

Graham Russell Hodges, ed. *Black Itinerants of the Gospel: The Narratives of John Jea and George White*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Pp. viii, 200. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-312-29445-X.

The history of African-American evangelical religion is rich in pathos and heroism, and the lives of the two itinerants in this edited account, John Jea (b. 1773) and George White (1764-1836), are representative of the early African-American evangelical religious experience in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The lives of both men are set in the context of the post-revolutionary era and the waning days of slavery in New York and New Jersey. The narrative accounts are both insightful and emotionally moving to read.

John Jea, born in Old Callabar, Nigeria, in 1773, became the property of a Dutch family adamantly opposed to slave conversion. After many traumatic experiences, he converted to the evangelical faith and later became an itinerant preacher. His autobiography is a deeply moving account of his terrible treatment as a slave, his quest for faith, the tragic suicide of his first wife, and his zeal for his Lord. Jea's narrative is a smattering of chronological account, sermon, and exhortation. He traveled to Great Britain, settled there in his later years, and sustained himself as a mariner. The last documentation of Jea is the baptism of his child in England in 1817, and after that date, there is no written record of his life. It is unknown, as Hodges notes, "whether Jea found the water grave he feared or made his way to some distant port where he could preach the gospel."

George White, born in Accomack, Virginia, and freed as a youth upon the death of his master, migrated north in 1796. After arrival in New York City, he converted to the evangelical faith through the preaching of a Methodist minister "on a memorable watch-night in the Bowery Church." White struggled to acquire official preaching licensure from the local Methodist body, but came up against repeated opposition. After several unsuccessful attempts to gain official recognition from the regular Methodist body, he affiliated with the new African Methodist Episcopal denomination, from which he received ordination as a deacon in 1822. He preached his last itinerant tour in 1828 at the age of 64, but suffered expulsion from the local Methodist circuit for "unknown reasons in 1829." He died in New York City at age 72 in 1836. White's chief contribution to our understanding of African-American religious life in the North is his "careful reconstruction of clerical politics between African-Americans and white Methodists."

The narrative is gripping as one reads of persecution, conversion, and commitment to the cause of Christ. Hodges, a professor of history at Columbia University, succeeds in his goal of placing the narratives of John Rea and George White "in the context of sweeping religious, political, and racial changes of their time," with his helpful introductory essay on the times and locales in which the two men preached. The work concludes with appendices containing lyrics of Jea's original hymns and demographic data on early Methodists in the New York City-New Jersey area.



Though instructors of African-American history and the American church at all levels of higher education will find the work useful, it is an excellent resource also for use in secondary-level classrooms for units on African-American history and literature or for assigned reading during Black History Month.

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**Glenn M. Linden, ed. *Voices from the Gathering Storm: The Coming of the American Civil War*. Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2001. Pp. xxxii, 236. Cloth, \$60.00; ISBN 0-8420-2998-2. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-8420-2999-0.**

*Voices from the Gathering Storm* brings to life in variegated vignettes the swirling ideological and material contradictions suffusing the United States in the roughly fifteen years preceding the Civil War. Primary sources—letters, diaries, editorials, and more—document the thoughts and sentiments of a mostly familiar cast of characters, including Lincoln, Sumner, Douglas, Truth, Davis, and many others.

The book is organized into three general sections, with equal selections for both the North and South: 1) The “Growing Rivalry” between the sections, from 1846 to 1854, largely covers the Mexican War, the Wilmot Proviso, the 1848 election, the Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave controversy, and the Election of 1852; 2) The growing sectionalism of the decade in the crucial years of “Southern Successes and Northern Anxieties,” between 1854 and 1857 gives attention to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the emergence of the Republican Party, as well as the election of 1856; 3) “The Union Comes Apart” deals with the period from 1857 through 1861, and focuses on the Dred Scott decision, John Brown’s raid, and secession.

The selections themselves, for the most part, are brief and accessible to undergraduate students. Also brief, but generally inclusive, are historical sketches of the figures covered. Quite useful from both the teacher’s and student’s perspective is the division of primary source material into separate “Northerner” and “Southerner” sections. This makes the work especially useful for instructors who wish their students to analyze, evaluate, and interpret the essential reasoning put forth by both North and South in the pre-war years. But the regional sections are not always thematically monolithic. Students will also doubtless notice the inclusion of selections from a varied lot from each section, such as small townsmen and casual observers, as well as prominent politicians and national spokesmen for each side.

Some of the documents seem especially striking. Several of Lincoln’s free soil speeches, as well as his aborted 1849 attempt to introduce a bill providing for compensated emancipation, are included. Horace Mann’s maiden speech on the House floor linked the poverty of education for whites to the existence of African-American slavery. Of course there are several sections from southerners supporting slavery. One of the most provocative is William Gilmore Simms’s 1854 article in *Putnam’s*