—h-a, ha," but got no further for his refrain was taken up by the chorus and the next day was a new version of the well-known song.

Such occasions might be cited in great numbers. Not infrequently a negro who has assumed the position of song leader sings a line while the others join in with a chorus of singing and shouting. When the leader has given all the lines that he knows, he will often continue in the simplest manner possible, as if he had known them for a long

time, to improvise lines, which often have little meaning, but which fit into the tune and sound well. This process may be continued indefinitely, sometimes with repetition of lines already uttered but slightly varied and the emphasis placed on the differing particular. It thus happens that the songs need not have a limit. The necessity of the occasion becomes the cause for the invention of the song. Itinerant worshippers are often thus gratified to sing to new congregations. As a rule the negroes always give attention and respect to strangers so that the man or woman who comes to them is at liberty to sing old or new songs, and they often become skilled in improvising songs. The new songs are then learned and begin their history as folk-song. Again, negroes often feel themselves called upon to introduce new features into some of their songs and conceive of various novelties. The negro's feeling toward leadership puts a premium upon such a practice. In this effort, a song that is little known among the negroes will be changed in some particulars, printed on a sheet of paper and distributed as the song of brother or sister So and So. The song may be found in a hymn book. However, songs entirely new and the efforts of their own poetic attempts are often thus circulated. This gives rise to a new class of negro spirituals, examples of which may be seen in the following pages.

A number of popular spirituals apparently had their rise in the effort of the church to satisfy the physical cravings of the negroes. The church deemed the fiddle and the dance instruments of the devil, and although the negro was and is passionately fond of dancing, he was forbidden by the church to do so. The church needed some kind of substitute for the rhythm and excitement of the dance that would satisfy and still be "in the Lord." Consequently marching services were often instituted. The benches were piled up together and marching room left for the worshippers. They had various orders for this service and many forms of it have been known to exist. Sometimes they marched two by two, a "sister and brother in the Lord", sometimes they marched singly, and at other times they marched in a general "mix-up." At first they followed a leader to a simple melody, keeping step and working into a rhythmic swing. Then as they became more excited they became more expressive and with the elaboration of the march into a dance their songs became marching songs. Often they thus marched, with intervals for rest, until the hours of

the morning. Sometimes they all sang; sometimes the leader sang the leading part and all joined in the chorus with more satisfactory effect. In the march the negroes swayed back and forth, to and fro, and found the usual satisfaction that comes from absolute lack of restraint. As the songs given in the following pages indicate, the negroes often imagined themselves to be the children of Israel, while their marching songs represented Moses leading them out from under the bondage of Pharaoh, or they considered themselves as marching around the wall of some besieged city. Victory would be theirs sooner or later. This is not confined to the songs composed by the slavery negroes, but is common in the later songs. Such scenes are often portrayed by negro preachers of the present day and very appropriate applications, as they think, are made. The march songs that have been found current to-day were composed since the war. Often the negroes enacted similar scenes without the formal putting away of the benches in the church, and the same general results were the outcome. Shouting scenes in negro worship to-day are very much similar to the old marches except that they are more promiscuous. The "strange, sweet harmonies and melodies" of the old songs are still good shouting songs.

Individuals have composed spirituals while at work or while wandering from place to place, as a simple outgrowth of the circumstances. The expression, so common in negro songs, "O my Lord", seems to have been introduced into a number of songs in this way. The single expression repeated itself forms a favorite melody that is often sung. A group of negroes sing while working; one sings a new verse of the song: "Where you git dat?" "I made hit maself, didn't you know I'm a songster?" And he did make it, and thus gratified, tries other attempts; with him others begin and they have become "songsters". Negroes, in order to verify a boast that they know a certain song to exist, have been known to compose on the moment just such a song, mixing all sorts of songs together with the ideas that arise. Others who have been offered an attractive price for songs have composed them without scruples of conscience and when asked to sing them, have done so with perfect ease. They were paid for the songs, thinking that they had "fooled that white man", who valued his song thus composed as much perhaps as an old spiritual that was still current. What the negro composed accidentally he learned to sing, and thus



introduced a real song in his community, which was to be soon carried to other localities. The negro is going to sing whether he has a formal song or not. The following song originated with two negro laborers, apparently in a dialogue. The lines may be sung to any tune and put to any chorus.

The church bell a ringin', how sweet I do declar'.  
Why don't you go to meetin' an' pray all day long?  
I'm goin' to church an' pray all day long.  
Of course I'm a sinner but prayin' might do me good  
An' if I do succeed I sure will tell the news.

Another song that was composed spontaneously in the effort to dignify his conversation is the following. It will be seen that for the most part it is composed of phrases common to other songs, and it is only the combination that is new.

Walk right and do right an' trust in the Lord—  
Lay down all yo' sinful ways an' trust in the Lord.

*I am goin' to trust in the Lord,  
I am goin' to trust in the Lord,  
I'm goin' to trust in the Lord till I die.*

My God he's a wonderful God an' trust in the Lord,  
He will answer yo' prayers don't care wher' you are,  
*An' trust in the Lord.*

The next example was composed by a negro man after he had recently "come through." He always loved to talk of what he had seen, what he knew would happen and how he could get out of difficulties. Along with this he had an unusually imaginative mind and told many ingenious stories. Here is the song:

The devil come down to the worl' one day  
An' I heard him holler, hoo-ray, hoo-ray!  
Come out, I'm havin' a holiday.

That was the word I heard him say,  
But I knowed if I danced to his holiday,  
There 'd be something doing an' the devil to play.

The above song is difficult to classify. It would seem to be very much like some rhymes that the negro had seen published in a newspaper but for all his purposes it was a good song and it mattered little where he had obtained the ideas. It was indeed his own song. One

other example of an effort to compose a new song shows the tendency of the negro to mix his serious themes with ridiculous expressions.

There was a man by the name of Cy,  
He never prayed an' he never try,  
So when ole Cy was come to die,  
He hollow out, "in hell I'll cry."

*In hell ole Cy did cry,*  
*In hell ole Cy did cry,*  
*In hell ole Cy did cry,*  
Now don't you die like ole Cy die.

The song is a variation of two or three secular songs and becomes a religious song because of its chorus. It is actually sung in the churches. The "author" continued,

Ole Cy did lead a mighty bad life,  
He was always after some other man's wife,

which clearly showed the trace of the secular element; this phrase is applied to many of the notorious characters in the negro secular songs. Still there was an opportunity for the moral and the song represents the peculiar gratification which the negroes find in having composed something more or less original.

Enough has been said to give a definite idea concerning the actual and possible origin of some of the negro folk-songs. Further examples will be given when the discussion of the negro's secular song has been reached. The psychology of negro music and song is not difficult to explain in the light of the facts already suggested. His plaintive appeals in prayer, his emotional and religious nature, his primitive expression, his love of rhythm and melody, his feelings and misguided imagination, his interpretation of life and Scripture, his faith in dreams and visions quickly exaggerated into fabrications, his whole nature but reveals within him what we call the musical nature of the race. With the negro, motion and song instinctively go together. Systematic movement is more conducive to singing than a careless, haphazard motion. Movement and song give rhythm that is not to be found under other circumstances. Regularity and rhythm in movement, emphasis and rhythm in music, these give the negro songs essential pleasure-giving qualities that appeal strongly to the negro's entire being. If his music is primitive and if it has much of the sensuous in it; if his songs and verse are full of primitive art having

many qualities of possible worth, nevertheless they are not thereby rendered less distinct.

In no way can a better insight into the negro's religion be obtained than by a careful study of his songs. An analysis of those songs that have been preserved will give us at once a better conception of his folk-songs and his religion. The references are reproduced in their exact forms in order that they may serve as an aid in the study of the verse contained in the common songs of the negroes from the time of slavery to the present day. Only the chief conceptions which have been portrayed in negro song are here given; further analysis may be made in connection with the songs themselves. The devil is prominent in the religious songs of the negroes. He is the constant terror and proverbial enemy of the race. He is alive, alert, and concrete. He represents the demon trickster incarnate in the form of a man. He is the opposite of God but always less powerful. He is the enemy against whom the battle is always on; it is a personal battle, but he is usually outwitted or disappointed. Here are some pictures of "Old Satan" as found in the songs of the slave and the negro of to-day:<sup>1</sup>

Ef you want to see ole satan run,  
Jes' fire off dat gospel gun.

Ole satan is a liar an' conjurer, too,  
An' if you don't mind he'll conjure you.

Other forms are

An' if you don't mind he'll cut you in two,  
An' if you don't mind he'll cut you through.

Ole satan lak a snake in the grass,  
Always in some Christian's path,

or

If you don't mind he'll git you at las'.

Ole satan weahs a mighty loose ole shoe,  
If you don't min' gwine a slip it on you.

Ole satan like dat hunting dog,  
He hunt dem Christians home to God.

O shout, shout, de debbil is about,  
O shut yo' do' an' keep him out.

<sup>1</sup>For verses not found in the present-day negro spirituals, see *Slave Songs in the United States*, W. F. Allen, New York, 1867, *The Jubilee Singers*, New York, 1873, *Plantation and Cabin Songs*, New York, 1892.

## HOWARD W. ODUM

All de debbils in hell can't pluck me out,  
 An' I wonder what satan 's a grumblin' erbout,  
 He's boun' in hell an' can't get out,  
 But he shall be loose an' hab his way,  
 Yonder at de great reserection day.

I went down de hillside to make a one prayer,  
 An' when I get dere ole satan wus dere,  
 O what you think he said to me?  
 Said, "Off frum here you better be."

Old satan tole me to my face,  
 "I'll git you when a you leave this place;"  
 O brother dat scere me to my heart,  
 I was 'feared to walk a when it wus dark.

I started home but I did pray,  
 An' I met ole satan on de way;  
 Ole satan made a one grab at me,  
 But he missed my soul an' I went free.

I tell you brother you better not laugh,  
 Ole satan 'll run you down his path,  
 If he runs you lak he run me,  
 You 'll be glad to fall upon yo' knee.

We shout so fas' de debbil look,  
 An' he gits away wid his eluven foot.

Ole satan is mad an' I am glad,  
 He missed the soul he thought he had.

What make ole satan hate me so?  
 'Cause he got me once an' let me go.

Ole satan tole me not to pray;  
 He want my soul at jedgement day.

I wrestle wid satan and wrestle wid sin,  
 Stepped over hell an' come back agin.

Ole satan tremble when he sees,  
 The weakest saint upon his knees.

Go 'way satan I doan min' you;  
 You wonder, too, you can't come through?

Oh brother, breth'ren, you better be engaged,  
 For de debbil he 's out on a big rampage.

I plucked one block out o' satan's wall,  
 I heard him stumble an' saw him fall.

Ole satan thought he had me fas',  
 Broke his chain an I 'm free at las'.

I met ole satan in my way;  
 He say, young man, you too young to pray.

The devil tries to throw down everything that's good,  
 He 'd fix a way to confuse the righteous if he could,  
 Thanks be to God-er-mighty he can't be beguiled,  
 Ole satan will be done fighting after awhile.

The negroes have many other phrases which they apply to satan and picture him in other relations. "Ole satan is a mighty busy ole man, an' throw rocks in my way." "What makes ole satan follow me so? Satan ain't got nothin' fer to do with me." As a *busy man* he also has his "shield and sword", not only *gives* trouble but *gets* into trouble. Says the negro: "I heard de debbil howlin' when I come out'n de wilderness an' I gib de debbil battle." "Now stan' back, satan, an' let me go by . . . why doan de debbil let a me be?" "Ole satan mighty busy, he follow me night an' day. Ole satan toss ball at me, he think the ball hit my soul, the ball for hell an' me for heaven." "Ole satan gettin' in mighty rage", for "satan's camp's afer." "Satan mount de iron gray hoss an' ride half way to pilot bar." But "We'll shout ole satan's kingdom down, gwine a pull down satan's kingdom, gwine a win ag'in de debbil." Victory is the negro's for he exclaims: "I saw dem bindin' satan", and "I saw ole satan's kingdom fallin'." But while satan is a great schemer and is very busy and "wash his face in ashes", "put on leather apron", his greatest attribute is the liar. The negro cannot give too insistent warning:

When I got dere Cap'n satan wus dere.  
 Sayin' "Young man, dere's no use to pray,  
 For Jesus is daid an' God gone away."  
 An' I made 'im out a liar an' went on my way.

With these pictures and warnings the negro song gives a final bit of advice. "If you ain't got de grace ob God in yo' heart, den de debbil will git you sho'", then the singer rests securely in the knowledge that *he* is filled with the grace that holds against the devil.

"King Jesus" was the original name most commonly given to Christ in the spirituals. Besides this He was the bosom friend of the negro. He comes in to intercept satan and to save the individual from hell. He is very real and no one is more vividly described than He. He bears many relations to his people.

Now my Jesus bein' so good an' kind,  
 My Jesus lowered his mercy down,

An' snatch me from de doors of hell,  
An' took me in with him to dwell.

Oh, Jesus tole you once befo'  
To go in peace and sin no mo'.

I heard o' my Jesus many one say,  
Could move po' sinner's sins away.

Den Jesus he come ridin' by,  
Gib me wings to ride an' fly.

Jesus Christ the first and las',  
*No man wuks lak him;*  
He built a platform in de air,  
He meets de saints from eve'where.

Virgin Mary had one son,  
The cruel Jews had him hung.

Me an' my Jesus goin' live at ease,  
Me an' my Jesus goin' do as we please.

If you want er die like Jesus died,  
Fold yo' arms an' clasp yo' eyes.

I tell you breth'ren an' I tell you twist,  
My soul done anchored in Jesus Christ.

Up on de hillside King Jesus spoke,  
Out of his mouth come fire an' smoke.

Yer say yo' Jesus set you free;  
Why don't you let yo' neighbors be?

Other shorter lines give equally concrete pictures and mention equally definite attributes.

You'll see my Jesus come to wake up de nations underground.  
King Jesus died for every man.  
An' de son He set me free.  
I got my Jesus as well as you.  
If you want to see Jesus go in de wilderness.  
Gwine serve my Jesus till I die.  
I call my Jesus king Emanuel.  
He pluck my feet out'n de miry clay.  
He sot dem on de firm rock of age.  
Christ hab bought yo' liberty.  
King Jesus' settin' in de kingdom.  
De win' blow eas' an' de win' blow wes' from Jesus.  
Oh yonder comes my Jesus, I know him by his shinin'.  
Hear my Jesus when he call you? Hear my Jesus callin'?  
I'm goin' to hebben where my Jesus dwell.  
O I walk and talk with Jesus.  
Jesus loosen de man frum under de groun'.

Jesus ain't comin' here to die no mo'.  
The son of man he dunno where to lay his weary head.

See what wonder Jesus done:  
Jesus make dumb to speak.  
Jesus make de cripple walk.  
Jesus gib de blin' deir sight.  
Jesus do mos' anything.  
I want to do (or die) like Jesus.  
Jesus stan' on de udder side Jordan.  
Jesus settin' on de water side.  
Jesus is our captain, Jesus got de hellum.  
Jesus mount (ride) a milk-white hoss.  
You had better follow Jesus.  
Daddy Peter set out for Jesus.  
Jesus will bring you milk an' honey.  
Mas' Jesus is my bosom friend.  
Gwine follow King Jesus, I really do believe.  
King Jesus he was so strong, my Lord, till he jar down de walls ob hell.  
Gwine to write to my Jesus.  
King Jesus settin' in de heaven.  
King Jesus on de mountain top.  
O Jesus is a mighty man. Ride in kind Jesus, who set po' sinner free.  
For Jesus came an' lock de do'.  
De Jews kill po' Jesus.  
Jesus call you—Jesus waitin'.  
I wus los' in de wilderness; Jesus hand me de candle down.  
Mas' Jesus gib me little broom fer to sweep my heart clean.  
Jesus fed me when I was hungry, he clothed me when I was naked, he  
gave me drink when I was dry.  
Jesus rose an' flew away on Sunday morning.  
Christ was there four thousand years ago, drinking of the wine.  
Jesus he wore the starry crown. Did you see Jesus when he wore the  
starry crown?  
Jesus he wore long white robe.  
King Jesus speaks an' de chariot stops.  
King Jesus is the Rock.  
Well did you say you love Jesus?  
Jesus done bless my soul an' gone to glory.  
Won't you ride on Jesus? O yes.  
I look fer Jesus all o' my days.  
Jesus is a listening all the day long.

The scenes of the crucifixion seem to impress the negroes very forcibly and their songs abound in references to His suffering. Some of these expressions are full of feeling, and are touching in their sentiment.

They nail my Jesus down  
They put him on the crown of thorn (thorny crown).

O see my Jesus hangin' high!  
 He look so pale an' bleed so free:  
 O don't you think it was a shame,  
 He hung three hours in dreadful pain?

Next to Jesus and often synonymous with Him is God. He is "My Lord", "My God", "Lord God-er-mighty", and "king Jehobah", and represents the personal God and the ruler of the world.

Upon de mountain Jehobah spoke,  
 Out o' his mouth come fire an' smoke.  
 My God a walkin' down hebbently road,  
 Out o' his mouth come two edged sword.

If yo' find yo' way to God,  
 The gospel highway mus' be trod.

De father he look upon de Son an' smile,  
 De Son he look on me,  
 De Father redeem my soul from hell,  
 De Son he set me free.

I'm a chile of God wid my soul set free,  
 For Christ hab bought my liberty.

I'm goin' home fer to see my Lord.  
 My Lord did give me ease.  
 Ever since my Lord set me free.

I believe it for God he tole me so.

O my Lord's comin' ag' in,

It may be las' time, I don't know.

I goin' to do all I can fer my Lord; I goin' to mourn, pray, weep all I can  
 fer my Lord.

The Lord is a listenin' all the day long.

My Lord is a talkin' (preachin') at de jedgement day.

De Lord goin' to wake up the dead.

My Lord come down wid de key an' unlock de jail house do'.

O, my Lord 's a doctor in a weary lan';

My Lord 's a preachin' and teachin, and walkin' in a weary lan'.

My Lord calls me by the thunder; by the lightning.

Dat mus' be my Lord in the cloud.

My Lord says there's room enough.

I'm goin' to tell God 'bout my trials.

Thank God-a-mighty, My God's been here.

When I talk I talk wid God.

Gwine to chatter wid de Fadder.

My Fadder call an' I mus' go.

My righteous Lord shall fin' you out.

Look to de Lord wid a tender heart.

O de Lord He plant de garden dere and raise de fruit for you to eat.



O de Lord He comfort sinner.  
 God did go to Moses house an' tell him who He wus.  
 God an' Moses walked and talked an' God did sho' him who He wus.

God sits in Heaven an' answers prayer.  
 I gwine tell God how you sarved me.  
 Look in my God's right hand.  
 His chariot wheels roll round.  
 God's goin' call dem chilluns frum de distant lan'.  
 My Lord's a-ridin' all the time.  
 De Lord has been here an' de love come tricklin' down.  
 Me an' my God goin' to walk an' talk.  
 O God don't talk lak a nat'ral man.  
 My Lord God-ermighty come a steppin' down, come a steppin' down on a  
 sea ob glass.

*Heaven* for the negro is an eternal resting place where he shall occupy the best place. It is a place of glory and splendor in the material sense. Nor docs he think that he will fail to miss his home when he dies. *Hell* is a place for *thieves* and *sinner*s and *liars*, but such persons are far removed from him. His religion is the panacea for all evils and all sins, and when he has the "love of God in his heart" nothing can doom him, for has he not been "washed in the blood of the lamb?" and had not the "blood done sign his name"? His ideas of heaven are those which his mind naturally conceives of as applying to a home; his conclusions from the Scriptures are not unusual. A few of the references to heaven will give a better conception of the negro's reality and vividness of interpretation.

I want to go to heaven when I die,  
 To shout salvation as I fly.

You say yer aiming fer de skies,  
 Why don't yer quit yer tellin' lies.

I hope I git dere bye an' bye,  
 To jine de number in de sky.

When I git to heaven gwine to ease, ease,  
 Me an' my God goin' do as we please,  
 Settin' down side o' de holy Lamb.

When I git to heaven goin set right down,  
 Gwin-er ask my Lord fer starry crown.

Now wait till I gits my gospel shoes,  
 Gwin-er walk 'bout heaven an' carry de news.

We'll walk up an' down dem golden streets,  
 We'll walk about Zion.

Gwine sit in de kingdom, I raly do believe, where sabbaths have no end.  
 Look way in de heaven — hope I 'll jine de band — Sittin' in de kingdom.  
 I done bin to heaven an' I done bin' tried.  
 Dere's a long white robe in de heaven for me,  
 Dere's a golden crown, golden harp, starry crown, silver slippers in heaven for me I know.  
 O yes I'm gwine up to see my Lord ; gwine all de way up to see my robe ; O de heaven is shinin', shinin'.  
 Gwine shout in hebben, gwine hab a big meetin'.  
 If you want to go to heaven come along wid me.  
 Take my flight up to de skies in de mornin'.  
 O de heaven gates are open.  
 Gwine up to heaven where my Jesus dwells.  
 My Jesus walkin' de hebbenly road.  
 De bell is ringin' in odder bright worl'.  
 If you touch one strin' de whole hebben ring.  
 De sun gib light in de hebben all round.  
 I wish I wus in de kingdom settin' side o' my Lord.  
 No more hard trial in de kingdom ; no more tribulation, no more parting, no more quarreling, backbiting in de kingdom,  
 No more sunshine fer to bu'n you ; no more rain fer to wet you.  
 Ev'y day will be Sunday in heaven.  
 Sweet music in heaven jes beginning to roll.  
 Goin feast off 'n milk an' honey.

The negro does not dwell upon thoughts of hell as he does of heaven. Even if he has “stepped over hell an' come back 'gain,” he does not reveal so much of its character. Some conceptions, however, are definite enough.

O hell is deep an' hell is wide,  
 O hell ain't got no bottom or side.  
 I'd rather pray myself away,  
 Than live in hell an' burn one day.  
 O when I git to hebben, I'll be able to tell,  
 How I shunned dat dismal hell.  
 Ev'y since my Lord done set me free,  
 Dis ole worl' bin a hell to me.  
 When I come to find out I 's on de road to hell, I flee to Jesus.

The negro song finds little satisfaction in his various ideas of hell. “This ole world's a hell to me,” says the negro ; but “hell is a dark and dismal place,” so that the only immediate conclusion which he

can reach is that he must "shun de gates of hell" and make for the home beyond the Jordan.

A rich variety of references to scriptural characters is seen in the majority of the negro spirituals, both of the past and of the present. The negro portrays the conduct of heroes in the past with imaginative skill. Their songs are often running-stories of scripture, in which the effort is made to include as many characters as possible and at the same time draw conclusions which have suitable morals, but these songs may be better studied in the examples that follow. Some of the typical references to the Scriptures will show the average interpretation given them by the negroes.

O, sisters, can't you help me sing,  
For Moses' sister did help him.

Where wus Ezekiel when de church fell down?  
Down in de valley wid his head hung down.

Ezekiel said he spied de train a comin',  
He got on board an' she never stop runnin'.

God made Adam an' Adam wus first,  
God made Adam out o' the dust o' the earth.

Well God show Noah de rainbow sign,  
No more water but fire nex' time.

Mose live till he got old,  
Buried in de mountain so I'm told.

Mary wept and Martha mourned,  
Jesus Christ laid de corner stone.

Mary wore the golden chain,  
Every link was in Jesus' name.

Judas was a deceitful man—  
Well he betrayed the innercent lam'.

John wrote a letter an' he wrote it in haste,  
If yer want to go to heaven, you better make haste.

John declar he saw a man,  
Wid seven lamps in his right han'.

The negroes wonder "wher's sister Mary, Martha, Brudder Moses, brudder Daniel (and the others) gone." So, too, "Sister Hannah, Hagar, brudder Moses" and the rest "took dey seat." And again, "Wondah whar good ole Daniel, doubtin' Thomas, sinkin' Peter" and others. Moses "smote de water" and the negro says:

I want to go where Moses trod,  
For Moses gone to de house o' God.

Peter is commanded again and again to "go ring dem bells"; "Daddy Peter go to Jesus", "Fisherman Peter out at sea", the latter perhaps being the origin of "sinkin' Peter." Elijah is one of the favorites of the Old Testament. "Elijah gwine ride in de chariot in de mornin'", and Isaiah who "mounted on de wheel o' time" is a kindred character to Ezekiel and Elijah. Jacob's ladder and struggle is vivid enough to be sung. "I'm gwine climb up Jacob's ladder"; "Rastlin' Jacob, let me go." "Jacob tremblin' on a limb." Noah's victory is the common theme. "Dey call Brudder Noah a foolish man", but that makes no difference for "de Lord tole Noah fer to build him ark", and "de ole ark a moverin." The negro remarks characteristically: "God placed Adam in de garden, 'was 'bout de cool o' day." Gabriel is proverbial and the attitude of the singer is always ready "fer to hear Gabriel blow his horn." "Don't you hear Gabriel's trumpet in de mornin'?" "Little David play on de harp" has been a shining example for many another "David" who loved to blow on his harp. "Father Abraham sittin' down side o' de holy Lamb", is almost synonymous with Christ. Prominent among the clear impressions made by the Scriptures is that of the delivery of Daniel, the Hebrew children and Jonah. However, one must read the songs in order to get the full significance of the references.

Although the negro bases everything in his religion upon the Bible, and his songs and sermons and exhortations abound in quotations from the "Holy word", he has comparatively little to say of the Bible itself as a book. He thinks sometimes that it is a "cumpass" and also bases his convictions on the truth of the Bible. He asks "How do you know? For my Bible hit tell me so."

For in dat Bible you will see,  
 Jesus died fer you an' me.  
 Matthew, Mark, Luke an' John  
 Tell me where my Master 's gone.

Go read de fifth of Matthew  
 An' read de chapter through,  
 It is de guide to Christians  
 An' tell 'em what to do.

Now take yo' Bible an' read it through,  
 An' ev'y word you fin' is true.

As the Bible is the *compass*, so sometimes the Holy Ghost is thought

of as the *pilot*. The Holy Ghost is too vague for the negroes to fathom and is not tangible enough for their imaginations. But he says: "If this ain't de holy Ghost I don't know", but goes little further.

Just as the negro expects to talk and walk with God and Jesus, so he looks forward to seeing the angels in Heaven. He wants to see them with their white robes and hear them sing; he even says they mourn. "Bright angels hoverin' on de water by de light", are but a part of the angel band which he hopes to join. "Join de hebben wid de angels" is his watchword and by it he sees in his child-like fancy all the beauties of ideal creatures.

I 'm gwine to keep a climbin' high,  
Till I meet dem angels in de sky.  
Dem pooty angels I shall see—  
Why doan de debbil let a me be?  
O when I git to heaven goin' sit an' tell,  
Three archangels gwine er ring dem bells.  
Two white angels come a walkin' down,  
Long white robes an' starry crown.  
What 's dat yonder dat I see?  
Big tall angel comin' after me.

The negro makes a terrible picture of the day of judgment. For him it means everything that could possibly happen at the end of the world. It is the destruction of the sinner and the glory of the righteous. Nor does he hesitate to affirm that the Christian in heaven will shout amen to the sinner's damnation. The sinner will see his mother and friends in heaven while he is doomed to hell. It serves as a warning theme for the song more than it indicates reality of thought. But here is a part of his picture:

My Lord what a mornin' when de stars begin to fall,  
You'll see de worl' on fire,  
You'll see de moon a bleedin' an'  
De moon will turn to blood,  
Den you'll see de elements a meltin',  
You'll see de stars a fallin',  
O yes, de stars in de elements a fallin',  
An' de moon drips way in blood,  
When God goin' call dem childuns from de distant lan',  
Den you see de coffins bustin',  
Den you see de bones a creepin',

Den you see po' sinner risin',  
 Den you hear de tombstones crackin',  
 An' you see de graves a bustin',  
 Hell an' seas gwine give up their daid,  
 Den you see de forked lightenin',  
 Den you hear de rollin' thunder,  
 Earth shall reel an' totter,  
 Hell shall be uncapped,  
 De dragon be loosed,  
 Don't you hear them sinners cryin'?

Such a scene vividly told of at a revival and sung to the associations of the moment is too much for the average negro; the sinner cries for mercy and turns to a Christian; the latter sings: "Fare you well po' sinner" and

A mighty sea of glass mingled wid fier,  
 Good-bye, brother, I 'm goin' higher.

Along with the scenes which are associated with the resurrection and judgment go the sadder strains of the "mourners"; "weepin' mournin', cry'n'"—these will be much in evidence. A study of the songs that follow will give some idea of the emotional nature of the themes and music. The negroes sing sympathy. "Weepin' Mary, weep no mo'"— "Mary wept, Martha cried", why can't they too? "Now ain't dis hard trial and tribulation?" He sings often in his songs of hard times and trials. "When you see me," he says, "pity me." "Nobody knows de trubble I seen" but "I boun' to leave dis worl'; Fare you well, dere's a better day comin'." His prayers are more pathetic than his songs; his appeals interpret the spirit of song and of worship. But one would scarcely look for a more pathetic wail than that of the negro who sings

Sometimes I hangs my head an' cries,  
 But Jesus goin' to wipe my weep'n' eyes.

If the negro loves to mourn and if his songs are full of sadness and pathos, he also loves to shout and vigorously defends the right to shout as much as he pleases. His songs have many "Hallelujahs" in them; many notes of victory may be read in the songs of his choice. They often sing, however, the songs which should be the most joyous in the same sad and plaintive tone of the sadder ones. They forget the words. In many, however, the shouting takes away any sadness and these livelier songs voice the light and sensuous emotions equally

as well as the more serious ones tell of hardships. The negro maintains that always and everywhere, "You'll hear the Christain shout." "De richest man I ever seed, his heart was fill wid Jesus an' Holy Ghost." "I got de glory in my soul" he says and

I real'y do b'lieve widout a doubt,  
Dat de church hab a mighty right to shout.

I tell you what I lak de bes',  
It is dem shoutin' Mefodes'.

If the negro's mother and sister and father and preacher and the others, as the songs put it, "died a shoutin'," why he is "goin' die shoutin' too."

Gwine hab happy meetin',  
Gwine shout in hebben,  
Gwine shout an' nebber tire,  
O slap yo' han's chilluns,  
O pat yo' feets chilluns,  
I feels de spirit movin'  
O now I 'm gittin' happy.

Of true love and devotion to God one finds little definite and concrete expressions as compared with other themes. The negro is constantly affirming his love for "his Jesus" and offering his eternal allegiance in a general way. But in the average instance the testimony is subordinated to some special word or phrase which receives the greater part of the significance in the song. What does he mean when he asks: "Does yo' love continue true?" or when he insists: "I wants to know, does you love yo' Jesus?" The negroes are often heard to say that they want to do something "for the Lord". In the same way they sing "I goin' to weep all I can for my Lord, I goin' pray all I can for my Lord, I goin' do all I can for my Lord." In each case the relation of the negro and his God are ideal and he conceives of his own deeds as being, not the practical every-day life, but as coming in the future when there will be nothing unpleasant about them. It was doubted if the negro's ideas of God and Heaven and his relation to them were truly expressed in his songs. A series of experiments were made with negro children, wherein questions were answered by them at the time they were given, others being carried to their homes or teachers. Their ideas of hell and heaven, God and the angels are almost identical. Perhaps some of them were gained from

the songs; some of them were certainly not; all seemed to agree with each other and with those of the race in a remarkable way.

Nature contributes something to the negro spirituals. Certain parts of nature are symbolic and serve to convey the picture of a vivid imagination as nothing else can do. The wonders of God and the terrors of the judgment must be seen in their relation and effect upon the forces of nature. Certain natural phenomena inspire awe and reverence; they add thus to the conception of his religious fear. Other references to nature convey, as they only could, pleasing features of life, hence of heaven and God. The negro refers to the "break o' day", the "settin' o' the sun", the "cool o' de evenin'" and each is very expressive. Morning and evening are common; he prays in the evening perhaps; in the morning he is going to heaven. The hillside, the mountain and mountain top, the valley, signify and typify the experiences of the Christian of the past and present; the heavenly breeze comes from the valley. The negro sees a paradise and a wilderness, a sunshine and a storm. But

Dere's a tree in paradise,  
Christians call de tree ob life,

and he faithfully believes "I specs to eat de fruit off'n dat tree". The earth trembles and is jarred; the sky is "shook." The river is "chilly an' cold, wide an' deep." The "rock" is better than the miry clay and "nebber mind de sun—see how she run." The stars, moon, and world fall, bleed, and burn. The thunder and the lightning are in the stormy cloud; Jesus may be, too. Satan is a snake in the grass and a hunting dog. Young lambs and "de sheep done know de road." The summer, spring, flowers and the field are mentioned. The negro wishes he had wings like Noah's dove. He is sometimes awed:

I looked toward dat northern pole,  
I seed black clouds of fire roll.

With his vivid imagination the negro feels much of the thought expressed in the folk-song. Thus sin and the sinner are intimately connected with life and death, religion and repentance. How skillfully the songs express the folk-feeling may better be inferred in the further analysis of the following



*Types of Negro Spirituals.*

An exact classification of negro songs, either as to subject-matter or as to form, is scarcely possible. There is little unity of thought in their content; their metres conform to no consistent standards. A single favorite stanza, regardless of its meaning, is constantly being sung in a dozen different songs. It is a distinct folk-song and it matters little to which one it belongs; it serves its purpose in any one of them. So in the form of the verse, a single tune is adapted to lines that differ widely in length; likewise a single line is not infrequently made to fit into any tune that is desired. Again, no final version of any song can be given. The lines are rarely sung in exactly the same form. There are ordinarily as many versions of a line as there are combinations of the words without spoiling the effect of the rhyme or emphatic word. The stanzas have no order of sequence, but are sung as they occur in the mind of the singer; a song does not have a standard number of stanzas, but the length depends upon the time in which it is wanted to sing that particular song. In the songs that follow the most common versions are given. In giving the dialect no attempt is made at consistency; for the negro of the present generation has no consistency of speech. He uses "the" and "de", "them" and "dem", "gwine" and "goin'", "and" and "an'", together with many other varied forms, which will be noted in a later chapter; nor does it matter that each of the forms is used in the same line or stanza. In the old songs that are here quoted for comparisons, the exact form of speech in which they have been published is used. In the miscellaneous songs gathered here and there, what may be called the average dialect is used. The songs that form the basis of this work are those that are found among the present-day negroes of the South; in many cases the corresponding song of earlier days is given in order that a better study of the folk-songs may be made and the many points of resemblance noted. In all instances the *basis* of the chapter is the *present-day song*, and these should not be confused with those that have already been published. The words of the chorus and refrain are italicized. Further particulars will be pointed out in connection with the several songs.

Perhaps no better beginning can be made towards general classification of the religious songs of the negroes than by introducing some

that combine several characteristics, but still have a general theme predominating. Sin is an important factor in the religious life of the negro and his songs refer to it in many forms. The three general tones which pervade the theme are: A note of victory over sin and the conception of it as being in the past or belonging to some other person; the conception of sin as being present and the singer as being in its grasp; and thirdly, the "sinner-man" himself and warnings given him. The very popular song, "All my Sins Done Taken Away" is typical of the first class mentioned above. There is no reason why the stanzas given below should come in the order presented, except that they are heard in this arrangement as much as in any other. The stanzas consist of two rhymed lines with the refrain. These, however, are usually extended to four, the first two and refrain being sung slowly and in a more or less plaintive tone, while the repetition of the same lines with the rhymed line and refrain are rapid and joyous. The common version follows.

I 'm goin' to heaven an' I don't want ter stop,  
 Yes, I 'm goin' to heaven an' I don't want ter stop,  
*All o' my sins done taken away, taken away;*  
 I 'm goin' to heaven an' I don't want ter stop,  
 An' I don't want ter be no stumblin' block,  
*All my sins done taken away, taken away.*

Instead of repeating the chorus line at the end of the first two lines that are sung, the negroes often vary the song by repeating the last half of the line, as in the following stanza:

Well "M" for Mary, an' "P" for Paul,  
 Well "M" for Mary, an' "P" for Paul,  
 An' "P" for Paul;  
 Well "M" for Mary an' "P" for Paul.  
 "C" for Chris' who died for us all,  
*All o' my sins done taken away, taken away.*

The chorus is again varied from "all my sins" to "all o' my sins" or "all of my sins," "done taken away," or "bin taken away," while the entire line is sometimes changed in a single stanza. Sometimes it is sung as given above; at other times the line goes: "All my sins done taken away, bin' taken away," or omitting either "done" or "bin" it is sung equally well as "All my sins taken away, taken away," while in the grand chorus at the climax of song the chorus goes:

*Yes all o' my sins bin taken away,  
Yes all my sins done taken away,  
Yes all o' my sins done taken away,  
Yes all my sins done taken away,  
Glory, glory to His name-e,  
All my sins done taken away, taken away.*

This last chorus may be repeated whenever the singers do not think of words to fit in with the songs, although this is rarely necessary. The following stanzas are sung in the same manner as those just given.

If I had er died when I wus young,  
I never would a had dis rist to run,  
*All o' my sins done taken away, taken away.*

Well you oughter bin dere to see de sight,  
The peoples come ruunin' both cullud an' white.

My feet got wet in de midnight dew,  
An' de mornin' star was a witness, too.

If you doan b'leave I bin redeem,  
Jes follow me down to Jordan stream.

When a sinner see me it make him laugh,  
Thank God-a-mighty, I'm free at las'.

Mary wept an' Martha mourned,  
Mary wept all 'round the throne.

Mary wept an' Martha mourned,  
All because deir brother done daid an' gone.

Mary wept an' Martha cried,  
All 'cause dey brother done gone an' died.

I'm goin' to ride on de mornin' train,  
All don't see me goin' ter hear me sing.

I'm gwine to heaven on eagle's wing,  
All don't see me goin' ter hear me sing.

My mother's sick an' my father's daid,  
Got nowhere to lay my weary head.

I went down in de valley to pray,  
My soul got happy an' I stayed all day.

A number of other versions are common. Instead of "Mary wept all 'round the throne" is sung "all 'round God's hebbently throne." Instead of the morning star as a witness the old songs have it "angels witness too." Instead of in the valley, the old songs also had "on de mountain" and also inserted "I didn't go dere to stay." This

version is sung in some of the songs still. "The Sabbath has no End" is the name of a favorite somewhat similar to "All my sins done taken away." It has a number of forms for the chorus.

I went down in de valley,  
 I did n't go ter stay,  
 My little soul got happy  
 An' I like to a stayed all day.

*I thought I had religion, I b'lieve  
 I thought I had religion, I b'lieve.  
 I thought I had religion, I b'lieve,  
 Dat Sabbath hath no end.*

I would n't be a sinner,  
 Tell you de reason why—  
 Feard de good Lord might call me,  
 An I would n't be ready ter die.

*Gwine rock trubbel over, I b'lieve,  
 Rock trubbel over, I b'lieve,  
 Rock trubbel over, I b'lieve,  
 Dat Sabbath has no end.*

Ole Satan's mighty busy,  
 Fixin' up his snares,  
 He'll ketch all dem mourners,  
 If dey don't keep deir prayers.

*Yer better get ready, I b'lieve  
 Yer better get ready, I b'lieve,  
 Yer better get ready, I b'lieve,  
 Dat Sabbath has no end.*

The singer is a little more definite in his convictions in "I am de light uv de Worl' ". He is no longer a sinner and looks forward to the time when he will "cross de ribber."

*Halleluyer, good Lord,  
 I am de light uv de worl',  
 Halleluyer, good Lord,  
 I am de light uv de worl'.*

Ever since my Lord done sot me free,  
 Dis ole worl' bin a hell to me,  
 I am de light uv de worl'.

I looked toward dat Northern pole,  
 I seed black clouds of fier roll,  
 I am de light uv de worl'.

*I gwine 'clare de word,  
I am de light uv de worl',  
I 'm gwine 'clar de word,  
I am de light uv de worl'.*

Der ain't but one train on dis track,  
Goes straight to heaven an' run right back.  
*I am de light uv de worl'.*

*Ever since I bin in de worl',  
I am de light uv de worl',  
Ever since I been in de worl',  
I am de light uv de worl'.*

When I cross Jordan I 'll be free,  
Gwine a slip an' slide dem golden streets,  
*I am de light uv de worl'.*

*'Way up in de kingdom, Lord,  
I am de light uv de worl',  
'Way up in de kingdom, Lord,  
I am de light uv de worl'.*

The negro is not troubled because he cannot see his Lord; he has heard Him speak and believes that He has gone "on to glory." His personal relation with Jesus is satisfactory and he sings His praises often as he tells of his own experiences. Says he :

One day, one day, while walkin' along,  
*Jesus done bless my soul;*  
I heard a voice an' saw no one,  
*Jesus done bless my soul.*

O go an' tell it on de mountain,  
*Jesus done bless my soul;*  
O go an' tell it in de valley,  
*Jesus done bless my soul.*

He done bless my soul an' gone on to glory, Good Lord,  
*Jesus done bless my soul;*  
Done bin here an' bless my soul an' gone on to glory.  
*Jesus done bless my soul.*

In one of the old plantation songs a similar idea is given of the blessing, but in a different version.

One day when I wus walkin' along, Oh yes, Lord,  
De element opened, an' de Love came down, Oh yes, Lord,  
I never shall forget dat day, Oh yes, Lord,  
When Jesus washed my sins away, Oh yes, Lord.

Another chorus inquired: "O brothers where were you? O sisters

where were you? O sinners, O Christians, O mourners, etc., where were you?" for "My good Lord's bin here, bin here, bin here; My good Lord's bin here, An' he blessed my soul an' gone." So the negro exhorters often conclude their services, saying that the Lord has been to the meeting and gone. Said one deacon who was exhorting for a large collection: "De good Lord's done bin with us to-night—I knows he has, done been here an' gone, an' now we wants to git down to bizness, I wants some money."

Again, the negro fresh and enthusiastic from his religious experience and having "come through" sings with some relief:

I have been tryin a great long while,  
*Lord, I jus' got over on yo' side.*

*L o r d, I jus' got over-er,*  
*L o r d, I jus' got over,*  
*L o r d, I jus' got over-er,*  
*I jus' got over on yo' side.*

I pray'd an' I pray till I come over,  
*Lord, I jus' got over on yo' side.*

So also he "weeps" and he "mourns" and "cries" till he "gets over on the Lawd's side." Then he sings "O de sunshine,"

O the sunshine, O the sunshine,  
O sunshine in my soul this mornin',  
Yes the sunshine, the sunshine,  
Yes sun shine in my soul.

Down in the valley, down on my knees,  
*Sunshine in my soul,*  
There I met that heavenly breeze,  
*Sunshine in my soul.*

Ole devil like a snake in the grass,  
*Sunshine in my soul,*  
He's always in some sister's path,  
*Sunshine in my soul.*

While the song is also sung at times with more dialect, it lends itself more readily to the above form. Very much mixed and somewhat similar to those already given is "Bless the Name."

I've got to go to judgment, I don't know how soon,  
*Lord bless the name, Lord bless the name,*  
I've got to go to judgment to hear my sins,  
*Lord bless the name, Lord bless the name.*

My Jesus fed me when I's hungry, gave me drink when I's dry,  
*Lord bless the name, Lord bless the name,*  
My Jesus clothed me when I was naked,  
*Lord bless the name, Lord bless the name.*

In the same song and with the same tune are sung the shorter lines that follow. The chorus is often sung "Lor' bless the name", and is a form of the phrase "Bless the name of the Lord." It is used as a refrain after each line or it may be omitted.

Mary wept and Martha mourned,  
*Lord bless the name, Lord bless the name,*  
Jesus Chris' laid the corner of stone,  
*Lord bless the name, Lord bless the name.*

Mary wore the golden chain,  
Every link was in Jesus' name.

You may talk about me just as you please,  
I'll talk about you when I git on my knees.

God made man an' man was sure,  
There was no sin an' his heart was pure.

God made Adam an' Adam was first,  
God made Adam out o' the dust o' the earth.

The old slave songs also had other interpretations of man's creation which differ slightly in particular from the last stanza quoted. One form occurs in

God made man an' he made him out o' clay,  
*Settin' on de golden altar,*  
An' he put him on de earth but he did not stay,  
*Settin' on de golden altar.*

A favorite chorus for the old spiritual was: "*What you gwine do when de lamp burns down?*" So there was also another version of the weeping of Mary and Martha:

Mary wept an' Martha cried,  
To see deir Saviour crucified,  
Weepin' Mary weep no mo',  
Jesus say he gone befo'.

It proves an interesting task to follow the development and changes in a song that has survived from slavery days. In "Free, free my Lord", one of the verses was quite a puzzle. During the recent summer the following stanza was heard:

The moon come down like a piper's stem,  
 The sun 'fuse to shine,  
 An' ev'y star disappear,  
 King Jesus set me free.

Inquiry was made in order to see if the words had not been misunderstood. The older negroes gave this version and insisted that it was correct, but none of them could explain what it meant. It was thought that perhaps it was a figure applied to the moon's rays or that the loss of the sun might have meant the peculiar appearance of the moon. Anyway, they maintained, this was the "way we got de song an' guess it must be right." The words of the original song were,

The moon run down in purple stream,  
 The sun forbear to shine,  
 An' ev'y star disappear,  
 King Jesus shall be mine,

of which there seemed to be several versions. Other verses that are found to-day are :

As I went down in de valley one day,  
 I fell upon my knees,  
 I begged and cried fer pardon,  
 The Lord did give me ease.

*Free, free, my Lord,*  
*Free, free, my Lord,*  
*Free, free, my Lord,*  
*To march de heaven's highway.*

The Lord called Moses,  
 Moses refuse to answer,  
*Free, free, etc.*

My mother look at de son an' smile,  
 My Father look at me,  
 My mother turn my soul from hell,  
 King Jesus set me free,

is an unusual variation and interpretation of the old song; just how and when the negro inserted the idea of mother would be difficult to ascertain; perhaps it came from "master," or more likely it was introduced by them while they interpreted *father* and *son* as names of the ordinary members of a human family. The original form seems to have been,

De Father, he looked on de Son and smiled,  
 De Son, he looked on me;



De Father, he redeemed my soul from hell ;  
An' de Son, he set me free.

The chorus, too, has been much confused and is given as “ *Children light on dat cross, God bless you forever mo'.*” The song is not a common one among the negroes and is not known, apparently, among the younger ones. In contrast with this favorite of the older negroes may be given a favorite of the younger generation, “ Glad I got religion.” The repetition represents pretty well the relative depth of the feeling which the convert feels. But he loves to sing it for its pleasing sound and for the faith it gives him in his own religious state. The song is a long and continued chorus and may well be taken as a type of the song which reflects the negro's feeling of immunity from sin.

I 'm so glad, so glad ; I 'm so glad, so glad,  
Glad I *got religion*, so glad,  
Glad I *got religion*, so glad.

I 'm so glad, so glad ; I 'm so glad, so glad,  
I 'm *glad all over*, so glad,  
I 'm *glad all over*, so glad.

I 'm so glad, so glad ; I 'm so glad, so glad,  
Glad I bin' *changed*, so glad.  
Glad I bin' *changed*, so glad.

And so he continues singing ; he is glad that he is *goin' to heaven*, he is glad that he is *not a sinner*, glad he has been *set free*, and many other such states. Then when he has finished he begins all over again, if he wishes and sings : “ Sister, ain't you glad ? Brother, ain't you glad ? ” and goes through with as many of these as he wishes, *preacher*, *mourner*, *auntie*, and the others.

The “ sinner-man ” is the theme for many verses of the negro favorites. Directed at him are warnings and admonitions. He is told what he must do and when ; how he must do and why. He is told of the experiences of the Christians and he is told of the doom of the damned. The negro rejoices over his own safety and boasts of the sinner's destruction ; at the same time he constantly refers to the “ po' sinner ” in a sympathetic way. But the sinner must be warned :

*God knows it's time, it's time, it's time,  
That a sinner was makin' up his min'  
It's time, it's time he was makin' up his min' to die.*

A sinner was walkin' off his time, his time,  
An' when my God call him he did not have the *time*,  
God know it was time, it was time, it was time for him to die.



In the "Downward road is crowded" a mournful picture is given of the sinner who failed to repent. His example is held up for the contemplation of those who are following in his steps.

Young people who delight in sin,  
I tell you what I lately seen,  
A po' godless sinner die,  
An' he said : " In hell I soon 'll lie."

*Hark, the downward road is crowded, crowded, crowded,  
Yes the downward road is crowded with unbelievin' souls.*

He call his mother to his bed,  
An' these is the dyin' words he said,  
Mother, mother, I long farewell,  
Your wicked son is damned in hell.

He dance an' play hisself away,  
An' still put off his dyin' day,  
Until at las' ole death was sent,  
An' it 'us too late fer him to repent.

They also sing of *mother* and *sister* being called to the bedside. The old plantation song of the same name had a similar chorus but the stanzas were quite different.

When I was a sinner,  
I loved my distance well,  
But when I come to fin' myself,  
I was hangin' over hell.

Ole Satan's might busy,  
He follers me night an' day,  
An' every where I 'pinted,  
Dere's something in my way.

The Lord will come to judge the world and *wake up the dead*. It is the supreme ambition of the singer to be ready to meet his Lord when He comes. Just what form the Lord will take the negro does not say ; perhaps it will be in a *cloud* or *fire* or He will come as in the days of Moses. " My Lord 's, comin' again " gives a general conception.

*O my Lord's comin' again,  
O my Lord's comin' again,  
(Talk about it :)  
Yes my Lord's comin' again,  
It may be las' time, I don't know.*

Well he 's comin' to judge the worl',  
Well he 's comin' to judge the worl',  
(Talk about it :)

Yes my Lord 's comin' to judge the worl',  
It may be las' time, I don't know.

Well you had better put off lyin' shoes,  
Well you better put off lyin' shoes,

(*Talk about it :*)

Better put off lyin' shoes,  
For it may be las' time, I don't know.

And so he sings "Better put off *dancin'* shoes", "better put off *gamblin'* shoes". For the sinner's shoes will not be suitable to "walk on the cross". He sings: "God's goin' to wake up the Dead" and makes a beautiful melody out of the simple repetition.

*Goin' to wake up the dead,  
Goin' to wake up the dead,  
God goin' to wake up the dead,  
Who 's a sleepin' in the grave,  
God is goin' to wake up the dead.*

You had better min' my brother how you walk on the cross,  
*God's goin' to wake up the dead;*

If yo' right foot slip, then yo' soul be los'  
*God goin' wake up the dead.*

Then "you better min' my *sister*, my *brother*, my *mother*, my *preacher*" are sung. The old song contained words similar to the lines just given, with the chorus: "*De young lambs mus' fin' de way*":

My brudder better mind how you walk on de cross,  
For yo' foot might slip an' yo' soul git lost,

Better mind dat sun, and see how she run,  
An' mind don't let her catch ye wid yer works undone.

But the sinner sometimes gets confused, it would seem; sometimes he heeds the preacher's warnings, sometimes he scoffs at them. Often he does not hear them. More rarely he inquires into conditions. In the lines which follow the negroes make each a stanza, repeating three times. It perhaps represents the retort of the "*sinner man*."

Some goin' thru' Jordan, some tryin' to go 'round.  
The Mef 'dis' they say sprinklin', de Baptis say' baptize.  
Now Lord the sinner man so hard to believe,  
Now Lord sinner man want you to show him de way

But the sinner gets little reply to his inquiries. "Time is comin' when sinner mus' die" and there is none so pitiable as the lost sinner.

*Sinner, die, sinner die,  
Sinner dies wid his head hung down,  
Sinner die, sinner die,  
Sinner die in de midnight dew.*

*Sinner die, sinner die,  
Sinner die, with achin' heart,  
Sinner die, sinner die,  
Sinner die with weary min',*

Stump'ty up an' stump'ty down,  
Time is comin' when sinner mus' die,  
*Hurry home, hurry home;*

Time is a comin' sinner mus' die.  
Don't you let that sinner change yo' min',  
Time is comin' sinner mus' die.

*Hurry home, hurry home;*  
Time is comin' sinner mus' die.

The plantation song of some years ago, sometimes called "O sinner, you better get ready", had the same line refrain, "Time is a comin' dat sinner mus' die." The repetition of "sinner die", is a new addition. In the old song were lines similar to those quoted :

O sinner man you better pray,  
For it look a like judgment every day.

I heard a lumb'ring in de sky,  
Dat make a me tink my time was nigh.

I heard of my Jesus a many one say,  
Could 'move poor sinner's sins away.

Yes, I'd rather pray myself away,  
Dan to lie in hell an' burn a one day.

I think I heard my mother say—  
'T was a pretty thing to serve the Lord.

O when I git to heaven I'll be able fer to tell,  
O how I shun dat dismal hell.

In addition to the line-refrain which was sung after each line of the song, an additional chorus followed at intervals; this chorus had "ready my Lord" where the new one has a short line, "Hurry home".

*Oh, sinner, you 'd better get ready, ready my Lord,  
Oh, sinner, you 'd better get ready.*

An interesting type of song is that in which an imaginary conversation is carried on between two parties. If the song is correctly

rendered the leader or one part of the chorus sing the first part or take the words of one of the speakers, while the other chorus take up the other speaker's words. Both then join in the grand refrain, which in the following song is "Lord, I'm on my way".

Sinner, what you goin' to do  
*When de devil git you?*  
 What you goin' do  
*When de devil git you?*  
 What you goin' do  
*When de devil git you?*  
*Lord, I'm on my way.*

I 'm goin' run to the rocks.  
*Well, they can't hide you.*  
 Goin' run to the rocks—  
*They can't hide you;*  
 Run to the rocks,  
*Well, they can't hide you,*  
*Lord, I'm on my way.*

I 'm goin' to run to the water;  
*An' water goin' to cry "fire",*  
 Goin' to run to the water,  
*An' water cry "fire",*  
 Run to the water,  
*An' water cry "fire",*  
*Lord, I'm on my way.*

And so the sinner will then "run to the mountain," and "De mountain fly open" or "De mountain cry mercy." The sinner must needs be hopeless at his death and there is neither mercy nor pity for him. It is the idea of the negro that at the great day "we won't be bothered with them any mo'". A sad picture he makes of the poor, and forsaken man who dies "with achin' heart", with "weary min'", and with his "head hung down". Consequently it is not surprising to find appeals of all sorts made to the sinner man; now he is told of his doom, now of possible salvation, now of the joys of being saved, now of immediate satisfaction. Sung like the above song is "Come, sinner, come".

Won't you come, won't you come?  
*Come, sinner, come;*  
 Great day of wrath is comin',  
*Come, sinner, come.*  
 Look over yonder what I see;  
*Come, sinner, come;*  
 Two tall angels comin' after me,  
*Come, sinner, come.*

In the same manner he sings, "Won't you come an' see yo' Lord?" and "Ole Satan like a snake in de grass, Always in some sister's path," "Ole Satan weahs mighty loose ole shoe, Ef you don't min' gwine slip it on you". "Up on hill side King Jesus spoke, Out of his mouth come fier an' smoke", "Down in de valley, down on my knees, Ask de Lord to save me if He please", and others. The plantation song asked,

O whar you runnin', sinner?  
*I do love de Lord;*  
 De Judgment day is comin',  
*I do love de Lord;*  
 You 'll see de worl' on fire,  
*I do love de Lord;*  
 You 'll see de element a meltin',  
*I do love de Lord.*

Besides these stanzas there were sung the various other warnings such as have been given in the idea of Judgment and Resurrection already noted. In the old slave song the sinner asks :

My Lord, My Lord, what shall I do?  
*An' heaven bell ring an' praise God.*  
 What shall I do for hiding place?  
 I run to de sea but de sea run dry.  
 I run to de gate but de gate shut fast.  
 No hiding place for sinner dere.  
 For I am gone an' sent to hell.

Instead of the regular refrain which is sung by the chorus of voices in response to a line by the leader, the negroes often respond with "um-m'" in a general mingling of chant, humming, and "amens". For the most part they do this with closed lips; the volume is surprisingly strong, however, and makes a stirring effect. The meaning of the expression is something like "Yes?" or "Of course, we know it is true" or "Sure, you talkin' brother". The singer says: "I look for Jesus all my days", and the chorus answers, "um-u'", and he then continues,

An' when I found him this is what he said,  
*um-u'*  
 Yo' sin forgiven an' you soul set free,  
*um-u'*  
*I pray all night, an' I pray all day, um-u', um-u',*  
*Then my Lord taken my sins away, um-u', um-u'.*

Nex' day, nex' day while walkin' along, um-u', um-u',  
 I heard a voice an' saw no one, um-u', um-u',  
 It said, sinner man, you better come home, um-u', um-u'.

One day I was walkin' long dat lonesome road, um-u', um-u',  
 King Jesus spoke unto me an' lifted off dat load, um-u'.

Again, "Brother, you 'd Better be a Prayin'", while mostly repetition makes a long song when sung to its limit. "*Sister*", "*Sinner*", "*Backslider*", "*Mourner*", "*Children*", each serves to make a complete stanza of eight lines :

Brother you 'd better be a prayin',  
 Brother, you 'd better be a prayin',  
 My brother, you 'd better be a prayin',  
 An' I 'll be carried above,  
 An' I 'll be carried above,  
 An' I 'll be carried above,  
 I 'll see king Jesus in his reign,  
 An' I 'll be carried above.

The chorus song, "Wheel in middle of Wheel" is most likely a variation of the old song "Wheel in a wheel" which was "run by *love*, by *faith*," and was sometimes conceived as a chariot wheel upon which "gwine take a ride, On de chariot wheel", for "de chariot's comin', O my Lord". Sometimes the wheel was conceived as being a "Little wheel a-turnin' in my heart", in which case it signified some sort of feeling. The phrase means nothing more than a chorus in the present-day song.

O sinner man, how can it be ?  
*Wheel in de middle of wheel,*  
 If you don't serve God, you can't serve me, .  
*Wheel in de middle of wheel.*

*In the wheel, in the wheel,*  
*Wheel in de middle of wheel,*  
*In the wheel, in the wheel,*  
*Wheel in the middle of wheel.*

Well don't you know it's prayin' time ?  
*Wheel in middle of wheel;*  
 Lay down yo' way an' go to God,  
*Wheel in middle of wheel.*

Well don't you know it's mournin' time ?  
*Wheel in middle of wheel ;*  
 He 'll hear yo' prayers an' sanctify,  
*Wheel in middle of wheel.*



Jesus and God are represented as "Listenin' all the day long", and the sinner is directed to pray. The plantation songs called to him: "Where you goin' sinner? O come back, don't go dat way." And one of the singers affirmed that "about the the break o' day" his sins were forgiven and "his soul set free." The song "Jesus is a listenin'" seems at some time to have been considerably corrupted. The negroes have sung it: "I've been a listenin' all day long," and all night long, to hear some sinner pray." However, the correct version now seems to be:

Jesus is a listenin' all the day long,  
 He keep listenin' all the day long,  
 He keep listenin' all the day long,  
 For to hear some sinner pray.

If I was a sinner I would please him,  
 I would pray an' pray a day,  
 An' when I got to heaven,  
 So he could say he heard me pray.

But in "Bear yo' Burden, sinner", another version is given of the same idea. This song is a popular one, while the figures used give a definite conviction.

The Lord is a listenin' all the day long,  
*Bear yo' burden sinner,*  
 If you will only pray, he will bear you on,  
*Bear yo' burden in the heat o' the day.*  
*Bear yo' burden, sinner,*  
*Bear yo' burden, sinner,*  
*Bear yo' burden in the heat o' the day.*

I'm goin' home fer to see my Lord,  
*Bear yo' burden, sinner,*  
 An' don't you wish you could go 'long,  
*Bear yo' burden, let in the heat.*

The way to bear yo' burden is to get down on yo' knees,  
*Bear yo' burden, sinner, let in the heat,*  
 Ask God to forgive you if you please,  
*Bear yo' burden in the heat of the day.*

This last stanza is an improvisation made by a young negro of some twenty-five years, although he claimed that it belonged to the song that was regularly sung, maintaining that they only forgot to sing it in the church on that special occasion. "True Religion" gives one view of the requisites of him who will be saved. The song

is based in form on a current secular song, and belongs to the class of colloquies.

Well you must have that true religion,  
 You must have true religion an' yo' soul converted,  
 You must have that true religion.  
*Or you can't cross there.*

Where are you goin', sinner,  
 Where are you goin', I say?  
 I goin' down to de river of Jorden,  
*An' you can't cross dere.*

He continues, "Where are you goin' *gambler, backslider, drunkard, liar, hypocrite?*" and answers each with, "An' you can't cross there," while the entire chorus, "You must have that true religion," is often repeated after each. The sinner is asked still other questions, one of which is given in the song "Waitin'".

Why does you tarry, sinner,  
 Why does you wait so long?  
 For my Lord is a waitin',  
 Why don't you come to His call?

*He is waitin', Lord,  
 He is waitin', Lord,  
 He is a-waitin' fer the good Lord,  
 To come, My Lord.*

But when my Lord get here,  
 You want have time to pray at all,  
 For he is goin' to judge you,  
 An' hell you be bound.

The negro preacher often rebukes his flock for talking about each other in uncomplimentary terms. Sometimes the "sisters" who do not like the preacher retort variously, "I heard you talkin 'bout So and So, you know I did" or "We gwine talk 'bout you," or "Yes, you knows it." Slander and gossip are fast runners and the average negro assumes that somebody is talking about him or something which he has done. Out of this has grown the song "Talk about me" and others.

*Yes, I know you goin' talk 'bout me,  
 Yes, I know you goin' talk 'bout me,  
 For you talk 'bout my father when he's on his knees a prayin',  
 An' I know you goin' talk 'bout me.*

So likewise he sings "I know you're goin' talk about me" because

“you talk about my mother when she’s on her bed a-dyin’; he actually sings *father, brother, mother, sister, mourner, preacher*, to both “on his knees a prayin’”, and “on bed a dyin’.” A very popular stanza which is regularly sung in a number of songs goes: “You may talk about me just as you please, I ’m goin’ to talk about you when I git on my knees.”

The old slave and plantation song asked: “Who’ll jine de Union?” saying, “Say, ef you belong to de union ban’, den here’s my heart an’ here’s my hand.” There have been societies known as “The Union” or “Union Band” both in the church and outside. The name “Union” itself is a favorite one among the negro societies and organizations. It was thought in the old days that a union band would march to heaven and that these only would be enabled to reach the destination. It is almost certain that a number of references in their songs referred to the Union army in and after the war. However, the exact origin of the song as it is now sung has not been found, but appears to be a general corruption of several old songs.

*Get in the Union, Jesus is a listenin’,  
Get in the Union, Jesus die.  
Well, won’t you get in the Union?  
Jesus is a listenin’, Jesus die.*

Where was Ezekiel when the church fell down?  
Down in de valley wid his head hung down.

Hypocrite, hypocrite, God do despise,  
Tongue so keen till he will tell lies.

Upon the mountain Jehober spoke,  
Out of his mouth come fier an’ smoke.

With this chorus are sung also as already given, “Satan, the snake in the grass”, “Ole satan weah mighty loose ole shoe”, etc. The “Hallelujah” so common among the old songs is less frequently heard now: it will be found to some degree in the shouting songs and songs of heaven.

Not the least among the warnings to the sinner were to be reckoned the times when “Gable” should blow his horn. “Gable” has been proverbial among the negroes; Gabriel and the trumpet are, however, significant in the same way among the whites in vulgar reference. Many ideas of “Gable’s” trumpet have appeared in the negro songs. Sometimes it is “blow louder, Gable.” “How loud mus’ I blow?”

Reference has already been made to these lines. The song "Blow, Gable, blow" has changed considerably from the old plantation songs of the same name.

Blow Gable, at the judgment,  
 Blow Gable, at the judgment bar,  
 For my God is a talkin' at the judgment,  
 For my God is a talkin' at the judgment bar.  
 Now won't you blow Gable at the judgment?  
 For my God is a preachin' at the judgment bar.  
 Now won't you blow Gable at the judgment bar?  
 Well, I'm goin' to meet my preacher at the judgment bar.

In the same manner, making a four-line stanza of each one, are sung, "Goin' to meet brother, mother, sister, etc.," and also "My God is a walkin', tryin', etc.," at the judgment bar. So, too, it is "*prayin'* time, *mournin'* time, *singin'* time, *shoutin'* time, *tryin'* time, etc., at the judgment bar." This song may be given as the last one of the class peculiar to warnings and admonitions to sinners. It closes with still other verses that give vivid pictures of the judgment bar.

Well, sinners, keep a prayin' at the judgment bar.  
 Well, it's too late to pray at the judgment bar.  
 Why didn't you take heed at the judgment?  
 Some come crippled at judgment.  
 Oh, I look fer my mother, brother, sister, at de judgment.

Both the sinner and the seeker has a "hard time" during some time in his experience. The duties of everyday life, too, often seem hard. Now on his knees, now shouting, now sorrowful and now glad, the negro comes from "hanging over hell" to die and "set by de Fadder's side." The average negro appears to pity himself, and his song intensifies the feeling. The songs that follow may be classed as those that give the state of uncertainty and doubt, together with pity mingled now and then with the note of triumph. In "Oh, what a hard time", *sisters*, *brothers*, *children*, *preachers*, *seekers*—all have the same difficulties.

*Oh, what a hard time, Oh, what a hard time,*  
*Oh, what a hard time—All God's children have a hard time.*  
 Oh, what a hard time, oh, what a hard time,  
 Oh, what a hard time, my Lord had a hard time, too.

So in another division will be given the song "My Trouble is Hard",

the idea of which seems to be derived from the old plantation songs, though the new song is entirely different from the old ones. The plantation negroes used to sing "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen", in which they were "sometimes up, sometimes down, sometimes almost to de groun'." Others sung it "Nobody knows the trouble I see, or I've had", and asked: "Brother, sister, preacher, will you pray for me?" In the same pathetic tone the "Sinner man" gives another phase of the feeling.

My mother 'n yo' mother both daid an' gone,  
 My mother 'n yo' mother both daid an' gone,  
 My mother 'n yo' mother both daid an' gone,  
 Po' sinner man he so hard to believe.

My folks an' yo' folks both daid an' gone,  
 Po' sinner man he so hard to believe.

My brother 'n yo' brother both daid an' gone,  
 Po' sinner man he so hard to believe.

In the same way "my sister", etc., completes the song, with favorite lines, "Down in de valley", "Upon mountain Jehober spoke", etc., being inserted as often as they desire. "Hanging over hell" gives more intensity to the feeling of the sinner. He says:

*When I wus hangin' over hell, over hell,  
 When I wus hangin' over hell, over hell,  
 Well, I had no one to pity poor me, poor me.*

Well, my mother sick an' my father daid, father daid,  
 Well, my mother sick an' my father daid, father daid,  
 Well I ain't got no one to pity poor me, poor me.

Well, I ain't got no one to pray for me, to pray for me.

I ain't got no one to feel for me, feel for me.

Likewise he has no one to "cry" for him, to "mourn" or to "care" for him. It will be noticed that the negroes insert the word "well" frequently. There is no regularity or rule for its use; it apparently gives the song a more plastic turn and makes it seem more conversational. In some of their songs they insert in the same way, "says" and "er", "a", "an", at will. The *struggle* is well represented by the song "Keep inchin' along", which was also common in the old plantation melodies; the chorus is the same, while the words are entirely different from the older song.

*Keep er-inchin' erlong, keep er-inchin' erlong,  
 Jesus 'll come bye'm bye,  
 Keep er-inchin', keep er-inchin' erlong,  
 Jesus 'll come bye'm bye.*

De road is rocky here below,  
*But Jesus 'll come bye'm bye,*  
 But Jesus leads me as I go,  
*Jesus 'll come bye'm bye.*

Sometimes I hangs my head an' cries,  
*But Jesus 'll come bye'm bye.*  
 An' He gwi' wipe mer weepin' eyes,  
*Jesus 'll come bye'm bye.*

Uh, run 'long mourner an' git yo' crown,  
 By yo' Father's side set down.

I'm glad that I'm bo'n ter die,  
 Frum trouble here my soul gwi' fly.

In the same hopeful strain the negro sings "Boun' ter cross Jord'n in dat Mornin'," which has a large number of stanzas, none of which have any similarity of meaning to the general theme.

Yonder come er sister all dressed in black,  
 She look lak er hipercrit jes' got back,  
*I'm boun' ter cross Jord'n in dat mornin'.*

*Cross me over,  
 Great Jehover,  
 My Lord, I'm boun' ter cross Jord'n in dat mornin'.*

See dat Christian on his knees,  
 He's gwin' ter cross dem jasper seas,  
*I'm boun' ter cross Jorden in dat mornin'.*

Swing low chariots in er line,  
 Carry me ter glory in due time,  
*I'm boun' ter cross Jord'n in dat mornin'.*

Ain't but the one thing grieve my min'  
 Sister goin' to heaven an' leave me behin',  
*I'm boun' ter cross Jord'n in dat mornin'.*

It is a favorite theme of the negroes to sing much of their "Lord" and "God". Much has been noted of the names and attributes which Deity holds in the negro's songs. As his friend the negro believes that God is always true; consequently he sings his loyalty to Him. The old plantation song "Tell Jesus" had as its chorus: "Tell Jesus done done all I can, Tell Jesus done done all I can, Tell Jesus done done all I can, I can't do no more". Very much like it is the song

“For my Lord” that is much in demand among the present-day negroes.

*I goin' to do all I can fer my Lord,  
I goin' to do all I can fer my Lord,  
I goin' to do all I can fer my Lord,  
I goin' to do all I can fer my Lord,  
I do all I can till I can't do no more,  
I goin' do all I can fer my Lord.*

In the same way he sings “I goin' weep all I can till I can't weep no more”, “I goin' pray all I can till I can't pray no more”, and “sing” and “mourn” and “work” for his Lord. The phrases “till I can't do no mo'”, and the others are characteristic of the negro's prayers. He usually closes his church prayers, “Now Lord, when we's done prayin' an' can't pray no mo'; when we's done meetin' an' can't meet no mo'”, etc. The closing scene, the final act of life, seems to appeal to the negro with wonderful dramatic power. It is in the *end* that he himself will be great; it is then that God and Jesus and the angels will be made manifest, and it is there in the new home that his condition will be one of ease and rest, at the same time that it is one of prominence. He sings “Gwi' lay down my life fer my Lord”.

De Lord giv' me mer trumpet an' tole me ter blow,  
He giv' me mer cummission an' tole me ter go.

*Fer my Lord, fer my Lord,  
Fer my Lord, gwi' lay down my life fer my Lord.*

You can hinder me here but you can't hinder me dere,  
For de Lord in Heaven gwi' hear my prayer.

De enemy's great but my Cap'n is strong,  
U'm fightin' fer de city an' de time ain't long.

When I git dar I'll be able fer to tell,  
How I whipped ole Satan at de door ob hell.

Mer head got wet wid de midnight dew,  
Dat mornin' star was shinin' too.

So again the negro magnifies his Lord in “a weary Lan' ” and makes both a striking picture and a pleasing song. His Lord is not only “a walkin' in a weary lan', but he is also a “doctor”, a “preacher” and a “shelter”. Thus he pictures him “walkin' ” “talkin' ” “preachin' ”, and “healin' ” in the weary land.

My Lord 's a walkin' in the weary lan',  
In a weary lan', in a weary lan',

Yes, my Lord walkin' in weary lan',  
He 's a shelter in a mighty storm.

Likewise he is a healer in a *mighty storm* or in *the time of storm*. It is but natural that the negro should call upon the Lord to remember him. The old plantation song "Do Lord remember me" was apparently based upon the idea of being remembered at Christmas times; indeed the negroes always ask to be remembered at such a time by the "whitefolks". They were always remembered and often their homes were made happy. The song asked: "O do Lord remember me, O do Lord remember me, O do remember me until de year roll round, Do Lord remember me." The song now current is most likely not the same song but an entirely different one.

*Do my Lord remember me,  
Do my Lord remember me,  
Do my Lord remember me,  
Do Lord remember me.*

Upon de housetop an' can't come down,  
*Do Lord remember me.*

Upon de house an' can't come down.  
*Do Lord remember me.*

When I am hungry do feed me Lord,  
*Do Lord remember me.*

When I am thirsty do give me drink,  
*Do Lord remember me.*

The negroes sometimes call the following song the "riddle song", asking "who is the Rock", while the answer comes back, like the Psalmist, "King Jesus is the Rock".

Lead me to the Rock, lead me to the Rock,  
Lead me to the Rock that is higher an' higher.  
O, Lead me to the Rock,  
Yes, lead me to the Rock that is higher an' higher.

King Jesus is the Rock, yes, King Jesus is the Rock,  
King Jesus is the Rock that is higher an' higher,  
O King Jesus is the Rock,  
Yes, King Jesus is the Rock that is higher an' higher.

Standing on the Rock, yes standing on the Rock,  
Standing on the Rock that is higher an' higher.  
O, standing on the Rock,  
Yes, standing on the Rock that is higher an' higher.

As Jesus is the Rock so the negroes have sung "Dere's no one



lak' Jesus". The chorus-line was common in the old songs ; the verses of the song of to-day are different.

I think I heard a rumblin' in de sky,

*Dar 's no one lac Jesus.*

It mus' be mer Lord passin' by,

*Dar 's no one lac Jesus.*

*Stan' still, walk study, keep de faith,*

*Dar 's no one lak' Jesus.*

Sister Mary went up on de mount'n top,

*Dar 's no one lak' Jesus.*

She sung a li'l song an' she never did stop,

*Dar 's no one lak' Jesus.*

She argued wid de Fadder an' chatter'd wid de Son,

*Dar 's no one lak' Jesus.*

She talk 'd erbout the ole worl' she cum frum,

*Dar 's no one lak' Jesus.*

The song " Gi 'me Jesus " was said to have been the product of "over-free spirit and super-religiousness" just after the war. The negro claims that the white man took him at his word when he sang, " Gi 'me Jesus, You may have all this worl' ", and has left him nothing in this world but Jesus. At least this is one view of the song, which is represented as a bargain which the white man wants the negro to keep. The song is a typical and well known one, said to have been first sung by a blind negro preacher.

In de mornin' when I rise,

In de mornin' when I rise,

In de mornin' when I rise,

Giv' me Jesus.

*Giv' me Jesus,*

*Giv' me Jesus,*

*You may hab' all dis worl',*

*Giv' me Jesus.*

Ef it's midnight when I rise,

Ef it's midnight when I rise,

Ef it's midnight when I rise,

*Giv' me Jesus.*

Jes' fore day when I cried,

*Giv' me Jesus.*

When I wade death's cold stream,

*Giv' me Jesus.*

The negro says that if you love Jesus, it seems to him that you

“ can’t keep it”, and that you are duty bound to let the world know it. The custom is a common one of asking “ members ” at the class meeting and revival services whether or not they “ love the Lord ”. It is the duty of the class leader to see to the religious welfare of the members. The song “ Love the Lord ” represents this phase of worship.

Well, did you say that you love Jesus?  
Did you say that you love the Lord?

*Yes, I say that I love Jesus,  
Yes, I say I love the Lord.*

All I wants to know is, “ Does you love Jesus? ”  
All I wants to know is, “ Does you love the Lord? ”

*Yes, I say that I love Jesus,  
Yes, I say I love the Lord.*

If you love Jesus, you can’t keep it,  
All I want to know is, “ Does you love the Lord? ”

*Yes, my mother, I love Jesus,  
Yes, my mother, I love the Lord.*

The chorus then varies from “ Yes, I say ” to “ Yes, my mother ”, “ Yes, my sister ”, “ Yes, my brother ”.

In striking contrast to his earthly life, the negro sings of his heavenly home. It will be seen in the study of his social songs that home plays a small part in their subject matter. It is true that the negro has little love of home or devotion to loved ones. Perhaps for this very reason he expects to have a better home in the beyond. He wants that which is ideal and impractical; he wants that which will come without effort. If in slavery days he had no home, it was natural that he should look to Heaven for his home. This conception, intensified by the negro’s emotional nature and self-pity, is still prominent. Not only is his home to be a happy one, but it is to be exclusive; only the fortunate, of whom he is the chiefest, may go there. This class of songs—of Heaven and home—is perhaps as large as any. The negro sings :

I got a home where liars can’t go,  
*Don’t you see?*  
Jus’ between the heaven an’ earth,  
Where my Saviour bled an’ died,  
I got a home where liars can’t go,  
*Don’t you see?*

I got a home where sinners can't go,

*Don't you see?*

Jus' between the earth an' sky,

Where my Saviour bleed an' die,

*Don't you see?*

When the earth begin to shake,

*Don't you see?*

You better get a ticket or you 'll be late,

*Don't you see?*

In the same way the singers repeat, using the words “*drunkards*,” “*hypocrits*”, and other sinners. Sometimes instead of saying “I got a home where the drunkards can't come”, the sinner will say “where the drunkards can't *find me*”. Another version of the same song is found in different localities :

I got a home in the Rock,

*Don't you see?*

Just between the heaven an' earth,

Well, yes, I got a home in the Rock,

*Don't you see?*

Judas was a deceitful man,

*Don't you see?*

Well he betrayed the innercent Lam',

Well he lost a home in the Rock,

*Don't you see?*

Well the sun refuse to shine,

*Don't you see?*

The sun refuse to shine,

An' the sun refuse to shine,

*Don't you see?*

God don't talk like a natural man,

*Don't you see?*

God don't talk like a natural man,

He talk so sinners can understan',

*Don't you see?*

Well I don't want to stumble,

*Don't you see?*

Well I don't want to fall,

I read that writin' on de wall,

*Don't you see?*

The “Home in the Rock” and the “Rock of ages” mean little to the negroes; they are suitable terms and appeal to their sense of sound. Like other peoples, the negroes have inserted them into their religion as forceful symbols. Interesting comparisons may be made

in a later chapter. The chorus of "Heaven" hummed in a monotone, with lips sometimes closed, makes a beautiful song, and one that appeals much to both old and young negroes.

You got a robe, I got a robe,  
All God's children got a robe,  
Goin' try on my robe an' if it fits me,  
Goin' to wear it all round God's heaven.

*Heaben—heaben, ev'ybody goin' to heaben  
An' I 'm goin' dere, too.*

Gamblers dere an' gamblers here,  
I'm so glad dat God declare,  
Dere ain't no gamblers in heaven.

This version and wording is rather that of the children, who are very fond of singing it. They continue "Heaven so high you can't go over it", "Heaven so low you can't go under it", "Heaven so deep you can't go through it", and "Heaven so wide you can't go round it". The most common form of the song is a variation of the above. *Sinners, gamblers, dancers, liars, drunkards are everywhere*, but not in Heaven.

Well there are sinners here and sinners there,  
An' there are sinners everywhere,  
But I thank God that God declare,  
That there ain't no sinners in heaven.

*Heaven, Heaven,  
Everybody talkin' 'bout heaven an' goin' there,  
Heaven, Heaven,  
Goin' to shine all 'round God's heaven.*

Well there are drunkards here an' drunkards there,  
An' there are drunkards everywhere,  
But I'm so glad that God declare,  
There ain't no drunkards in heaven.

*Heaven, Heaven,  
Preachers all preachin' 'bout heaven an' goin' there,  
Heaven, Heaven,  
Goin' to shine all 'round God's heaven.*

As has been indicated, many of the negro songs consist of single lines repeated in couplets or by fours in order to give length to the singing. The most simple sentences that could be devised may serve as a good song. The negro happens to think of an ordinary truth; he then sings it to his tune and chorus.

I'm goin' to be a Christian if I keep a prayin' on,  
 I goin' to be a Christian if I keep a prayin' on,  
 I goin' to be a Christian, I'm goin' to be a Christian,  
 I goin' to be a Christian if I keep a prayin' on.

An' when I git religion, I goin' to keep a prayin' on.

I goin' to see my Jesus if I keep a prayin' on.

I goin' to see my mother if I keep a prayin' on.

In the same way he is "going to see" his *father, brother, master, preacher*, singing each line four times, altering them as he desires and putting in any chorus that appeals to his fancy. The next song shows a typical variation of a line, and the negro sometimes sings the second version with more determination than the first.

Lord, I want to go to heaven fer to stan' my trials,  
 Lord, I want to go to heaven fer to stan' my trials,  
 Yes, I want to go to heaven fer to stan' my trials,  
*Great Judgment day.*

Well, *I'm goin'* to heaven fer to stan' my trials,  
 An' *I'm goin'* to heaven fer to stan' my trials,  
 Yes, *I'm goin'* to heaven fer to stan' my trials,  
*Great Judgment day.*

The darkeys used to sing, "Hail, hail, hail, I'm gwine jine saints above, I'm on my journey home". So, too, in many of their songs the "promise lan'" was held out as the goal of future happiness. So it is to-day. "On my journey home" and "Goin' to Heaven" represent the common conception.

Sister when you pray you mus' pray to de Lord,  
 For I hab some hopes ob glory,  
*I feel like, I feel like I'm on my journey home,*  
*I feel like, I feel like, I'm on my journey home.*

*I'll away, I'll away to de promise lan',*  
*My Father calls me, I mus' go,*  
*To meet Him in de promise lan'.*

I have a father in the promise lan',  
 Go meet him in de promise lan',  
*I feel like, I feel like I'm on my journey home,*  
*I feel like, I feel like I'm on my journey home.*

So, too, the singer has a *mother, a sister, an auntie* and others in the "promise lan'". Likewise he says instead of "sister when you pray," etc., *brother, member, mourner, sinner, preacher*, and the others.

As a rule morning signified to the negroes the time for going to heaven and for the resurrection. The morning star shining as a witness to his conversion, and the midnight dew typified the early morning time of his religion. "In the morning" is sung as of old.

I have been tempted, *O yes,*  
 An' I have been tried, *O yes,*  
 I have been to the river an' been baptize,  
 An' I want to go to heaven in the morning.

*Won't you ride on Jesus?*  
*Ride on Jesus, ride on crowning King,*  
*For I want to go to heaven in the morning.*

If you see my mother, *O yes,*  
 Please tell her for me, *O yes,*  
 That the angels in heaven done change my name,  
 An' I want to go to heaven in the morning.

So if you see "*brother John, sister Nancy,*" and others makes the song complete. The song once so popular, "Yes, I'll be dere, When gen'ral roll call" is still heard occasionally. Many of these songs have been corrupted and changed, consolidated and revised into new songs. Such a song is "Study war no mo'", which combines the old camp meeting, "down by the river side", and a new element of *peace*, the origin of which is not known.

Well there 's goin' to be a big camp meetin',  
 Well there 's goin' to be a big camp meetin',  
 Well there 's goin' to be a big camp meetin',  
 Down by the river side.

*Well, I ain't goin' to study war no mo',*  
*Well, I ain't goin' to study war no mo',*  
*Well, I ain't goin' to study war no mo'.*

Well such a shoutin' an' prayin'  
 Down by the riverside.

Well I goin' to meet my sister,  
 Down by the riverside.

Well the brothers got to shoutin',  
 Down by the riverside.

Said the old singers: "Some o' dese mornin's, hope I'll see my mother, hope I'll jine de ban', hope I'll walk bout Zion, Talk wid de angels, Talk my trouble over" while they looked "away to heb-ben". Now the negro sings:

Gwine to weep, gwine to mourn,  
Gwine to git up early in de morn,  
Fo' my soul's goin' to heaven jes' sho 's you born,  
Brother Gabriel goin' to blow his horn.

Goin' to sing, goin' to pray,  
Goin' to pack all my things away,  
For my soul 's goin' to heaven jes' sho 's you born,  
Brother Gabriel gwine ter blow his horn.

“Pray come an' go wid me” sings the Christian, for “I'm on my journey home to the New Jerusalem”. If refused he says, “Now don't let me beg you to follow me, for I'm on my journey home”, and finally he sings, Well, brother come an' go wid me.” If the sinner needs other exhortation he may listen to the mixed song “Dry bones goin' to rise ergain”, in which there is first warning, then hope of glory.

Some go ter meetin' to sing an' shout,  
*Dry bones goin' ter rise again;*  
Fore six month deys all turned out,  
*Dry bones goin' ter rise again.*  
*O little chillun, O little childun,*  
*O lit'le childun, dry bones goin' rise ergin.*

Talk erbout me but taint my fault,  
Dry bones goin' ter rise ergin;  
But me an' Godermighty goin' walk an' talk,  
Dry bones goin' ter rise ergin.

Ef you want ter go to heaven when you die,  
Dry bones goin' rise ergin;  
Jes' stop yo' tongue from tellin' lies,  
Dry bones goin' ter rise ergin.

In the old plantation song Ezekiel was represented down in a valley “full of bones as dry as dust” and

He gib de bone a mighty shake,  
Fin' de ole sinners too dry to quake,

Death for the Christian is *shouting*: death for the sinner is *doom*. “When I git to heaven, goin' shout on my knees” gives an accurate picture of what the negro conceives to be happiness. But he not only expects to shout while on earth and when he gets home, but even when he dies. For says he,

My mother dies a shoutin', an' I goin' die shoutin', too,  
Yes, my mother died a shoutin' an' I goin' die shoutin', too,

My mother died a shoutin', my mother died a shoutin',  
 Yes, my mother died a shoutin' an' I goin' die shoutin', too.

Still his mother is not the only one who has died shouting; he sings in the same way of *father, preacher, brother, sister* and others; the slave song included "*Missus*" and "*Marster*" or "*Massa*". But shouting must not be all. The negro and his brothers, sisters, mother are all to die "*mournin'*", and "*prayin'*". In "*Join de Heaven wid de Angels*" the rich voice of one or two leaders and the swelling chorus produce an effect scarcely surpassed.

O join on, join my Lord,  
*Join de heaven wid de angels;*  
 O join on, join my Lord,  
*Join de heaven wid de angels.*

What kin' er shoes is dem you wear?  
*Join de heaven wid de angels;*  
 Dat you kin' walk upon de air,  
*Join de heaven wid de angels.*

Oh, God don't talk like a nat'al man,  
 Join de heaven wid de angels;  
 He talk to de sinner, he understan',  
 Join de heaven wid de angels.

I'm Baptis' bred an' I'm Baptis' bo'n,  
 Join de heaven wid de angels;  
 An' when I die dey's a Baptis' gone,  
 Join de heaven wid de angels.

Jes' so de tree fall jes' so it lie,  
 Join de heaven wid de angels;  
 Jes so de sinner lib' jes' so he die,  
 Join de heaven wid de angels.

The song has been found in several forms among which one has it that *John* is to be in de heavens with the angels. In fact the probable origin of "join on" seems to have been "John saw de heaven wid de angels". In one of the old songs the singer answers,

Dem shoes I wears is gospel shoes,  
*View de lan', view de lan';*  
 An' you can wear dem if you choose,  
 View de lan', view de lan'.

There are other references, too, besides the above, to the denominations of the negro churchmen. It has already been seen that the negro likes "bes'" the "shoutin' Mefodes'". So he says "There's fire in de



eas' an' fire in de wes ; An' fire among de Methodes'". He is loyal and proclaims : " Methodist, Methodist is my name, Methodist till I die, I'll be baptize in the Methodist name, An' I 'll lib' on the Methodist side". In the same way he is *Baptist* and *Presbyterian* ; the *Baptist* is the favorite church of the negro, however, and there are more Baptists than all other denominations combined.

The "Angel Band", while a very simple song in which the chorus constitutes the greater part, is one of the most beautiful that the negroes sing. The tune is a variation of a well-known hymn used by the whites. The power of the song seems to lie in the tender interest which centres about the vivid portrayal of the little angels in the heavenly band. The chorus is repeated after each stanza, while each stanza itself is the repetition of a single line. From one to ten ; from ten to twenty and so on to one hundred is ordinarily sung, thus making a lengthy song. The children love to sing the chorus ; two forms are ordinarily found, varying the monotony enough to please the negro.

*Dere's one little, two little, three little angels,  
Dere's four little, five little, six little angels.  
Dere's seven little, eight little, nine little angels,  
Dere's ten little angels in de band.  
Dere's leben, dere's twelve, dere's thir'een little angels,  
Dere's fourteen, dere's fifteen, dere's sixteen little angels.  
Dere's seventeen, dere's eighteen, dere's nineteen little angels,  
Dere's twenty little angels in de band.*

The "little" in the chorus is preferred to the "dere's" as a rule, apparently serving to describe the angels. The stanzas of the song are equally as unlimited and as simple as the chorus. "Sunday morning" is the common factor to all of the verses ; sometimes it is omitted.

Jesus rose on Sunday mornin',  
Jesus rose on Sunday mornin',  
Jesus rose on Sunday mornin',  
On Sunday mornin' so soon.

He rose an' flew away on Sunday mornin'.

My mother died on Sunday mornin'.

Oh was n't that sad on Sunday mornin'?

Dere's goin' to be a big camp meetin' on Sunday mornin'.

Dere's goin' to be a mournin' on Sunday mornin'.

Mourners got to shoutin' on Sunday mornin'.  
 I'm goin' away to leave you on Sunday mornin'.  
 Well, my sister's goin' to heaven on Sunday mornin'.

While this form of the song may be continued indefinitely, other verses may also be inserted. Instead of the "On Sunday mornin'" is often substituted "Fer to see my Lord".

Well, my sister's goin' to heaven fer to see my Lord,  
 To see my Lord, to see my Lord;  
 Well, my sister 's goin' to heaven fer to see my Lord,  
 What's de onbelievin' soul?

And so he continues with *preacher, brother, mother, auntie* and any others that he wishes to enumerate. As a shouting song or as a "collection" song, it is not surpassed.

The negro's fancies of the "Heaven's bright home" are not exceeded by the world's fairy tales. There are silver and golden slippers; there are crowns of stars and jewels and belts of gold. There are robes of spotless white and wings all bejewelled with heavenly gems. Beyond the jasper seas he will outshine the sun; the golden streets and the fruit of the tree of life are far superior to any golden apples or silver pears of a Mother Goose. In fact the negro's fairy stories centre on heaven; the children's definitions of heaven consisted entirely of pictures of splendor and glory. To this place the negro imagines he will go and who knows but that he may fly there?

Some o' dese mornin's bright an' fair,  
*Way in de middle of de air;*  
 Gwi' hitch on my wings an' try de air,  
*Way in de middle of de air.*

*Come over, den, John saw de holy number,*  
*Way in de middle of de air;*  
*John saw de holy number,*  
*Way in de middle of de air;*

If yer wanter dream dem heavenly dreams,  
 Way in de middle of de air;  
 Lay yo' head on Jord'n's stream,  
 Way in de middle of de air.

I got a book goin' read it thru',  
 Way in de middle of de air,  
 I got my Jesus well as you,  
 Way in de middle of de air.

With a golden “band all round his waist, An’ de palms ob victory in a-his hands”, the negro sings in reality: “Pray come an’ go wid me”, for so vivid is his picture that he has been known to start up a post or pillar in the church, saying, “Good bye brothers, I’m gone”. His songs make much of flying; different from that just quoted he repeats:

*One mornin’ soon,  
One mornin’ soon, my Lord,  
One mornin’ soon,  
I goin’ try the air,  
I goin’ try the air,  
Pray come an’ go wid me.*

Well I got on my travellin’ shoes,  
Well I got on my travellin’ shoes,  
Well I got on my travellin’ shoes,  
Pray come an’ go wid me.

He sings, too, “I goin’ to put on my long white robe”, “We’ll try on de slippah shoe an’ wear de golden belt”. Again he sings of his doings in the *morning*, *noontime*, and *midnight*.

In the morning—um-u’,  
In the morning—um-u’,  
In the morning—um-u’,  
I goin’ put on my golden shoes.

In the midnight—um-u’,  
In the midnight—um-u’,  
In the midnight—um-u’,  
I goin’ put on my long white robe.

Talk about it—um-u’,  
Talk about it—um-u’,  
Talk about it—um-u’,  
I goin’ wear that starry crown.

The angels and Jesus wear the starry crown and long white robes; there will be no separating line between us and God in the new world. “Oh how I long to go dere, too”, sang the old negroes. Now he pictures again the appearance of Jesus.

Jesus, he wore the starry crown,  
Jesus he wore the starry crown,  
Jesus he wore the starry crown, starry crown.

How does you know he wore the crown?  
How does you know he wore the crown?  
How does you know he wore the crown? wore the crown?

For the Bible it tell me so,  
 For the Bible it tell me so,  
 For the Bible it tell me so, tell me so.

Then, too, Jesus "he wore the long white robe, for the Bible it tell me so." More than the *world* or *riches* or *dress* the singer claims he values the treasures of heaven. In this assertion he is doubtless sincere, both because he is thinking only of his religious state while he sings, and because he has little opportunity for obtaining these earthly riches. Says he :

I don't care for riches,  
 Neither dress so fine,  
 Jes' giv' me my long white robe,  
 An' I want my starry crown.

*For my Lord done bin here,  
 Done bless my soul an' gone away.*

Po' man goin' to heaven,  
 Rich man goin' to hell,  
 For po' man got his starry crown,  
 Rich man got his wealth.

This "ole worl' bin a hell to me" indicates the contrast between the everyday life of the world and that which the negro will enjoy after death. In his eagerness and impatience to rest in the "promise lan'," the negro does not always think kindly of the world and he does not care even though "Death is in dis lan'."

Ever since my Lord has set me free,  
*Death is in dis lan',*  
 This ole worl' bin a hell to me,  
*Death is in dis lan'.*

*I'm so glad death is in dis lan',  
 I'm so glad death is in dis lan'.*

O run 'long mourner 'n git yo' crown,  
*Death is in dis lan',*  
 By yo' father's side set down,  
*Death is in dis lan'.*

Some er dese mornin's bright and fair,  
*Death is in dis lan',*  
 Gwin' r hitch on my wings an' try de air,  
*Death is in dis lan'.*

If the negro expects to go to heaven and there mingle with God, the angels and his loved ones, he also expects to sing in all the glory

and splendor imaginable. The negroes used to sing of “jinin’ de association, climbin’ Jacob’s ladder, climbin’ higher an’ higher, sittin’ down at de welcome table, feastin’ off’n milk an’ honey, tell God how you served me, jine de big baptizin”, after which “den my little soul gwine shine.” So they sang of a mother, father, brother in heaven who “outshines de sun”, and ended by declaring that when they got to heaven “we will outshine de sun.” In very much the same way the negroes sing to-day in one of their favorites, “Goin’ to Outshine de Sun.”

Well, my mother’s goin’ to heaven,  
She’s goin’ to outshine the sun, *O Lord*,  
Well, my mother’s goin’ to heaven,  
She’s goin’ to outshine the sun,  
Yes, my mother’s goin’ to heaven to outshine the sun,  
An’ it’s way beyon’ the moon.

You got a home in the promise lan’,  
Goin’ to outshine the sun, *O Lord*,  
An’ it’s way beyon’ the moon.

The crown that my Jesus give me,  
Goin’ to outshine the sun, *my Lord*,  
An’ it’s way beyond the moon.

Goin’ to put on my crown in glory,  
An’ outshine the sun, *O Lord*.  
’Way beyon’ de moon.

Other verses sing of putting on slippers, long white robe, in each case the singer is to “outshine the sun.” The dazzling splendor of it all makes anticipation full of staying qualities; it makes the picture one of reality because of the vigor of an imaginative power. Who knows if the negroes often dream of the grandeurs of the sky?

The negro uses many figures and symbols in his religion. He can see the chariot wheel and the chariot of fire taking him to heaven as easily as Elijah. He can imagine that he, too, can ascend even as Christ and the angels. Besides these methods he has the Gospel Train and the Ship of Zion. The train has much fascination for the negro; much will be seen of this in his social songs. It is but natural that he should bring it into his religious songs. The negro often goes to meet the train at the station, even when sick. It is a great social event of a Sunday. So again, he wishes to go on an excursion; few things can hinder him. Very much in the same strain is the religious song, “When the train come along.”

Well, I may be sick an' cannot rise,  
But I meet you at de station when de train come along.

*When de train come along,  
When de train come along,  
I 'll meet you at de station when de train come along.*

Well, I may be blind an' cannot see,  
But I meet you at de station when de train come along.

Well, I may be lame and cannot walk,  
But I 'll meet you at de station when de train come along.

While no mention is made of the exact kind of train, it is generally understood to mean the Gospel train. This song also has a popular variant which is used in a secular way. In either case it expresses in a very forceful way the importance of meeting the train. In proportion as a picture resembles real life or magnifies that which has been imaged, to that degree does it bring home its truth to the negro's mind. The negro continues to sing of the train on which he is to ride into the Kingdom. Says he :

I am talkin' 'bout the same train,  
Same train that carried my father,  
*Same train.*

Same train that carried my mother,  
*Same train,*  
Same train will be back to-morrow,  
*Same train.*

Same train will be here to-morrow,  
*Same train,*  
Well you better be ready,  
*It's the same train.*

The "same train" also carried his *brother, sister, preacher* and others. But the train which will come back to-morrow will not wait always. One must not only be at the station but must also have a ticket. There is plenty of room, according to the negro's conception, but there is not plenty of time. It would be a wistful negro that looked upon the train pulling out for heaven and he all alone is left behind. He sings,

Well you better git yo' ticket,  
Well you better git yo' ticket,  
Well you better git yo' ticket,  
Bye and bye.

There 's a great day er comin',  
There 's a great day er comin',  
There 's a great day er comin',  
Bye and bye.

For the train it 's er comin',  
For the train it 's er comin',  
For the train it 's er comin',  
Bye and bye.

*I am sure God is ready,*  
*I am sure God is ready,*  
*I am sure God is ready,*  
*Bye and bye.*

Instead of the chorus just given he often sings: "I sure God am ready," and "I sho' God is ready." With this in view he is willing and glad for the train to come along. If he is ready, all the better for him to be on his journey. So he continues in another song and at another time:

If God was to call me I would not care—um-u',  
For he done move away my fears—um-u'.  
I 'm goin' to heaven, an' I 'm goin' fo' long—um-u',  
All don't see me will hear my song—um-u'.  
When de gospel train come 'long—um-u',  
That 's the train carry me home—um-u'.  
Wake up, sinner, you will be too late—um-u',  
Gospel train done pass yo' gate—um-u'.

In the old plantation songs the exhortation was given to "Git on board little children, dere 's room for many a mo'." So also they sang:

De gospel train 's a comin',  
I hear it jus' at hand,  
I hear de car wheels rumblin',  
An' rollin' thru de land.  
I hear de train a comin',  
She 's comin' round de curve,  
She 's loosened all her steam an' brakes,  
An' strainin' eb'ry nerve.  
De fare is cheap an' all can go,  
De rich an' pore are dere,  
No second class aboard dis train,  
No difference in de fare.‡

In addition to the above stanzas the Jubilee singers added others. They heard the bell and whistle and "she 's playin' all her steam an'

power.''' The rhyme and imagery of the old song struck a more responsive chord than the present song; this is due to the fact that the negro of to-day sings his railroad songs and enjoys them in his secular music. There he pictures the train with such vividness that the train may be easily heard and seen in his imagination. Other verses of the *Gospel Train* as it was sung by the Jubilee singers are :

There 's Moses and Noah and Abraham,  
And all the prophets, too,  
Our friends in Christ are all on board,  
O what a heavenly crew.

We soon shall reach the station,  
O how we then shall sing,  
With all the heavenly army,  
We'll make the welkin ring.

She 's nearing now the station,  
O sinner, don't be vain,  
But come an' get your ticket,  
And be ready for the train.

No signal for the other train,  
To follow on the line,  
O sinner, you 're forever lost,  
If once you 're left behind.

While the song as reported by the Jubilee singers does not possess the mere characteristics of form and dialect, it nevertheless appeals to the negroes and it is sometimes sung. One of the fears of the negro is that others may go to heaven and he be left behind. This, as has been indicated, constitutes the sum total of misery. So he has a number of songs in which he expresses this feeling and prays that he may not be left behind in the race of life for the eternal goal. One of the most touching of these songs represents the negro as an orphan who is unwilling to stay alone in the world :

My muther an' my father both are daid, both are daid,  
My muther an' my father both are dead,  
My mother an' my father both are dead,  
Good Lord, I cannot stay here by merself.

*I'm er pore little orphan chile in de worl', chile in de worl',  
I'm er pore little orphan chile in the worl',  
I'm a pore little orphan chile in de worl',  
Good Lord, I cannot stay here by merself.*



De train done whistled an' de cars done gone, cars done gone,  
De train done whistled an' de cars ere gone,  
De train done whistled an' de cars ere gone,  
*Ezekiel*, I cannot stay here by merself.

My brothers an' my sisters are all gone, all gone,  
My brothers an' my sister 're all gone, all gone,  
My brothers an' sisters all are gone,  
*Mer Jesus*, I cannot stay here by merself.

Git me ticket fer de train, fer de train,  
Git me ticket fer de train,  
*I got mer ticket fer de train*,  
*Thank God*, I *ain't gwine* stay here by merself.

Very much like the song just given the negroes used to sing: "Dar's room in dar, room in dar, room in de heaven, Lord, I can't stay behin'". So, too, "I can't or don't want to stay here no longer" are common and classic verses of negro song. Again they sang the "good news" because "De chariot's comin', I doan want her to leave a-me behind, Gwine get upon dat chariot, Carry me home". In a prayer the negro sang: "Jesus, don't leave me behind". In his songs to-day the negro says:

Dear brother, don't you leave,  
Dear brother, don't you leave,  
This ole world 's a hell to me.

*This cle world 's a hell to me,*  
*This ole world 's a hell to me.*

Yes, I bleedzed to leàve this world,  
Yes, I bleedzed to leave this world,  
Sister, I's bleedzed to leave this world,  
For it's a hell to me.

While the old negroes used to sing "Oh brother, sisters, mourners, don't stay away, For my Lord says there's room enough", the modern negro sings "You can't stay away".

*Sister, you can't stay away,*  
*Sister, you can't stay away,*  
*Sister, you can't stay away, stay away.*

My Lord is a callin' an' you can't stay away,  
My Lord is a callin' an' you can't stay away,  
Yes, my Lord is a callin' an' you can't stay away,  
An' you can't stay away.

King Jesus is a ridin' an' you can't stay away,  
*O preacher, you can't stay away.*

There have been a great many versions of the song "Ole Ship of Zion", none of which differ materially. The four or five versions most common in the slave and plantation song represented the Ship of Zion somewhat as follows: "She has landed many a thousand, She can land as many more, Do you think she will be able, For to take us all home? You can tell 'em I'm comin' home", "Dis de good ole ship of Zion, An' she's maken' fer de promise lan'". "She hab angels fer de sailors. An' how you know dey's angels? Dat ship is out a sailin' she's a sailin' mighty steady. She'll neither reel nor totter, She's a sailin' way cold Jordan. King Jesus is de captain, captain'". "De gospel ship is sailin', O Jesus is de captain, De angels are de sailors, O is yo' bundle ready? O have you got yo' ticket!" Another version has "her loaded down with angels"; Another "wid a-bright angels". Another asks what ship is that "you're enlisted upon"? and answers that it is the "Good ship of Zion", which "sails like she's heavy loaded", and "has King Jesus for the captain", and "the Holy Ghost is de pilot" The coast negroes had many songs that originated in ideas suggested by the boats. To-day the river negroes have songs of their own, but they do not go into the church songs. The Old Ship of Zion, however, is sung, but only as a remnant of the former song, less elaborate.

This ole ship is a reelin' an' a rockin',  
 This ole ship is a reelin' an' a rockin' rockin' rockin'  
 Makin' fer de promise lan'.

While the negro sings, he sees the ship reelin' an' rockin', and repeats these phrases enough and in a rhythmic manner, so that he imitates the imagined motion of the ship. The other stanzas of the song are practically the same as those of the earlier days.

*O my Lord, shall I be the one?*  
*O my Lord, shall I be the one?*  
*O my Lord, shall I be the one?*  
 Makin' for the promise lan'?

Yes, 't is that good ole ship of Zion, of Zion,  
 Yes, 't is that good ole ship of Zion, of Zion,  
 Yes, 't is that good ole ship of Zion,  
 Makin' for the promise lan'.

O the ship is heavy loaded, loaded, loaded,  
 Makin' for the promise lan'.  
 It's loaded with many er thousand, thousand, thousand,  
 Makin' fer the promise lan'.

“This ole worl’s a rollin’ ” is most likely a figure of the ship and modelled on the same song. However, it conveys a different idea, one of judgment and the end of the world. The negro sings :

Well the ole worl’ is a rollin’, rollin’, rollin’,  
Yes, the ole worl’ is rollin’, rollin’ away.

Well ain’t you goin’ to get ready?  
Yes, ain’t you goin’ to get ready? for it ’s rollin’ away.

Well get on board little children, children, children,  
Well get on board, for this ole worl’s rollin’ away.

He sings for the *sinner*, *mourner*, and all his *friends* and *relatives* to get on board the world as she rolls away. It reminds one somewhat of the song once current among the negroes: “O de ole ferry boat stan’ a-waitin’ at de landin’, Chilluns we’s e all gwine home”. The same feeling of motion and the end of the world as is indicated in the moving of the train, ship, and the world itself is also reflected in the opening of the graveyards and the rolling of the hearse wheel. The same rhythmic effect of motion and words give a strikingly appropriate attitude to the singer.

O the lightening flashin’ an’ the thunder rollin’, rollin’, rollin’,  
O the lightening flashin’ an’ thunder rollin’, rollin’, rollin’,  
O the light’ning flashin’ an’ thunder rollin’,  
Lawd, I know my time ain’t long; Lawd, I know my time ain’t long.

The hearse wheel rollin’ an’ graveyard openin’, openin’, openin’,  
The hearse wheel rollin’ an’ graveyard openin’, openin’, openin’,  
The hearse wheel rollin’ an’ the graveyard openin’,  
Lawd, I know my time ain’t long, my time ain’t long.

And very much like the above song is “Every Day”. However, it is so similar to other songs that one concludes that it is only a putting together of what the singer already knew. The Bahama negroes have a song, “If hev’ry day was judgment day”, that is almost exactly the same in meaning as this one. The song, however, is a powerful one and seems to be gaining in popularity.

Well the hearse wheel rollin’,  
*Every day, every day,*  
Carryin’ yo’ brother to the graveyard,  
*Every day, every day—move, Zion, move.*

Well ain’t it a pity, pity?  
Every day, every day,

Well ain't it a pity, ain't it a pity?  
 Every day, every day, *move, Zion, move.*

Well they 're carryin' a sinner, sinner,  
 Every day, every day,

Yes, they 're carryin' a sinner,  
 Every day, every day, *move, Zion, move.*

Move, Zion, move, for you got to go to judgment,  
 Every day, every day,

Move, Zion, move, for you got to go to judgment,  
 Every day, every day, *move, Zion, move.*

The getting of mail, and especially of letters, usually means much to the negroes; perhaps simply because they receive little mail. To have a letter from a distinguished person is superlative honor and the recipient usually makes the fact known generally. Just how the negro conceived of receiving letters from God, or why he imagined the angels and apostles as writing letters does not appear clear. One gets a letter, another reads it; one writes a letter and all know its contents. Such a reference is found in a number of songs, that serve as a warning or admonition.

Well my mother got a letter, O yes,  
 Well she could not read it, O yes,  
 What you reckon that letter said?  
 That she didn't have long to stay here.

*Won't you come, won't you come?  
 Won't you come an' get ready to die?  
 Won't you come, for my Lord is callin' you?*

How do you know that my Lord is callin', O yes?  
 If you look at this letter, O yes,  
 You see it come from the Hebrews, O yes,  
 Won't you come, for my Lord is callin' you.

Perhaps the idea of the letter came from the *epistles* of the New Testament. John and Peter wrote letters; Mary and Martha read them. The letters of the Hebrews and Ephesians are spoken of. The idea "It just suits me" seems to have sprung up from satisfaction in reading the "word" or in hearing the sermon and praying in the usual way.

John wrote a letter and he wrote it in haste,  
*An' it jus' suit me:*  
 John wrote a letter and he wrote it in haste,  
*An, it jus' suit me.*

John wrote a letter and he wrote it in haste,  
If yer want to go to heaven yer better make haste,  
*An' it jus' suit me.*

I'll tell you a little thing that was in that letter,  
*An' it jus' suit me.*

I'll tell you a little thing that was in John's letter,  
The Holy Ghost came to make us better,  
*An' it jus' suit me.*

In the same form and repetition are sung other stanzas, all of which  
"suit" the negroes pretty well.

If this is n't the Holy Ghost I don't know,  
I never felt such a love befo',  
*But it jus' suit me.*

O my brother, you oughter been at de pool,  
To see me put on my gospel shoes,  
*An' it jus' suit me.*

Ezekiel said he spied the train a comin',  
We got on board an' she never stopped runnin',  
*An' it jus' suit me.*

This kind er religion is better than gold,  
It's better felt than ever told,  
*An' it jus' suit me.*

I tell you a little thing you can't do,  
You can't serve God and the devil, too,  
*But it jus' suit me.*

When trouble is done an' conflict have passed,  
I rise to reign in peace at last,  
*An' it jus' suit me.*

By this time the singers are happy enough and the preacher joins them in shouting, "Yes, brethren, it just suits me." It is gratifying to the negroes that their sins have been "washed in the blood of the Lamb", as indeed it ought to be. Perhaps they give it its undue prominence without thought; for they have no conception of the seriousness of their claims. The negro singers have exhibited a characteristic specimen of their *word combinations, concrete pictures, and theological principles* in their song, "De blood done sign my name."

*O de blood, O de blood,  
O de blood done sign my name;  
O Jesus said so, Jesus said so,  
O de blood done sign my name.*

I believe it for God he tole me,  
*That the blood done sign my name,*  
 I believe it for God he tole me,  
*That the blood done sign my name,*  
*Yes, the blood done sign my name.*

How do you know so, God he said so  
*That the blood done sign my name.*

Well it's written in de Kingdom,  
*That the blood done sign my name.*

Well in de Lamb's book it is written,  
*That the blood done sign my name.*

Well the wheels a turnin', wheels a turnin',  
*Blood done sign my name.*

I'm boun' for glory, boun' for glory,  
*The blood done sign my name.*

On de mountain, on de mountain,  
*The blood done sign my name.*

In the valley, in the valley,  
*Blood done sign my name.*

But the Christian does not have an easy time after his conversion. Satan is always at hand and ready to lead him away if there is a chance. The negro's idea of satan and the devil has been noted. In his march songs the negro imagines that he is marching against his foe; this foe is sometimes satan himself. "The other world is not lak' dis" is a typical marching song.

I er's walkin' 'long de oder day,  
 De udder worl' is not lak' dis,  
 I met ole satan on de way,  
 De udder worl' is not lak' dis,  
 He said, "Young man, you 're too young to pray",  
 De udder worl' is not lak' dis.

*Tell all dis worl',*  
*Tell all dis worl',*  
*Tell all dis worl',*  
*De odder worl' is not lak' dis.*

As I went down in de valley to pray,  
 De udder worl' is not lak' dis,  
 I met a little looker on de way,  
 De udder worl' is not lak' dis,  
 He said: "Look out fer de Judgment day",  
 De udder worl' is not lak' dis.

Another marching song that is a rousing one is "Goin' down to Jord'n". It represents, like the one just given, the attributes of satan and his relation to the Christian. The scene as pictured, the army marching on down to Jordan, the imaginary foe, and the rhythm of the song make it a favorite.

Halleluyer to the Lam',  
Goin' on down to Jordan,  
Lord God's on that givin' han',  
Goin' on down to Jordan.

*Goin' down to Jordan,  
Goin' down to Jordan,  
I got my breas'plate, sword an' shield,  
Goin' down to Jordan,  
Boldly marchin' thru' the field,  
Goin' on down to Jordan*

I plucked one block out'n satan's wall,  
Goin' on down to Jordan,  
I heard him stumble an' saw him fall,  
Goin' on down to Jordan.

Ole satan 's a liar an' a conjurer, too,  
Goin' on down to Jordan,  
If you don't mind he 'll conjure you,  
Goin' down to Jordan.

Ole satan mad an' I am glad,  
He missed a soul he thought he had.

Ole satan thought he had me fast,  
Broke his chain an' I m free at last.

I 've landed my feet on Jordan's sho',  
Now I'm free forever mo',  
*Goin' on down to Jordan.*

Something has been observed about the negro's attitude toward the crucifixion. The old songs asked: "Wus you dere when dey crucified my Lord? When dey put the crown of thorns on?" and other scenes. In some of the songs the negroes sang "*I wus dere when*", etc., while still others only affirm the facts. The songs of the present generation of negroes are less vivid and less full of feeling for the suffering of the Master. Some of the verses are similar to those of the plantation songs.

He carried his cross, he carried his cross,  
Up Zion hill, up Zion hill,

He carried his cross, he carried his cross,  
 Up Zion hill, up Zion hill,  
 He carried his cross up Zion hill, Zion hill, Zion hill.

They put on him the thorny crown (3),  
 Then they nail my Jesus down,  
 They nail him down, nail him down, nail him down,  
 They lif' the cross high in the air (3),  
 To show the worl' how they nail him there,  
 How they nail him there, nail him there, nail him there.

A peculiar corruption of this song represents the prodigal son as being in the place of Christ; now it is the prodigal, now it is the Lord. It indicates the manner of the development of many of these songs, and shows something of the insignificance of the words on the minds of the singers. He sings with his holy laugh:

Yes, the prodigal son come home, ha, ha,  
 Yes, the prodigal son come home, ha, ha,  
 The prodigal son come home by hisself,  
 An' they nail him to the cross, ha, ha,  
 An' they nail him to the cross, ha, ha,  
 An' they nail him to the cross on that day.  
 An' the blood come runnin' down, ha, ha,  
 The blood come runnin' down, ha, ha,  
 An' the blood come runnin' down, on that day.  
 An' they kill the fat'nin' calf, ha, ha,  
 An' they kill the fat'nin' calf, ha, ha,  
 They kill the fat'nin' calf on that day.  
 An' they carried my Lord away, ha, ha,  
 An' they carried my Lord away, ha, ha,  
 They carried my Lord away, by hisself.

Paul and Silas, Peter and John are models for proper contemplation. One of the old songs represented Peter and Paul as bound in jail. "Togedda dey sung, togedda dey prayed, De Lawd he heard how dey sung an' prayed. Den humble yo'selves, de bell done rung." "Paul an' Silas bound in jail, The Christians pray both night and day," represented another song, one version of which has survived and is current to-day. Most of the song consists in repetitions.

Paul and Silas bound in jail,  
 Paul and Silas bound in jail,  
 Paul and Silas bound in jail,  
 Paul and Silas bound in jail.



Paul did pray one mournful prayer (4).

Don't you wish you could pray like Paul?(4)

He prayed an' the good Lord set him free (4).

Another version prays for the *angels* to come down and *unlock* the door of the jail. It has a striking parallel among the secular songs and might have been composed with the idea of the negro in jail as being rescued.

Come down angel with the key,  
Come down angel with the key,  
My Lord, angel, come down with the key.

Unlock the door for me-e-e,  
Unlock the door for me-e-e,  
My Lord, unlock the door for me.

Paul and Silas is in jail,  
Paul and Silas is in jail,  
My Lord, Paul and Silas is in jail.

Unlock the jail-house door,  
Unlock the jail-house door-oor,  
My Lord, unlock the jail house door.

Among those of the Bible who have been the special subject of song, Noah has a prominent place. References to him have been made already. He is always the hero of the flood. In most of the songs wherein a special character has an important part, it is in the chorus or refrain. So in "Fohty days an' nights'", a general mixture of songs and ideas, Noah and the flood make the chorus.

Dey calls bro' Noah a foolish man,  
*Fohty days an' nights,*  
He built de ark upon de lan',  
*Fohty days an' nights.*

*En, ho, ho, did n't it rain?*  
*O yes, you know it did.*  
*Ho, ho, did n't it rain?*  
*O yes, you know it did.*

Ole Satan wears a iron shoe,  
Hit's fohty days an' nights,  
Ef you don't mind gwine slip it on you,  
Fohty days an' nights.

Some go to meetin' to put on pretense,  
*Fohty days an' nights,*  
Until de day ob grace is spent,  
*Fohty days an' nights.*

## HOWARD W. ODUM

Some go to meetin' to sing an' shout,  
*Fohty days an' nights,*

Fo' six months dey 'll be turned out,  
*Fohty days an' nights.*

I tell you brother an' I tell you twice,  
*It's fohty days an' nights,*  
 My soul done anchored in Jesus Christ,  
*Fohty days an' nights.*

If you git dar befo' I do,  
*Forty days an' nights,*  
 Look out fer me I 'se comin' too,  
*Fohty days an' nights.*

You baptize Peter an' you baptize Paul,  
*It's fohty days an' nights,*  
 But de Lord-God-er-mighty gwine baptize all,  
*It's fohty days an' nights.*

Another version in one of the old songs says: "Some go to church to laugh and talk, but dey knows nuthin' 'bout de Christian's walk". "De Ole Ark a-moverin'" was the title of a plantation song which gave the story of Noah and the flood. Noah and his sons "went to work upon dry lan'", and everything went according to the original "plan".

Jes' wait a little while. I'm gwine tell you 'bout de ole ark,  
 De Lord told Noah for to build him an ole ark,  
 Den Noah and his sons went to work upon dry lan',  
 Dey built dat ark jes' accordin' to comman',  
 Noah an' his sons went to work upon de timber,  
 De proud begin to laugh the silly to point de finger,  
 When de ark was finished jes' accordin' to plan,  
 Massa Noah took his family both animal an' man,  
 When de rain begin to fall and de ark begin to rise,  
 De wicked hung round wid der groans and der cries,  
 Fohty days and fohty nights de rain it kep' a fallin',  
 De wicked clumb de trees an' for help dey kep' callin',  
 Dat awful rain she stopped at las', de waters dey subsided,  
 An' dat ole ark wid all aboard on Ararat ridid.

This is the picture which the plantation and slave negro has made for his satisfaction. The present-day song that apparently originated in the above song is less elaborate, having only portions of the old song, and not being much in demand. It, too, is called "Didn't it rain?"

God told Noah 'bout de rainbow sign—  
*Lawl, did n't it rain?*

No more water but fier nex' time—  
*O did n't it rain? Halleluyer.*

*O did n't it rain, O did n't it rain?*  
*Halleluyer, did n't it rain?*  
*Some fohty days an' nights.*

Well it rain fohty days an' nights widout stoppin',  
*Lawd, did n't it rain?*

The sinner got mad 'cause the rain kept a droppin',  
*O did n't it rain? Halleluyer.*

Among the most interesting of all the negro spirituals are those which have been composed in recent years. These are significant in their bearing upon the temperament and religion of the present-day negro. These songs are efforts at poetry, while at the same time they unite biblical story with song. How they are often begun and for what purposes they are composed was mentioned in the previous discussion concerning the origin of negro songs. Further analysis of the form may be made in the study of the negro's mental imagery. The following song, which gets its name from the chorus, is entitled "My Trouble is Hard", and was composed by "Sister Bowers". It was printed on a single sheet for distribution; each person who contributed to the collection was entitled to a copy, or a copy could be had for a nickel. She sung her new song to the crowds wherever she went, and then was given a *pro-rata* of the collections. With the chorus repeated after each stanza, as the negroes always do, it becomes a song of unusual length:

I know a man that was here before Christ,  
 His name was Adam and Eve was his wife,  
 I'll tell you how this man lived a rugged life,  
 Just by taking this woman's advice.

*My trouble is hard, O yes,*  
*My trouble is hard, O yes,*  
*My trouble is hard, O yes,*  
*Yes indeed, my trouble is hard.*

Whilst you are sitting on your seat,  
 Let me tell you something that is sweet,  
 When all God's people in glory meet,  
 They will slip and slide the golden street.

Stop young man, I've something to say;  
 You know you're sinful and why don't you pray?  
 You're sinning against a sin-venged God,  
 Who has power to slay us all.

O Lord, aint it a pity—ain't it a shame—  
To see how my Lord and Saviour was slain?  
I hate to call the murderer's name,  
I know they are dead but left the stain.

Read the Scriptures and be content,  
You are bound to know what Jesus meant,  
John was here before his advent;  
Stood in the wilderness and cried "Repent".

Christ called his apostles two by two,  
He particularly told them what to do,  
Preach my gospel as I command you,  
And I 'll be with you all the way through.

Just me tell you what David done,  
Old man Jesse's youngest son:  
He slayed Goliath that mighty one,  
Ole Saul pursued him but he had to run.

Ole Saul pursued poor David's life —  
It's a mighty good thing he had a wife,  
They went to his house and did surround  
And she took a rope and let him down.

God called Jonah in a powerful way,  
He told old Jonah just what to say;  
Tell them people if they don't pray,  
I'll destroy the city of Nineveh.

Just let me tell you how this world is fixed,  
Satan has got it so full of tricks,  
You can go from place to place,  
Everybody 's runnin' down the colored race.

Almost equally interesting is "That's another Witness for my Lord." It will be noticed in these songs that references and phrases taken from the old songs are often used, but in different combinations. They thus lose their former worth. It will be interesting, too, to compare the negro's religious conceptions of the Bible and God as expressed in these songs with those expressed in the older productions: Has he advanced in his theology?

Read in Genesis, you understand,  
Methuselah was the oldest man,  
Lived nine hundred and sixty-nine,  
Died and went to heaven in due time.

*Methuselah is a witness for my Lord,  
Methuselah is a witness for my Lord.*

You read about Sampson from his birth,  
Strongest man that lived on the earth,

'Way back yonder in ancient times,  
He slayed three thousand of the Philistines.

Sampson he went wanderin' about,  
For his strength had n't been found out,  
His wife dropped down upon her knees,  
Said: "Sampson, tell me where your strength lies, please."

Delila' talked so good and fair;  
He told her his strength lie in his hair;  
"Shave my head just as clean as your hands,  
And my strength 'll be like a nachual man's."

*Was n't that a witness for my Lord?*  
*Was n't that a witness for my Lord?*

Isaiah mounted on de wheel o' time,  
Spoke to God-er-mighty way down the line:  
Said, "O Lord, to me reveal,  
How can this vile race be healed?"

God said: "Tell the sons of men,  
Unto them 'll be born a king,  
Them that believe upon his Way,  
They shall rest in the latter day."

*Isaiah was a witness for my Lord,*  
*Isaiah was a witness for my Lord.*

There was a man amongst the Pharisees,  
Named Nicodemus and he did n't believe,  
He went to the Master in the night,  
And told him to take him out er human sight.

"You are the Christ, I 'm sure it's true,  
For none do de miracles dat you do,  
But how can a man, now old in sin,  
Turn back still and be born again?"

Christ said, "Man, if you want to be wise,  
You 'd better repent and be baptized;  
Believe on me, the Son of Man,  
Then you will be born'd again."

*Was n't that a witness for my Lord?*  
*Was n't that a witness for my Lord?*

"After 'While" gives a slightly different form of verse, but with somewhat the same characteristics in other respects as those just given. There is little regularity in the metrical arrangement, but it makes a good song.

The worl' is full of forms and changes,  
It's just now so confuse,

You will find some danger  
 In everything you use:  
 But this is consolation to every blood washed child,  
 God's goin' to change our station after while.

*Afterwhile, afterwhile,  
 God's goin' to change our station, afterwhile.*

The devil tries to throw down  
 Everything that's good,  
 He'd fix a way to confine  
 The righteous if he could,  
 Thanks be to God almighty, he cannot be beguiled,  
 Ole satan will be done fightin' afterwhile.

Some men and women who help the world along,  
 By constantly complaining of everything that's done,  
 They want to be called Christians and all their badness hide,  
 God's goin' to open the secret afterwhile.

Preachers in their sermons stand up and tell the truth,  
 They'll go about and murmur with slander and abuse;  
 They want the whole arrangement to suit their selfish style,  
 God's goin' to rain down fire afterwhile.

In a general mixture of old song and new song, of old traits and new traits, the negro sings a beautiful song which he has called: "Whar' shall I be?" The usual imagery is seen.

Moses lived til he got old,  
*Whar' shall I be?*  
 Buried in de mountain, so I'm told,  
*Whar' shall I be?*

*Whar' shall I be when de fust trumpet sounds?*  
*Whar' shall I be when it sounds so loud?*  
*When it sound so loud that it wake up the dead,*  
*Whar' shall I be when it sounds?*

Well God showed Noar de rainbow sign,  
 Whar' shall I be?  
 No more water but fire nex' time,  
 Whar' shall I be?

Mathew, Mark, Luke and John,  
 Whar' shall I be?  
 Tole me whar' my Saviour gone;  
 Whar' shall I be?

John declar'd he saw a man,  
 Whar' shall I be?  
 Wid seven lamps in his right han',  
 Whar' shall I be?

The exact meaning of the following song could not be ascertained. It is apparently derived from some idea of the scriptural invocation and blessing upon the disciples. It is said to have a special message to the preacher, and is sometimes represented as being the words of God; at other times the encouragement of a friend and the reply.

Go and I will go with you;  
 Open your mouth and I'll speak for you;  
 If I go and tell them what you say they won't believe me.  
 Shout and I shout with you;  
 Throw out your arms and I catch you;  
 If they see you going with me, they won't believe on you.  
 So it's go and I go with you;  
 Open your mouth and I speak for you,  
 Shout and I shout with you,  
 Throw out your arms and I catch you,  
 If I go and tell them what you say they won't believe me.

Another song of the modern type seems to appeal to the negroes very strongly. Again he is seeing a vivid picture of the Christ in the long years ago. But just where he gets the exact ideas by which to make the combinations is a little doubtful. Perhaps he gets the central thought from the miracle of Cana.

If my mother ask you for me, tell her I gone to Gallerlee,  
 I ought to a been there four thousand years ago,  
 To drink of the wine.  
*Drinkin' of the wine, drinkin' of the wine,*  
*Drinkin' of the wine, Drinkin' of the wine,*  
*Christ was there four thousand years ago,*  
*Drinkin' of the wine.*

You may mourn, sinner, mourn, the Lord help you to mourn,  
 Christ was there four thousand years ago,  
 Drinkin' of the wine.

So, too, you may *moan, weep, cry, pray, brother, sister, father, mother, backslider*, and any others that the singer happens to think of, and the chorus, "Drinkin' of the wine," is the favorite refrain. Again in "The Blind Man" the picture is one of confusing the scriptural scenes with those of the present, and of placing himself in the stead of the central character of the story.

Well the blind man stood by the grave and cried,  
 Well the blind man stood by the wave and cried,  
 Yes, the blind man stood by the wave and cried.

He cried, "O Lord, don't you hear po' me?"  
 Hark, the blind man stood by the wave and cried,  
 He cried, "O Lord, don't you hear po' me?"

Brother don't you hear the blind cries, blind cries?  
 Brother don't you hear the blind cries, blind cries?  
 O brother, don't you hear the blind cries?

Jesus he give de blind man sight, blind man sight,  
 Jesus he give de blind man sight, blind man sight,  
 Yes, Jesus he give de blind man sight.

He also sings "*sister*, don't you hear," etc., *brother*, *father*, *preacher*. A peculiar modification of "Walking in the Light" is the song of the same name among the negroes, which seems to have its origin in the scriptural injunction, "Ye are the light of the world."

Let yo' light shine all over the world,  
 Walkin' in the light, beautiful light.

Mos' wonderful light, shine by night,  
 Let yo' light shine all over the world.

I am the light, most pitiful light,  
 Let yo' light shine all over the world.

Follow the light, mos' beautiful light,  
 Let yo' light shine all over the world.

Sinner, what you gwine do when the lamp stops burnin',  
 Let yo' light shine all over the world?

The negro prays to be remembered at Calvary; so, too, he asks to remember Calvary and the Lord. A single fragment of the old song remains:

O Lord remember me, remember Calvary,  
 For without any doubt and you remember the Lord,  
 I pray thee, Lord, remember me,  
 O Lord, remember me, remember Calvary.

The "Pilgrim's song" that has been considered so beautiful is still a favorite; the words of the stanzas differ little. It may be called a standard hymn of the negroes. There is a story that Bishop Allen, the founder of the A. M. E. church, composed the song on his dying bed. He was very well educated and a man of considerable ability and feeling. While the sadly hopeful words of the song are of a higher type than the average spiritual, and while its metrical form is far above the usual, the song still combines many of the ideas and phrases of the favorite spirituals of the slaves. One of these songs,



“I hope my mother will be there, In that beautiful world on high”, embodies the same sentiment and in similar words. Another, “Give ’way Jordan, I want to go across to see my Lord. I heard sweet music, I wish dat music would come here”, represents the other part of the song. The Pilgrim’s song as it is found is :

I am a poor way-faring stranger,  
While journeying through this world of woe,  
But there is no sickness, toil, nor danger,  
In that bright world to which I go.

*I’m going there to see my classmates,  
They said they ’d meet me when I come,  
I’m just a going over Jordan,  
I’m just going over home.*

I know dark clouds ’ll gather round me,  
I know my road is rough and steep,  
Yet there bright fields are lying just before me,  
Where God’s redeemed and vigils keep.

*I’m going there to see my mother,  
She said she ’d meet me when I come,  
I’m just going over Jordan,  
I’m just a going over home.*

I’ll soon be free, free every trial,  
My body will sleep in the old churchyard.  
I’ll quit the cross of self-denial,  
And enter in my great reward.

*I’m going there to see my mother,  
She said she ’d meet me when I come,  
I’m just a going over Jordan,  
I’m just going over home.*

The only differences in the versions of the old song and its present form is the substitution of “But” for “yet”, “and” for “their”, and “free” for “from”, “drop” for “quit” in the various lines. Very much in the same class of song is “Steal Away”. The present version is much the same in general as the old, of which there were several, differing only in minor details. There is in some of the church song books a version of the song; however, the most common verses now sung are :

O the green trees a-bowin’,  
An’ po’ sinner stan’ tremblin’,  
Well the trumpet soun’ in my soul,  
An’ I ain’t got long to stay here.

*O steal away, steal away,  
O steal away to my Jesus,  
Steal away, steal away,  
For I ain't got long to stay here.*

My Lord is a callin',  
Po' sinner he can't answer,  
Well, the trumpet sound in my soul,  
An' I ain't got long to stay here.

One of the most beautiful and at the same time simple and pathetic songs of the negroes is "Heal me, Jesus". Here the negro is at his typical best in prayer; without pretension, without reserve, claiming nothing, he simply pleads for his desire.

O Lord, I'm sick an' I want to be healed,  
O Lord, I'm sick an' I want to be healed,  
O Lord, I'm sick an' I want to be healed,  
O Lord, I'm sick an' I want to be healed.

*Heal me Jesus, heal me Jesus,  
Along the heavenly way,  
Heal me Jesus, heal me Jesus,  
Along the heavenly way.*

O Lord, I'm blind an' I want to see,  
O Lord, I'm blin' an' I wan' ter see,  
O Lord, I'm blin' an' I wan' 'er see,  
Heal me Jesus along the heavenly way.

O Lord, I'm crippl'd an' I wan' 'er walk,  
O Lord, I'm crippl'd an' I wan' 'er wa-a-a-l-k,  
O Lord, I'm cri-p-p-l-e-d an' I want 'er walk,  
Heal me Jesus along the heavenly way.

O Lord, I'm deaf an' I want to hear, etc.

The negroes are great believers in dress and uniform. Color, too, appeals to them as significant and the more strikingly distinct the color, the stronger impression it makes upon their imaginations. Chief among all others is the white which the angels wear; gold and purple, too, are concerned with the heavens. Among men red and black are strongest. This idea of color dressing has become interwoven in many of their songs. The rhyme helps to give the picture its vividness. The following song, with its variants, is still sung with considerable zest.

Who is that yonder all dressed in red?  
*I heard the angels singing;*

It look like the children Moses led,  
*I heard the angels singin'.*

*Down on my knees,  
Down on my knees,  
I heard the angels singing.*

Well who that yonder all dressed in black?  
I heard the angels singing;  
It look like it 's de mourner jus' got back,  
I heard the angels singing.

Yes' who 's that yonder all dressed in blue?  
It look like the children just come through.

Instead of "mourners jus' got back" the negroes sing "a sister, a sinner, a hypocrite, etc., jus' got back". Once the negroes sang: "Who's that yonder all dressed in black? Must be children of the Israelites", which is the common version for the answer to "Who's all them come dressed in white?" The songs almost invariably have a different chorus for the different versions and combinations. In one of the old songs, the above verses were sung to the chorus

Oh, what you say, John?  
Oh, what you say, John?  
Oh, what you say, John?  
*De ressurection drawin' nigh.*

with this last line as a refrain after each line of the song, just as above in "I heard the angels singing". In another of the old songs the chorus was:

Go, Mary, an' ring de bell,  
Come, John, and call de roll,  
I thank God.

The negro visualizes with a good deal of satisfaction. He imagines that he can see the things about which he sings. So they have imagined seeing the people dressed in white, black, red and blue; so he imagined that he could see "two tall angels comin' after me", or "big tall", "long tall", "band of angels" or whatever form the song has taken. So the negroes have told wonderful stories about the whale and the gourd vine; about the "cutter worm" as well as Jonah. The old song, modified and adapted with characteristic phraseology and expression still appeals to the negro.- The "Big fish" and "Sherk" represents the terror of the sea to the negro. One old darkey explained this fact by saying that it was because the negroes were terri-

fied as they were brought over from Africa, and that they saw the whales and "fishes" in "de sea" and that "de race hain't nebber got ober it yet". Another ascribes the fear and imagination much to the biblical story of the whale and Jonah. Perhaps neither determines to any marked degree this feeling. However, the song "Big fish swallow Jonah", which has made such a hit in its paraphrases and in the glee clubs, and variously, is still current in this form :

Lord, the big fish, big fish, big fish, swallow ole Jonah whole,  
The big fish, the big fish, the big fish swallow ole Jonah;  
The big fish, big fish, big fish, swallow ole Jonah whole.

*Ole Jonah cried, "Lord save my soul",*  
*Ole Jonah, ole Jonah, ole Jonah cried "save my-save-m-y-y,*  
*Ole Jonah cried "Lord save my soul".*

In the same manner are sung other lines :

Lord, the gourd vine, gourd vine, gourd vine growed over Jonah.  
Well, the cutter worm, cutter worm, cutter worm cut that vine down.

In addition to Jonah—and the last two stanzas are not common in the old songs—"Peter on the sea", "Gabriel, blow your trump", "Daniel in the lion's den", are sung. Those who have heard the latest form of this song rendered would scarcely imagine that it was a very appropriate church song.

It has been stated that the negro makes a song his own by the simple act of singing it. If he is free and unrestrained at the same time that he is thoroughly wrought up, he adds enough to his song or changes its version sufficiently to make it almost unique. In the common tunes sung by both white and black people, the negro's rhythm and graceful passing from one line to another, together with the insertions of shouts and "amens" renders them distinct. A number of the favorite "old time" religious songs are thus rendered by the negroes. They are the old "stand-by" hymns. The nature of some of them was indicated in the first chapter. The following songs will serve to illustrate the common practice of singing among the "spiritualists".

In "The old-time Religion" there are as many versions as the singer can make combinations. It is "Gi'me dat ole-time religion", or it is "'Tis that ole time religion", or it is "Was that ole-time, etc.," or "Will be the old time religion". In the same way it may

be "good enough", "It's good enough". It is, was, will be good enough for "mother, my mother, my ole mother, father, brother, sister," and all the list of biblical names, chiefest among whom are Paul and Silas, Peter and John. So again, it is "good when *dying, living, mourning, sinking, praying, talking*". It is good "when in *trouble, when de worl's on fier, when the lightening flashes, when the thunder rolls, when the heavens are melting, when the stars are falling, when the moon is bleeding, when the grave yards are opening, and all other times that are conceived as being a part and factor in destiny.* Likewise the chorus or the lines may be sung with additional "Yes", "sure", "well", "Uh", and various other expressions that are the product of the moment.

One who has heard the song "Bye and bye we'll go and see them", rendered in an effective way must recognize its power and beauty. It is pre-eminently a song for the emotions, and suggests scenes of the past and of the future; it brings back memories that have been forgotten and forms emotions and conceptions that have not before existed. To the negro it is all this—in so far as he is able to grasp the better emotions—but it is mostly a medium through which he can sing his rhythmic feeling off. And with the additional interpretations and additions both in words and in expression, it is scarcely surpassed by any of his spirituals. The simplest form is exactly the same as that of the regular song: "Bye and bye, we'll go and see them", From this the negroes vary to "Bye and bye I'm a goin' to see *him, them, her*". To this chorus they nearly always add in alternate lines "Well it's", "Well", "An'" and such expressions, thus:

Bye an' bye I'm goin' to see them,  
 Bye an' bye I'm goin' to see them,  
 Well, it 's bye an' bye I 'm goin' to see them,  
 On de oder shore.

These expressions inserted or omitted at pleasure, serve to give an additional rhythm to the song that seems otherwise to be lacking. The verses of the song, like many others, are practically unlimited. Each is repeated three or six times as the singers prefer, with the refrain "On the other shore" added at the end of each stanza. The negroes sing not only of a *brother, sister, father, mother, auntie, preacher and friends*, but they also sing of *Paul and Silas and Daniel and Moses*; they are at liberty to use any name that comes to mind. And they

manifest as much feeling and emotion about meeting *Moses* or *Noah* or *Abraham* as they do about a dear old mother. Not only will they meet these loved ones but there will be scenes "over yonder."

I'm got a brother over yonder— on the other shore.  
 I'm goin' to meet my brother over yonder.  
 Tryin' time will soon be over, on the other shore.  
 Well, it's mournin' time will soon be over, on the other shore.  
 Cryin' time will soon be over.  
 Prayin' time will soon be over, etc.  
 Shoutin' time will soon be over, etc.

If necessary they then turn to the sinner and sing: " *Sinnin' time, gamblin' time*, etc., will soon be over." The old plantation song, instead of saying, "Brother Daniel over yonder," had it, "Wonder where is good ole Daniel? Bye an' bye we'll go an' meet him, 'Way over in de promise lan'. Wonder where 's dem Hebrew children? Wonder where 's doubtin' Thomas? Wonder where is sinkin' Peter?" This form is apparently not sung to-day.

In the same way the negroes have modified the comparatively new songs that have been successful among the evangelists the country over. One would scarcely recognize even the tunes at first hearing, while the verses are usually entirely different. The chorus, as a rule, remains the same, save for the variations already mentioned. One or two songs may be taken as illustrations. "When the Roll is Called up yonder" appealed to the negroes for many reasons. Most of the churches sing it, and sing it "rousing" well. Their chorus is beautiful and the parts, though carried informally, make a splendid effect. But the negro does not sing the prescribed stanzas. After singing the chorus, with such additions as he feels disposed to make, and after two or three, perhaps one, of the written verses, he sings his own song:

When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.  
 By the grace of God up yonder, I'll be there.  
 Yes, my home is way up yonder, an' I'll be there.  
 I got a mother way up yonder, I'll be there.  
 I got a sister way up yonder, I'll be there.

And without limitations he sings this new song into his old and favorite themes, often inserting stanzas and words that belong to the oldest existing negro spirituals in the same verse with the evangelist's best efforts. Another may illustrate further: "Blessed be the Name of the Lord", has a great many variations, some of which would never

be recognized without considerable study and investigation. At first the searcher is inclined to wonder at the distance the singer has got from his original, but the evolutionary steps make the process quite clear. The negroes love to sing blessing to the Lord; much of the basic principle of their theology is based upon gratitude for the final deliverance of bondage from work and suffering. It is not surprising, then, that this song should become a favorite. One of the present versions, most commonly sung is :

If you git there before I do,  
Blessed be the name of the Lord,  
Tell my God I 'm a comin' too,  
Blessed be the name of the Lord.

I turn my eyes toward de sky,  
Blessed be the name of the Lord,  
I ask the Lord for wings to fly,  
Blessed be the name of the Lord.

And encouraged by the happy putting in to this new song an old verse, the singer proceeds to put in as many as he wishes; then in his desire for rhythm and his habit of repetition, together with the cries of "amen" or "Lord" the chorus often becomes: "My Lord, blessed be the name of the Lord." The outcome of such a chorus may be seen in the song already cited: "Lor' bless the Name."

In the effort to make new songs or to appropriate songs themselves, the negroes are thus constantly introducing various songs into their worship. The most common method, that of having the song printed on a single sheet for distribution, has already been mentioned. And as was there suggested, these songs are often verses taken at random from song books or poems, and put into song form. In most cases such songs are varied in such a way that the song may both meet the demand for a song of its kind and at the same time appear original. Some, indeed, are purely original productions, some of which have been cited. Just between the "spirituals" and the standard hymns are these innovation songs. They show well the circumstances which they represent. The effort is often made by members of the younger generation of negroes to substitute the new songs, together with the standard hymns for the old spirituals. They represent a step forward; young educated negroes do not like to be heard singing the simple spirituals. They claim that they are songs of the past, and, as such

only, are they beautiful. The following song, given in the exact form in which it was distributed, will serve to illustrate.

*BLESSED HOPE.*

*By Rev. W. E. Bailey.*

Blessed hope that in Jesus is given,  
 All our sorrow to cheer and sustain,  
 That soon in the mansions of heaven  
 We shall meet with our loved ones again.

*Blessed hope, blessed hope,  
 We shall meet with our loved ones again,  
 Blessed hope, blessed hope,  
 We shall meet with our loved ones again.*

Blessed hope in the word God has spoken,  
 All our peace by that word we obtain,  
 And as sure as God's word was never broken,  
 We shall meet with our loved ones again.

Blessed hope how it shines in our sorrows,  
 Like the star over Bethlehem's plain,  
 We will see our Lord ere the morrow,  
 We shall meet with our loved ones again.

Blessed hope the bright star of the morning,  
 That shall herald his coming to reign,  
 He will come and reward all the faithful,  
 We shall meet with our loved ones again.

(Sung by Rev. J. T. Johnson.)

Such a song is neither sung to an old melody nor a new tune; it is not a spiritual; it is scarcely native nor yet borrowed. It represents the general result that comes from a free intermingling of all. To such a song there may be any number of tunes; likewise there are a great many such songs introduced and may be sung alike to simple tunes. A tune is as easily selected and rendered as are the words; words are as easily improvised, or written with some care, as the melodies are natural. But they appeal less strongly to the negroes as a rule for the simple reason that "they don't put a feelin' in you like the old songs."

Thus the negro's religion is dependent upon feeling; song facilitates and intensifies the feelings, and song is the essential joy of much of the negro's life. Whenever and wherever occasion demands religious manifestation, the song is the prerequisite. Not only at the



church, but at lodge celebrations, funerals and memorial services, the song begins the process of "putting a feelin'" in the congregation. Again, the stress of the negro's religion is placed upon the supernatural and the life that lies beyond his present sphere. A religious attitude is scarcely conceived by the negro without the fundamental conception of the next world. Thus is life contrasted with heaven and hell; the sinner and the righteous are but temporary; so will the souls of all one day sing with Jehovah the songs that the angels love; and there will be feeling there, too. It is thus that the central themes of the negro's religious songs reveal both his religious nature and his mental attitude, together with the emotional characteristics that predominate. And it is easily seen that the negro's imagery and imagination are scarcely surpassed. His religious fervor depends upon the reality of such imagery; the folk-song reflects this imagery as nothing else does. Again, the negro's sense of sin is ever present in a feeling of guilt in the struggle between himself and the real or the imaginary; consequently he insures himself against a final sense of guilt by strong declarations of his righteousness as opposed to the sinner's state. His sense of sin thus becomes less practical; it is rather an imaginative expression of a religious feeling. As the clearest exponent of the negro's real self, the folk song reveals the heart of his psychic nature; it is indeed a witness to the fact that "'Ligion's so sweet". Does he not sing well and truthfully?

I jus' got home f'um Jordan,  
I jus' got home f'um Jordan,  
I jus' got home f'um Jordan,  
'Ligion's so-o-o sweet.

My work is done an' I mus' go,  
My work is done an' I mus' go,  
My work is done an' I mus' go,  
'Ligion's so-o-o sweet.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION LIBRARIES



3 9088 00776 8757

Microfilm a control  
XCI # 16622790 - Columbia University



