

Liberation Theology Down on the Farm: Family Religious Values in the Antebellum South¹

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Abstract

The central concern of this article is family values taught in the religion of southern working-class people in the antebellum United States. It uses a representative South Carolina family and focuses on the values in three different contexts: religion, family and labor. In living out their lives, working people encountered both success and failure. Their history is compared with the present-day family value discussion, as conducted by scholars such as James Dobson.

Introduction

This article is about the values that antebellum southern religion taught concerning the family. Religious family values are a popular topic of present-day study with James Dobson alone having a daily audience of 220 million in 164 countries (Anonymous. 2008).² He and similar popularizers call upon religious tradition to give common sense answers to the problems of child rearing and child discipline, young adults, marriage, and aspects of intimacy, fatherhood, motherhood, money and success (Dobson 1970, 2000a, 2000b, 2001). Antebellum religion also held up values concerning the family. The present-day popularizers echo these values. But, as will be seen, if the nineteenth century farmers could speak, they might complain their most liberating values are too often omitted.

One of the challenges in studying antebellum family values is, as historian Frank Owsley (1976) remarks, to overcome the tradition of writing from the perspective of prominent politicians like John Cal-

houn. The values offered by the religion of those symbolized by Calhoun were not necessarily those of the rank-and-file. In Owsley's view, when the religious history of southern communities is written from the basic sources, a story emerges that is different from that previously written. The methodology offered by Owsley may seem more like sociology than theology to those accustomed to texts as their source for study. But working people did not write texts about their beliefs, which is not to say that their beliefs are not worth study. Jesus was not a text writer but scholars study his theology by looking at his life.

The social-religious analysis of working people has obtained, under the name of liberation theology, an academic niche. Practitioners (Nelson 1978,15) find in such analysis "an arena for God's continuing self-disclosure." For the antebellum period scholars have restricted the focus to black family values, arguing that there was nothing liberating about the religion of slaveholders, which a contemporary (Stowe 1995 [1852], 221; see also Cone 1969) called "the essence of all abuse." But white agrarians, even those with slaves, would have disagreed. The methodology here gives God's manifestation in the lives of antebellum white agrarians a niche. There were gaps between what their religion taught and how they acted. Looking at actions rather than words may be a more accurate measure of beliefs. The approach here is to look at both action and words.

The Crankfields

Our?

The methodology will be to look at family values as they occurred in three different contexts: religion, family and labor. Following Owsley, the focus will be on the values which the religion of a farming family, the Crankfields, taught about the family. This family, which lived in the Fairfield County section of the South Carolina upcountry, is used because there is abundant data about them and because they were representative in farming for subsistence and in being neither rich nor poor and in owning slaves. Studies of them started with Harriet Beecher Stowe (1998 [1853], 261) in her research for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The family consisted of Littleton Crankfield (1775–1846), Lucy Wilson Crankfield (1779–1847), eight children born between 1799 and 1818 and in the 1830s and 1840s several slave families that had belonged to

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Lucy's parents and in the last decade of his life, Littleton's two black children, Esey and John.³

There were wealthy Fairfield merchants and planters, including the former Regulator William Kirkland, who in 1790 owned ten slaves. Large wealth characterized less than one percent of the population. As noted, the Crankfields were not in this category. Like three quarters of the people, they were agrarians who spent much of their time in field labor (Carter 2006, 2/2–17, 2–18; Klein 1990, 136; Ford 1988, 12–13). They raised cotton, corn, wheat, garden crops, hogs, cows and other animals. From August to November their farm was a way station or “hog hotel” for drovers bringing in hogs, cattle, horses, mules and oxen raised in Kentucky, Tennessee and the Shenandoah Valley for consumption in Charleston, Savannah and the plantations in between. Crankfield daughter, Eliza (1818–1906) married one of the drovers, George Bush (1797–1881) and moved with him to Kentucky in 1841. A drover who avoided alcohol and prostitutes, such as George, could average one dollar per day, which was a good return for a working man (Parr 1929,74; Shepard 1968 [1937], 45, 58).

Only in the last half of their lives did the Crankfields incorporate slave labor. Even then for a lengthy period they worked side-by-side with the slaves. Characteristic of the upcountry husbandry was its self-sufficiency. A Carolina historian (Taylor 1970 [1942], 13–14) describes the homespun economy:

The first concern of the small up-country and mountain farmer was to provide ample food for man and beast. Cloth was manufactured in household looms and shoes were fabricated by an itinerant shoemaker from native hides tanned at the local tan yard. The cider press and distillery supplied vinegar and brandy for family and neighborhood use while grist mills reduced Indian corn to meal and sawmills converted timber into lumber. Cotton was grown on an increasing scale; but its culture, with some exceptions, was not permitted to eclipse the homespun economy of self-sufficiency in essential needs.⁴

Similar is the conclusion of agrarian scholar Sam Hilliard (1972, 2) that despite any tendency toward the growing of commercially marketable crops to be used in buying or trading, “the typical farm of the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries was a highly

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independent and self-supplying entity with a diversified production of plants and animals answering most of the farmer's own needs. On the whole most farmers wanted to be as self-contained as possible."

The introduction of cotton on a large scale coincided with the early part of the Crankfields' marriage and benefited them. Upcountry farmers in the 1790s could make cash incomes of \$75 per year from the production of corn, wheat and pork. This was the same as a laborer's wages, which were \$.50 per day (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics 1934, 225; Johnson 1971, 263). The addition of a cotton crop doubled the farmer's income. This was because in the 1790s with the first wide-spread use of the rolling gin, the farm price for short-staple cotton rose from near zero to \$.30 per pound. A farmer with little capital could make as much as \$150 per year by growing five hundred pounds of cotton (one bale) on four acres of land (Gray 1933, 2/681; Wright 1976, 149–150; Fox-Genovese 1988, 177).

A description of the type of cotton husbandry done by the Crankfields and their children starting at age twelve was left in a diary kept by another upcountry family (Sloan, 1854–1861; see also Burton 1985, 5, 10, 12, 47, 131, 191, 199). From late spring to the end of picking in early December, they worked daily in their garden and fields. In March the father and sons harrowed the cotton and cornfields and the women planted and hoed. In June the women thinned out the cotton. In July the whole family hoed corn and thinned the cotton fields. The children went to school in August and part of September, but by September 15 the cotton opened up. The whole family picked from then until November 30. Family historian Bonnie Smyre (1999, 157) has outlined a budget for an upcountry subsistent cotton farmer.

Only in households of ten slaves or more did the white women not work in the fields. Only after twenty-five years of marriage and eight children did the Crankfields in the mid-1820s reach the ten slave mark (McCurry 1995, 67–68, 83). During their first decade of marriage, which coincided with the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Crankfields had no slaves. But by 1810 with five children, Lucy's parents gave her one of their female slaves. By 1840 with further gifts and by natural increase, there were three generations numbering 21 people (Wilson 1821, 1837).

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Religion as a Family Value

While labor occupied much of an agrarian's life, those like the Crankfields looked to their religion for instruction on what to value. During the antebellum period only a minority of the population had formal church membership, but most were religious believers. About this one student (Crowther 1992, 622, 624) comments,

Most southerners, regardless of class, shared a theistically ordered worldview ... and carried with them the same moral values of self-reliance, common sense, and duty to God and family. Only one southerner in eight held membership in a church in 1840. ... [However,] eyewitness accounts of worship services and revivals describe attendance in figures far greater than membership rolls imply.⁵

Neither Lucy Crankfield nor her parents, children and, when they had them, slaves were church members. Littleton, however, was a Baptist. Many of the South Carolina Baptists followed in the tradition of their New Light ancestors, who had been called "Separates" because they refused to compromise their church's self-government to associations and conferences. The Separates migrated from Connecticut in 1754 first to the Sandy Creek area of Orange County in North Carolina, which later became Guilford County. In 1759 some moved further south to Fairforest Creek in South Carolina. Their deacons and elders were self-taught working people, both men and women. Their preachers, such as James Perry in North Carolina, viewed the American Revolution as a conflict between low country merchants and their English counterparts with both sides having little merit (Wills 1997, 50; Burkitt and Reed 1985 [1803]; Klein 1990, 43, 177; Hicks 2003, 180; Mulkey 1945, 13).

The neighborhood church in which Littleton was a member throughout his adulthood was Twenty-Five-Mile Creek Baptist Church. When Lucy and the children attended services, they went with him. As an adult the Crankfields' second oldest son, Jonathan (1802–1875) was a member of the Chosea Springs Baptist Church in the Choccolocco Valley of Calhoun County, Alabama. Twenty-five Mile Creek Baptist was established in 1768 as part of the Wateree Creek Church. It joined the Charleston Association in 1807. By 1825 the church was holding

meetings in two locations on an alternating basis. Between 1829 and 1835 the church had branches at Corcord on Sawney's Creek, at Jackson Creek, Cedar Creek, Sand Hill-Old Field and Bear Creek (Hicks 2003, 90).

One of the values that the Crankfields' religion instructed them about the family was the role which God should play in the family. It taught them that religion was a relation with God that should permeate family life. As a consequence, home and family, not only the institutional church, was the lord's temple. One of their hymns (Lloyd 1906 [1843], 585) described it:

Let every peaceful private home,
A temple, Lord, to thee become.

Complementing home as being a temple was a belief in the priesthood of the faithful that made each family member a minister. Within the family circle there was a wide-spread custom to read the Bible, sing hymns, and pray (Mintz and Kellogg 1988, 48; McDannell 1986, 83; Bruce 1974, 75; Ford 1988, 25). The Bible's popularity in the antebellum period was reflected in its many American printings. Between 1800 and 1829 there were 622 different editions and between 1830 and 1860 there were more than 1,000 editions. Even the slaves owned bibles (McDannell 1995, 72). Sundays, funerals, weddings and baptisms commonly brought forth special family practices. Lucy Crankfield's "family Bible" was among her possessions until the day she died (Anonymous 1847). The use of such Bibles in morning and evening family prayer was described in the hymn "The Family Bible" (Lloyd 1906 [1843], 525; Goble 1887, 285–286):

I still view the chairs of my father and mother,
The seats of their offspring as ranged on each hand,
And the richest of books which excels every other
The Family bible that lay on the stand ...
At morning and ev'ning would yield
The prayers of our father, a sweet invocation,
For mercy by day, and for safety by night.

The Crankfield family faced multiple economic, social, health, and personal problems. Their religion instructed them on how to put these

in context and not be overwhelmed. Most importantly it taught the family that their relation to God was more valuable than anything else, including food, wealth, health and reputation:

Religion is the chief concern
Of mortals here below;
May I its great importance learn
Its sov'reign virtues know.
More needful this than glitt'ring wealth,
Or aught the world bestows;
Not reputation, food, nor health,
Can give us such repose. (Lloyd 1906 [1843], 336)

During difficult times, such as draughts, excessive rains, storms, hurricanes, an end to winter, illness, death, births of humans and animals, journeys, and economic depression, the family was instructed by their religion to look to God as their ultimate help (McDannell 1986, 81). Their hymn for rain petitioned:

Savior! Visit thy plantation;
Grant us, Lord, a gracious rain!
... Lest, for want of thine assistance,
Ev'ry plant should droop and die;
... But a drought has since succeeded,
And a sad decline we see. (Lloyd 1906 [1843], 570)

The importance to the family of religion within the home did not mean that the meeting house was not also a family value. At small churches such as the Crankfields', members believed themselves to be literally part of a single family. They addressed each other as brother and sister, father and mother, son and daughter. Church buildings were member-built log cabins or barn-like frame structures with backless benches located within walking distance of home. Their services were led by their own self-taught preacher-farmers with no seminary training. These preachers were elected and ordained by the parish family and, as in any family, they often worked for little or no pay. Sermons, which some chanted, received little preparation before hand. This was said to allow for divine inspiration (Crowley 1998, 20, 197; Vance 1938, 2, 4–5, 27, 43; Taylor 1970 [1942], 155).

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Baptists, whether at home or at meeting, sang their hymns in a slow, minor-sounding style without choir or instrumental accompaniment. Observers mentioned that they valued singing more than preaching (Crowley 1998, 9, 178). Hymnals contained about 600 songs, many of which were about family values. Where there were illiteracy, songs were lined out with a leader singing a line which was then repeated by the people.

In 1827 “Brother” Littleton’s church had seventy-four members, including four blacks. By 1844 its membership was down by half because of the population decline in Fairfield County and splits over church government. Women were twice as numerous as men (Vance 1938, 17, 34–36, 48–49). The value that Littleton placed on his parish family was reflected in financial support. The yearly church membership lists at Twenty-Five-Mile Creek ranked the congregation according to the amount of their support. In the 1827 list, Littleton was number twenty-six out of seventy-four members. In the last decade of his life, when he had more money, he was always near the top of the list. At the bottom were the slaves (Vance 1938, 4, 34–35, 45–46).

The value that Littleton placed on his parish family was also manifested in the services he donated. In the 1810s and 1820s he was chosen as a delegate to the triennial conventions of the Charleston Association. He helped obtain and maintain church property, as in the purchase of a two-acre tract that became the location for one of their meetinghouses (Vance 1938, 2; Ward 1819). From time to time he participated in church government helping to resolve congregational problems. Members were censured or expelled for economic injustice, gambling, alcoholism, adultery and spousal abuse. For example, Littleton was assigned on Saturday June 5, 1824 to cite “Brother Oliver to next meeting... Oliver a black brother has been guilty of the practice of intoxication. [His presence is needed] in order to answer to the unfavorable report” (Vance 1938, 6, see also 2, 10, 29, 32). As reflected in the church minutes, the corporal works of mercy were valued by the church family: helping the widows, the orphans, the sick, the elderly, the homeless, the hungry, burying the dead and visiting the imprisoned.

For those familiar with James Dobson’s emphasis on obedience and deference to authority as a family value, it may be surprising that the

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opposite in the form of egalitarianism was taught as a family value in antebellum religion. Farmers found in religion a sanction for snubbing the polished professional preachers who, as one of them (Carwardine 1996, 297) put it, “wear black broadcloth coats, silk shirts, fair-topped boots, a watch in their pockets and ride fine fat horses.” Brother Scott summarized the problem in agrarian terms:

We are but a feeble body and much exposed to the innovations of the learned gentry of the day, who swarm out of the theological institutions like locusts, and are ready to devour the land.

(Wyatt-Brown 1970, 513, 527–528)

The professional clergy were similarly referred to as “well dressed beggars [seeking] to gather in the financial sheaves,” “modern Tetzels, selling Protestant indulgences to gullible sorely overburdened churchgoers,” and “self-congratulatory snobs... falsely proclaiming that the whole region is in a state of moral degradation” (Wyatt-Brown 1970, 510, 512, 519). The high-priced (\$40 per month) missionaries were said to be addicted to the “liberal hedonistic” preaching favored by wealthy benefactors (Wyatt-Brown 1970, 508, 519, 527). In 1860 the average wealth of free males was \$2,580, but for Protestant clergy. it was \$10,177. Religion could be a good business (Holifield 1990, 17).

Egalitarian values within the parish family were a Baptist tradition. This can be seen in the history of those who worshipped at Twenty-Five-Mile Creek. Many of the members or their ancestors had grown up in North Carolina churches that were part of the Kehukee Association, established in 1777. One of its thirteen articles of faith stated that each individual congregation was, in democratic fashion, a rule unto itself:

We believe that every church is independent in matters of discipline; and that Associations, Councils, and Conferences, of several ministers or churches, are not to impose on the churches the keeping, holding or maintaining of any principle or practice contrary to church’s judgment. (Bratt 2006, 69).

During the 1840s a fight at Twenty-Five-Mile over egalitarian values within the parish family, and specifically over how much they would accept the direction of the Charleston Association on the issue of fund-

ing missions, split the people. Littleton sided with the Charleston centralizers. But the long-time pastor and six members resigned and set up a separate church, or rather continued the Twenty-Five-Mile Creek church. The commercially oriented centralizers moved their location five miles west to the town that is now Blythewood. There they established Sandy Level Baptist Church. The town had become a market center when it was designated a watering stop for the railroad linking Columbia and Charlotte. At the national level in the early 1840s a total of 900 preachers, 1,622 churches, and 68,000 members separated from centralizing Baptist associations (Townsend 1978, 144).

The opposition to the centralizers was not because their opponents were against evangelism but because of the mechanisms of national organization and paid agents by which the missions were promoted. As one observer (Bratt 2006, 68) of the period remarks,

Not only did these violate Baptist principles of doctrine and organization, but also they threatened a democratic society. The “missions” engine was premised on money, markets and elite managers, but management would quickly veer to manipulation under a cabal entrusted with too much power.

Even those at Sandy Level who went along with the centralizers on the mission issue were egalitarian on other issues. The Charleston Association encouraged the establishment of Sunday schools, temperance societies and tract societies, but Sandy Level did without. It was said that as God was the greatest friend to the family, so its greatest enemy was the devil as embodied by the mercantile class in their new inventions such as Sunday school. Church historian Richard Carwardine (1993, 126–127) discusses how the farmers connected the attack on egalitarian parish family values with commerce:

They regarded protracted meetings, anxious benches, and other “new measures” as “steam religion” and “priestcraft.” “Good works” they dismissed as diabolical encouragements to pride, self-righteousness, worldliness, and ostentation. They had no time, explained Elder Mark Bennett, for plans designed “for the improvement of the moral, intellectual, and physical, condition of mankind.” Temperance societies, theological schools, tract societies, Sunday schools, Bible societies, railroads, banks, and protective tariffs—none were based on apostolic principles.

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The egalitarian values of the parish family can also be seen in antebellum humor, where the layperson generally outsmarts the prideful preacher. One example is where an honest country farmer meeting the parson of the parish in a narrow lane, and not giving him the way so readily as he expected, the parson, in a haughty tone, told him—he was better fed than taught; “very true indeed, Sir,” replied the farmer, “for you teach me, and I feed myself” (Anonymous 1800,19).

Mixed with humor were bitter hymns that denounced as corruption the “wealth, honor and titles” which the devil substituted for family values:

See of late the sad declension,
Bitter strife and fierce contention;
Fiery zeal and persecution
Raging like the troubled ocean.
See the proud assuming spirit,
Some among us now inherit;
Striving who shall have domination,
Slaves to popular opinion.

See the world and church uniting
In the work of proselytizing;
Wood, and hay, and stubble bringing
To build up the gospel kingdom.

See the train of “means and measures,”
Filthy lucre, worldly pleasures;
Honors, titles, wealth, and numbers,
All combined to gain more members,

See the wide-spread desolations,
Churches and associations,
Once so happily united,
Now are like a house divided. (Lloyd 1906 [1843], 538–539)

Laments about the present religious corruption were joined with millennial rejoicing about future deliverance. Church historian Ross-er Taylor (1970 [1942], 154) writes, “Judging from the number of sermons announced to be delivered on the millennium, this subject filled a large place in the thinking of the religious-minded.” For work-

ing people the millennium in which justice would finally prevail was as much about this world as the next. Their antinomianism, as in *Galatians 2* and *Romans 6:1* (justification by faith, not works/laws) was similarly as will be seen, as much against state and federal legalism as against church legalism.

Unfortunately for Littleton, his observance of egalitarian values, which his religion established for the parish family, declined in his old age and he suffered harsh consequences. The period from 1835 to 1845 was the last decade of life for him and his wife. They had more money than ever before.⁶ Their children were grown. Their personal needs were small. They could have had an enjoyable sunset. Their religion taught that church members as part of the same family were not to relate to each other for profit. But in 1836 Littleton became entangled in an estate proceeding that in the view of the church violated this doctrine. The estate was that of Lewis Perry, Sr. (1765–1836), who had died intestate and without surviving siblings. This left his surviving nieces and nephews with a claim. Lucy Crankfield was one of his nieces, as was church member Mary (Perry) Montgomery (b. 1781), wife of David Montgomery. Littleton was appointed administrator of the estate.

According to the church minutes, the congregation was “aggrieved” by Littleton’s administration. He apparently did not give what was felt to be a fair share to all the claimants. The church ordered him to give a bond of indemnity, which would have guaranteed them against loss. But he refused. As a result of the dispute, the congregation turned against Littleton and he stopped attending services (Vance 1938, 6, 25).⁷

After several years the church ordered Littleton to explain why he was absenting himself and why he felt they had dealt wrongly with him. He did not respond and was censured. For another year the case was raised regularly at church meetings but deferred. When on August 2, 1839, he finally did appear, he accused the church of being “ungospelly” and unrighteous. They responded by voting “without dissent” to censure him a second time (Vance 1938, 27–30). Littleton may have been within his legal rights to profit from the merchant-controlled court proceedings. But legal rights did not count within the family.

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Even if the church was acting “ungospelly,” and Littleton was not “gaining the world but losing his soul,” the point is that antebellum religion taught values that the Crankfield and church family claimed to follow. A story from a contemporary almanac (Beers 1801, 47–49) about a similar dispute shows the seriousness with which the laboring people looked upon religion. An “honest old farmer” and Revolutionary War veteran, who on the day he was to be excommunicated for a minor offense, took his gun to the service. After the benediction, when the parson began the excommunication with the words “offending brother,” the veteran cocked and leveled his weapon, stating “Proceed if you dare, proceed and you are a dead man.” The clergyman dove under his desk. The deacon, elders and congregation ran for the door in confusion, the women with shrieks. As the almanac put it, the farmer was left master of the field. He locked the door and sent the keys to the parson with his respects. He lived out the last 13 years of his life in full communion.

Family as a Value

Besides religion, the family itself was a second context in which family values, as taught by southern religion, occurred. Associated with the family were values such as love, self-sacrifice, co-operation, egalitarianism and forgiveness. The refrain from the Crankfields’ hymns such as “Home, home, sweet sweet home,” reflected these values (Lloyd 1906 [1843], 446–447). In 1841 one of the Crankfields’ son-in-laws George Bush summarized his understanding of these family values in a letter to his future wife, Eliza Crankfield:

Marriage is an institution calculated for a constant scene of as much delight as our being capable of. Two persons who have chosen each other out of all the species, with a design to be each others mutual comfort, and entertainment, have in that action bound themselves to be good humored, affable, discreet, forgiving, patient, and joyful with respect to each others frailties and imperfections to the end of their lives (Bush 1841).⁸

What was said of the Crankfields’ Baptist neighbor, Maria Taylor, exemplified Baptist family values, “she held the love of family at the center of her life at all times” (Schwarz 1991, 154; see also, Bleser 1991, xxii).

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Agrarian religion directed believers to look to the family for what was spiritually and socially valuable. That most people had little money over much of their lives made it easy and necessary for them to spend time at home, working in the fields and around their neighborhood. Bordering the Crankfields on the west was the 250-acre farm of Lucy's parents, James Wilson (1752–1836) and Mary (Perry) Wilson (d. 1818). Lucy and her four siblings grew up there. On the north was Lucy's uncle, William Wilson (d. 1837) and his wife Mahala Lee Wilson. On the south was another uncle, Theophilus Wilson (1767–1853), his wife Margaret and their nine children born between 1785 and 1800 (United States Census Office 1965e, 261/894/5; Wilson 1774; Stewart 1990, 254; Kenedy 1814).

In their leisure time farming people visited their relatives and neighbors, chewed tobacco, barbequed pork, fished in the creek for brim, trout and catfish, trapped, swam and read books, magazines and the weekly newspaper. One of Lucy's possessions was a bookcase and a "lot of old books" (Anonymous 1847). Ninety-five percent of the South Carolina free population was literate (Taylor 1970 [1942], 146). Among the popular works reprinted, abridged and rewritten in the antebellum was Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which celebrated the virtue of self-sufficiency in family and religion. Other literature with an agrarian bent were *Reynard the Fox* and the Mother Goose rhymes and tales, which were filled with moralisms about the family and labor. Publications that circulated in South Carolina via the postal system in the antebellum period included the *Southern Chronicle and Camden Aegis* (1824–1825), and the *Camden Journal* (1826–1851), both published at Camden, S.C., which was 30 miles east of the Crankfields, the *Fairfield Herald* (1849–1876) published in Winnsboro, the *South Carolinian* (1838–1852) and *Temperance Advocate*, both published in Columbia, several Baptist magazines, the tri-weekly *Charleston Courier* (1809–1849), Godey's *Ladies Book* (monthly, 1830–1858), *Graham's Magazine* (monthly) both published in Philadelphia and the *Southern Literary Messenger* (monthly, 1835–1864) published in Richmond (Heller 1998, 54).

Child-rearing was taught by agrarians to be a family value and farm life was said to be a good place for its practice. An observer (Hardeman

1981, 38) commented,

Family farm units shaped American character. Without question they fostered self-reliance as children learned much of the discipline of work from chores related to Indian corn. At the same time they felt a measure of security and personal worth from being wanted and needed to sustain the family.

In bad seasons there was all the more need for teamwork. “Poverty on the farm builds character,” said Francis Trollope, an English traveler in American in the 1840s, while “poverty in the city breeds vice” (Hardeman 1981, 38).

Trollope also observed what she called the “nearly complete independence” of farmers who raised corn. Such independence, however, in her view did not lead to selfishness. As she put it,

Yet along with the independence and individualism, young pioneers learned something of the spirit of co-operation—family member to family member, and neighbor to neighbor. Individualism and cooperativeness went hand in hand. When a work animal got sick or died, a neighbor would usually lend a hand or a horse. A spring plot unplowed was a winter season unprepared for. (Hardeman 1981:38)

The farm children visited by Trollope had homemade toys and played games such as tag, races, cards, checkers (draughts), jacks, marbles, tops, hopscotch, dominoes, yoyos, backgammon and cribbage. On special days such as George Washington’s Birthday and the Fourth of July some families went five miles to town, which is now called Blythewood. Others liked staying home and hated both the town and everything associated with it. For court, election and market days or to pay annual taxes, the farmers went 18 miles to the county seat at Winnsboro (McCurry 1995, 253). Even in death the extended family stayed together. In a wooded area on the Crankfield farm was the cemetery. In it are Lucy, Littleton, their descendants, relatives, slaves and freedmen.⁹

For those familiar with James Dobson’s emphasis on male dominance in family relations, one might find surprising the absence of this from the family values listed above by George Bush, the Crankfields’ son-in-law, in the letter he wrote to his future wife. Family farms were

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egalitarian operations with women and even children carrying their own weight economically. Even beyond egalitarianism, religion taught that marriage was not merely a civil contract, but something “made in heaven” and that gave grace, a sacrament. As one historian (Mintz 1983, 136, see also, 133) commented:

Drawing a pointed analogy with the evangelical ideas of love of God, it was argued that the assertion of rights and claims within marriage was inappropriate. As in their relationship with God, men and women were without rights and had no just claim to special consideration. Much as God’s mercy was exercised through acts of grace, kindness in marriage depended on acts of sympathy, not on rights that one might claim as one’s due. This rejection of “emotional legalism” and emphasis on the transforming power of sympathy was a way to exclude notions of power from the marriage relationship and to place marriage on a higher moral basis.

Along the same lines family historian Steven Mintz (1983, 136) comments on the widespread belief in the sentiments as expressed by son-in-law Bush, that the religious foundation of marriage values originated from the “compassionate understanding of another person’s needs and weaknesses together with a desire to alleviate these. To rely on rights raised dangers, for victory at the expense of affection was defeat and capitulation conquest.” In giving grace freely, the religious family was said to give back more than was contributed. This distinguished it from the market, which tended to return less to working people than their contribution.

Unfortunately for the Crankfields whatever free grace their marriage generated was compromised by the slave system. The compromise took place in the period from 1835 to 1845, which culminated a half-century of marriage. It was a time when they doubled their slave holdings. Instead of bringing contentment, Littleton fathered two mulatto children, Esey born in 1835 and John in 1840. The economic system, as not only abolitionists but southern church people pointed out at the time, gave those like the 60 year old Littleton the temptation, to seduce by flattery with gifts or rape the laboring women.

In breaking his “sacred vow” to Lucy, Littleton became what contemporaries called a “libidinous scoundrel,” a polluter of the slave and of

the “sanctity of the marriage relationship.” Adultery violated both the divine law and the “law of nature.” Abused spouses such as Lucy comprised ten percent of the population (Bleser 1991, 52; Horwitz 1998, 125; Gelles 1985, 362). The Crankfields’ neighbor, Mary Boykin Chestnut (1972, 210), commented on the humiliation of women caused by the adultery and miscegenation of their husbands, “Mrs. Stowe [in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*] did not hit the sorest spot. She makes Legree a bachelor.”

Similarly victimized by the compromise of family values were the slave offspring. Littleton’s “backdoor” or “backyard” children, as they were called, were not raised economically and educationally in the manner of their free siblings nor manumitted (Crankfield 1846; Mullis 2006; Mills 1981, 23, 32). To the extent they learned to read or do arithmetic, it was because their siblings instructed them. It was not from formal education (Webber 1978, 131). In his last testament in 1847 Littleton neither freed them nor gave them property. Epsy went to Sarah Ann Stokes (b. 1828), the daughter of Epsy’s deceased older sister Permillia (Pamela, Millie, 1807–1845). John went to Permillia’s son George W. Stokes (b. 1836). Market values were substituted for what working class religion taught about the family. Historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (1987, 220) maintains that the “common expression ‘my family, white and black’ was no passing sentimentality.” But for Littleton, the family value that he accorded to his black children was more like that which Cain accorded Abel.

In addition to the difficulties flowing from adultery, the market system was negative for family values in a second way that literally broke up the Crankfield family through bankruptcy and migration. As will be seen, while Littleton learned to distance himself far enough from the market to protect his subsistence, he was not distant enough to protect his children as they married and started their own families. The push toward intensive market agriculture drove up land and slave prices. The North had a larger population than the South, but out of 70,000 Americans with a worth of \$40,000 or more, 40,000 lived in the South (Holifield 1990, 24). The monopolization of land and capital by a commercial minority meant that young adults starting out were marginalized and often forced to migrate (McCurry 1995, 71).

Antebellum hymns (Lloyd 1906 [1843], 499) mourned the family breakups:

Though, your young branches torn away,
Like withered trunks ye stand.

Among the Crankfield branches torn away was second son Jonathan (1802–1875) and his wife, Sara Emily Little (1818–1895). They took up farming near Anniston in Calhoun County, Alabama in 1835 at about the time Littleton was beginning his adulterous slave relationship. Daughter Eliza at age twenty-three, married George Bush in 1841 and moved to her spouse's home state of Kentucky. For her remaining sixty-five years, she saw her South Carolina family only once (Hardman 1938). Oldest son Isaac (b. 1799), his wife Rachel Montgomery (b. 1811) and their four children moved to Marion County in the area around Jacksonville, Florida in the 1850s. Joining them was George W. Stokes, the son of Littleton's deceased daughter Permilla and son-in-law, Abraham J. Stokes (b. 1803).

The migration of Isaac, Jonathan and Eliza Crankfield was repeated in many agrarian families. Fairfield County's free population declined by one-third in the thirty years after 1830 from 9,705 to 6,373 (McMaster 1980 [1946], 27). A generation earlier Lucy's parents had faced the same dilemma. They avoided it by downsizing in 1821. To the families of their three adult daughters, Lucy's parents gave slaves and land. This helped the children to hold on. But twenty years later the Crankfields were barely able to hold on themselves and were not able to help their children who were attracted to market farming and who remained in South Carolina. A Crankfield neighbor (Hallam 1855) who migrated wrote back from Texas that the land there would not "suit large cotton planters, but is a poor man's paradise."

The Crankfield children who did not migrate and who farmed for the market in a substantial way, risked bankruptcy. Third son Allan (b. 1809) and his Quaker wife, Jemima (Wright) Jones (b. 1800) borrowed from family members who were having their own difficulties and compounded the damage.¹⁰ In the national depression of 1852 Allan and Jemima Crankfield became insolvent. The county sheriff sold off their possessions. Allan's sister and brother-in-law, Tempie (Crankfield,

b. 1811) and John W. Miller were among the creditors. The newspaper (Stowe 1998 [1853], 135) advertised their disaster:

Sheriff's Sale

By virtue of sundry executions to me directed, I will at Fairfield Court House, on the first Monday, and the day following, in December next [1852], within the legal hours of sale, to the highest bidder, for cash, the following property. Purchaser to pay for titles.

2 NEGROES, levied upon as the property of Allen R. Crankfield, at the suit of Alexander Brodie, et al.

2 Horses and 1 Jennet, levied upon as the property of Allen R. Crankfield, at the suit of Alexander Brodie.

2 Mules, levied upon as the property of Allen R. Crankfield, at the suit of Temperance E. Miller and J.W. Miller.

1 pair Cart Wheels, levied upon as the property of Allen R. Crankfield, at the suit of Temperance E. Miller and J.W. Miller.

1 Chest of Drawers, levied upon as the property of Allen R. Crankfield, at the suit of Temperance E. Miller and J.W. Miller.

1 Bedstead, levied upon as the property of Allen R. Crankfield, at the suit of Temperance E. Miller and J.W. Miller.

R.E. ELLISON

Sheriff's Office, Nov. 19, 1852.

S.F.D.

Nov. 20

For their participation in the market the Crankfield children paid heavily in terms of family values. On the other hand the children most committed to subsistence production, the two mulattos, prospered from a family value perspective. Littleton's black son, John Lawhin, his wife Melinda (b. 1844) and their six children born between 1861 and 1868 subsisted on their labor and lived out their lives on the Crankfield farm. Their mulatto descendants own and still work the farm (United States Census Office 1965f).

In addition the two white Crankfield children, Mary Ann Crankfield Lawhon (1814–1876) and Margaret Jane Crankfield Hogan (1818–1860), who married neighbors and engaged in subsistent farm-

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ing without slaves, managed to raise large families without significant market income. Margaret Jane and her Methodist husband Sam Sanders Hogan migrated to Alabama in the late 1830s for a short time in the early part of their marriage. When they were not able to establish a farm there, they came home. Littleton let them farm part of his place and set up a trust for Margaret Jane with several slaves in it. But after Littleton died, the trustee, Allen Crankfield, who was Margaret Jane's brother, petitioned the court to be relieved of his duties. The Hogans wanted to "run off" the slaves and were on "the most unfriendly terms" with him (Crankfield 1848). When she died in 1860 Margaret Jane had twelve children and no slaves.

Labor As A Family Value

The role that labor should play in the family was a third area of values about which religion gave instruction. The family values connected to labor reflected the "small-producer creed," which held labor to be a virtue, as historian Gary Nash (1987, 606, 609–610; see also, McCurry 1995, 78) summarizes:

The political ideas of the majority of Americans who toiled with their hands, as farmers in the countryside, as artisans, mariners, and laborers in the towns, were not, of course, without variety. But the bulk of these laboring people cleaved to what has been called a small-producer ideology.... Stressing the social value—and virtue—of labor, this thought emphasized economic equality and economic justice.... The popular ideology of the Revolutionary period, with its emphasis on the virtuousness and community value of productive labor and on equality and social justice, provided an ideological legacy for those of a later period.

Associated with small-producer family values was the "labor theory of value," as it was called. One labor historian (Freyer 1994, 3–4) summarizes,

Most political leaders and publicists contended that the producing classes were most important to American prosperity. For the proponents of a labor theory of value, producers were those who made and deserved the fruits of all true wealth. The manipulative creators of false paper wealth—bankers, lawyers, corporations generally, and big merchants—were agents of capitalist enterprise that threatened the producing classes.

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To those with anti-labor perceptions this distinction between producers and capitalists is not meaningful. But historians continue to find the distinction useful. Historian Tony Freyer (1994, 4) explains:

This study does not follow the modern conception, favoring instead that of antebellum political economists. I use the distinction that these commentators made between producers and corporate or large mercantile capitalists for several reasons. First, the people and institutions I write about in this study operated in a world in which the great majority of white adult males were self-employed in some form of small or modest-size, independent, unincorporated enterprise. Also, most of these people and their families lived in rural areas and small towns. In 1830 only 9 percent of Americans resided in cities; by 1860 the percentage of city dwellers had risen to just 20 percent.... This small-scale, and localistic kind of work resisted the pervasive threat of market failure through reliance upon community resources, including local governmental institutions and protectionist debtor-creditor laws.

Labor as a family value was celebrated in hymns which praised even God as a worker whose hands, like those of the agrarians, brought forth the corn and vine:

Wide as the wheels of nature roll,
Thy hand supports and guides the whole;
The sun is taught by thee to rise,
And darkness when to veil the skies.
The flow'ry spring at thy command
Perfumes the air and paints the land;
The summer rays with vigor shine
To raise the corn and cheer the vine.
Thy hand, in autumn, richly pours
Through all our coasts redundant stores;
And winters, softened by thy care,
No more the face of horror wear. (Lloyd 1906 [1843], 538)

Agrarian religion taught subsistence agriculture as a family value and viewed the “unapostolic” market as a danger. An evangelical scholar (Carwardine 1993, 126–127) concludes,

Freemasonry, and similar secret brotherhoods, railroads, banks, and

protective tariffs—none were based on apostolic principles but rather were Yankee-inspired contrivances, instruments of New England cultural imperialism, tending towards fusing of church and state, and fatal to religious and civil liberty. Their proponents were a “new race of Jesuits,” “Mammonites,” and “money-missionaries” who “would take from the poor man his last hard-earned fourpence half-penny.”

Among the vices associated with the market that religion condemned were “envy, fame and wealth” (Goble 1887, 218, 239). Held up as family values were “endless riches without money” and rejection of the “world”:

Poor and afflicted, Lord, are thine;
 Among the great unfit to shine;
 But through the world may think it strange,
 They would not with the world exchange. (Goble 1887, 256)

At the center of the small-producer family values was abstention from Adam Smith’s liberal economy. The enemy, as symbolized by John Calhoun, was profit and its partner, the consumer life style of the English gentry. Calhoun and his class imported English furniture, silver, linen, pictures, architecture, politics, religion and a class view of labor. In analyzing the aping of the English gentry by the merchants and their prejudice against laboring people, some studies have more muddled than clarified the picture by equating the beliefs of working people with those of the gentlemen. Forrest McDonald (1975, 149–150; see also, Wright 1976, 106–109; Waterhouse 1989, 110) describes this problem as reflected in the scholarship of Ulrich B. Phillips:

Phillips perpetuated the misconception that almost every antebellum southerner was, or wanted to be, a grower of great staple crops... Phillips arranged his evidence to convince readers that the only worthwhile activity in the Old South was the growing of plants, and that success, not occupation, determined a man’s place in society... Long before Frank Lawrence Owsley wrote a book about the “plain folk” Phillips had “discovered” them—only to obscure them by painting them in false colors.

For the antebellum gentlemen laboring people were “lower” class and slaves. South Carolina Governor Steven D. Miller in 1829 advocated

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the ensurment or enslavement of the “crackers,” as they were called, to prevent them from western migration (Brady 1971, 128; Richardson 1946, 4). This migration increased the proportion of blacks, which, in the view of the gentlemen, increased the number of slave insurrections. Historian Tony Freyer (1994, 5) discusses the emphasis which antebellum economics put on class analysis,

Antebellum political economists recognized how strong these social and market cleavages separating capitalists and producers were. Indeed, the differences were powerful enough that economic commentators assumed that large merchant and corporate capitalists were a class apart, separated from the producers by a privileged legal and market position. The very nature of such privilege was that the opportunity it represented seemed closed to most individuals. Thus for Carey and other American political economists, average producers did not share the same capitalist values with those they feared insofar as those values were defined in terms of corporations and mercantile speculations. The followers of Adam Smith in America recognized the distinctiveness of the capitalist and producer classes. Smith himself distinguished between “productive and unproductive” classes.

If the gentlemen had prejudices, they were matched by the agrarian’s contempt which held the merchants to be the “lower” class. According to agrarian religion, Charleston’s superficial culture of dinner parties, balls, horse racing, drinking, gambling and dueling was sinful. For self-sufficient farmers, the devil in their community was the country store several miles distant from their farm. Besides being a place to socialize, it provided what the farm lacked.¹¹ It sold groceries, dry goods and served as creditor, post office, polling stand, stagecoach stop, liquor store and factor for pork, cotton and other produce. Family historian Bonnie Smyre (1999b, 11; see also Stewart 1973, 383) has studied the capitalist nature of the country store as a promoter of alcoholism, indebtedness for luxury goods, gambling and prostitution.

Along with valuing their own labor and minimizing market involvement went the view of working people that electoral politics, as an appendage to the market, was a menace to family values. Abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) were advocating an electoral boycott because the system was rigged in favor of slavery. But

the backcountry had been boycotting politics since the colonial period (Stewart 1973, 393). In the American Revolution Lucy Crankfield's father, grandfather and uncles rejected the "newspaper patriotism," and took a neutral position toward independence. Olson (1967, 203) describes the negative upcountry views toward the South Carolina government:

The people of the backcountry had taken no part in the opposition to taxation by Parliament, and the slogan of no taxation without representation evoked little sympathy from people who had but slight representation in the colonial Assembly. Nor were they concerned with the struggles of the Assembly against the governor and Council. The backcountry population had as much or more reason to resent the actions of the Assembly as those of the British government.

The farmers took sides only after the British literally invaded their farm and stole their cattle (Boyle 1970). Later as democratic decentralizers and provincialists, the upcountry was neutral toward the Constitution, which they viewed as merely a funding scheme for the federal debt owed to European and American creditors.

In the antebellum period agrarians boycotted politics because like the market there was nothing in it for them. Only white, adult males were eligible to vote. Among these, less than half actually voted (Ginsburg 1986, 583, 610).¹² Commercial interests had a monopoly on democracy, as the South Carolina Baptist preacher, William "Brutus" Brisbane summarized, "This state is said to have a republican form of government. It may be the form, but the substance is wanting. The great mass of the people are virtually disfranchised" (Harris 1986, 73–74). Agrarians complained of "demagogic maneuverings" such as the use of alcohol to buy votes on election day. Illustrative of electoral corruption in the Crankfield neighborhood was the censure on January 1, 1837 of fellow church member Matthew Wooten for "drinking and rioting at the election" (Vance 1938, 25).

Andrew Jackson, president from 1829 to 1837, sloganeered in the 1830s, "let the 'people' rule." They did, but it was in their homesteads. The boycott of electoral politics did not mean that civic-mindedness was not a family value. But this ideal in the face of merchant monopoly had to be practiced on the margin. Jackson maintained that the prob-

lems of working people were caused by the Bank of the United States, “the eastern establishment,” and local southern creditors. His solution was to eliminate the federal subsidization of capitalism. This meant opposition to Clay’s grandiose government funding of national transportation (roads, canals, ports and other “improvements”), an end to bigger Army, Navy and costal fortifications, the elimination of protective tariffs and a demolition of the “official” patriotic mysticism about national unity (Sellers 1991, 72, 270, 313).

But subsistent farmers who saw the problem in religious terms, argued that with or without banks, creditors and subsidies, Jackson’s so called “laissez-faire” economics were devoid of apostolic values for family people (Wyatt-Brown 1970, 510).¹³ The weather, insects and other natural events produced yearly variations in agricultural productivity, but the small operators at Twenty-Five-Mile Creek never went hungry. On the other hand capital intensive agriculture could not give a family this security but only “survival of the fittest.” The more that labor compromised with the market, the greater the risk during economic downturns.

More sympathetic to family values was Thomas Cooper (1759–1839), who spoke for the “democratic decentralizers and provincialists opposed to nationalism and cosmopolitan corruption” (Carwardine 1996, 297). He signed his articles “Back County Farmer” but in time he taught at the University of South Carolina. Back-county farmers, such as at Twenty-Five-Mile Creek, opposed the efforts of the merchant-controlled American government to protect foreign commerce. In Cooper’s estimation, such commerce was worth less than the expense of supporting it (Malone 1961, 99). He pointed out that American exports consisted of articles “of the first necessity” and that they would be carried away in foreign vessels if American were not available. He concluded, “Thus the only part of our commerce really defended by the American ships of war is the *carrying trade*” (Malone 1961, 99). For the benefit, not of the farmer or mechanic but primarily of British agents in commercial towns, he asserted, heavy taxes were levied upon the entire community and a navy was created which led the nation to continuous belligerency and war. Said Cooper:

I know of no body of men, so ready to postpone the interests of their Country to their own Interests, as Merchants. They are truly a swinish multitude: touch but the bristle of one of them and the whole herd cryout murder. Profess to defend your own territory and that only, and you will have no wars; profess to defend your distant Commerce, and you are never safe for a Day (Malone 1961, 101).

In like manner, “Back Country Farmer” prophesized,

If wars are necessarily attendant upon commerce, it is far wiser to dispense with it: to imitate the Chinese and other nations who have flourished without foreign trade: your commodities, the nations who want them will fetch away:—if they will go to China for tea cups, they will come to America for Bread (Malone 1961, 100).

To those familiar with James Dobson’s association of capitalism with family values, it might appear that the anti-market beliefs that existed among antebellum farmers were heretical. Dobson (2001, 85) praises capitalism because “America is the richest nation on earth.” But Dobson himself is a heretic on this issue in most of his writings. Family relations for him are not for profit or selfishness. The role of parent is not to make money but self-sacrifice and shouldering the burdens of the weak. In terms of family values, Littleton was not “richer” but poorer, despite “achieving a better income,” for not having emancipated his mulatto children (Dobson 2001, 85). Dobson (2001, 63) sums up, “We are all more valuable than the possessions of the entire world.”

The contradictions arising from Dobson’s muddled surrender to the market are no less destructive to present-day family values. On the one hand he maintains abortion is a great enemy of the family. On the other hand, it is not the self-sufficient nineteenth century farm which always had room for children that is his ideal, but capitalism. Scholars have repeatedly shown that abortion and divorce are the real capitalist family values because children and marriage offer self-sacrifice, not economic self-indulgence or the pursuit of selfish ends or a “better income.” Family historian Terry Sullivan (2004, 24) summarizes how the market is the occasion of sin for family values:

Preaching chastity to teens is stupid when we also teach them to aim for Law School. She will be 18 by the time she finishes high school, 22

when she finishes College, 25 when she finishes law school, 30 by the time she establishes herself in the legal profession. Can she then give it up, throw away a \$300,000 investment in her education, in order to stay home and raise children? Obviously she has to keep on working. She has to pay back all that borrowed money, which could have bought a farm or a small business...

Is she going to wait until she is in her thirties to have a boy friend? Wait until she is 35 to have the one baby she is allowed, which she must then put in day care? Is she going to remain a virgin until she is 35? If she doesn't, she must use contraception backed by abortion. If she gets pregnant during those 20 years of sterility for the sake of money there is only one answer. In an *investment* minded society, abortion is the best investment there is. Counting the \$200,000 it cost to raise her, the \$300,000 it cost to educate her, and the \$50,000 a year she can make in her career, a \$400 abortion yields a million dollars in money saved and money earned.¹⁴

During the antebellum period, as Sullivan (2004, 24) comments,

You could tell a 16 year old girl to wait. Don't spoil it for yourself. When you are 18 you can get married and start having babies. And, if she couldn't wait, getting married at 16 wasn't the end of the world. Today, if she gets pregnant and refuses to get rid of the baby, she is bound for the welfare roles. For a short while anyway. Thanks to the de facto welfare reform alliance between the Radical Feminists and the Conservatives, she will soon be forced to go to work at a minimum wage job while they subsidize food, housing, child care etc. They don't care how much the subsidies cost just so the main objective is achieved: do not allow women to stay home with their children.

To use Dobson's expression, "the richest nation on earth" in terms of the family ought to be the one most self-sacrificing. It should not be the one dominated by "men, so ready to postpone the interests of their country to their own interests" that there has never been a time when there was not belligerency and, more recently, abortion on demand.

Not only in terms of family values but in merchant terms, Littleton's position was not much improved by not emancipating his mulatto children and by his otherwise compromising his labor beliefs. When he died in 1847 his estate was valued at \$7,377, about a quarter of that

of his father-in-law, James Wilson, whose estate in 1836 was valued at \$30,870 (Anonymous 1836; see also Crankfield 1836; Anonymous 1846). The bulk of Littleton's estate was the result of multiple gifts from his father-in-law. Because of the chronic depression, the labor of Littleton, his family and the slaves was not able to increase his wealth. The boom in upcountry cotton lasted twenty years starting in the 1790s. Then came the chronic depression from the 1810s to the Civil War (Gray 1933, 2/663, 666, 681; Freehling 1967, x, xii). Littleton's productive years coincided mainly with the depression. A majority of the Fairfield population dealt with the problem by eliminating their cotton production. Of those who grew cotton, half produced only one bail per year (Racine 1990, 2). South Carolina historian Patrick Brady (1971, 196) describes the upcountry market boycott, "The main economic division within South Carolina was not between competing market interests but between those who were and those who were not part of the market economy. Farmers... were simply neglected."

A minority of the upcountry farmers, which included the Crankfields, attempted to maintain a cash return by expanding production. They were paid less per pound, but they produced more. To expand they increased their capital, which meant increasing their slaves and land under cultivation. In the 1790s free labor outnumbered slave labor by a factor of six to one. By 1830 slave labor dominated (McMaster 1980[1946], 27; Ford 1988, 12). At the time of the Civil War it was double that of free. It pushed a third of the free population out of the county. White labor was driven to Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas by the market forces. There they grew cotton in virgin soil that provided a better return. This competition further reduced South Carolina prices (Heller 1998, 55). Classical liberalism's "law of diminishing return and falling rate of profit," as it was called by David Ricardo (1772–1823), resulted in the doubling of land and slave costs at the same time that cotton prices were declining (Fox-Genovese 1987, 218; Gray 1933, 2/663–665).

The Crankfields experienced both benefits and difficulties in not distancing themselves from the market. Along with animal husbandry, they cultivated ten acres per person, half of which was corn, wheat and other non-cotton crops. In 1810 after a decade of marriage, they along

with a single female slave were cultivating thirty acres. A decade later in 1820 they had five (three whites, two blacks) engaged in agriculture, as the older Crankfield children and a slave family joined in the work. By then Littleton was forty-five years old and his sons Isaac and Jonathan were twenty-one and nineteen. Their two male slave workers were between twenty-six and forty-four (Racine 1990, 4; Bolton 1994, 22, 73; United States Census Office 1965a, 113; 1965b, 36).

As noted, the last twenty-six years of life for the Crankfields from 1810 to 1846 coincided with low cotton prices, depleted soil and competition from the expanding and more fertile southwest (Robbins 1950 [1942], 131). The Crankfields endured because Lucy's parents helped them. In 1821 for example, the Wilsons (1821, 1837) deeded them three slave children for one dollar and sold them a one-hundred and twenty-seven acre tract. By 1830 the Crankfields' single slave family had become two, with 14 members (Crankfield 1836; Buchanan 1836). In 1840 the number had risen to 21, with 12 in agriculture.¹⁵

Even with parental help and expanded production, the Crankfields barely escaped bankruptcy in the 1830s. In their early years with production largely for subsistence, they stayed solvent when cotton prices declined, as in the depressions of 1812 and the post-war panic and depression of 1819. But the upcountry depression of the 1820s and 1830s combined with successive national depressions and the Crankfields' increased market production starting in the mid-1820s brought them near to ruin. They mortgaged their farm in 1830 to borrow \$900 to plant a crop. This was supposed to be repaid at the rate of \$300 on the first of January in 1832, 1833 and 1834 (Crankfield 1830). They defaulted and their farm was signed over to Fairfield County sheriff, William Moore. Twenty percent of nineteenth century farm families actually did go bankrupt and it was not unusual for there to be a dozen forced-sale advertisements in local papers such as the *Camden Journal* (Freyer 1994, 37; Anonymous 1832).

The Crankfields avoided eviction, however, because in the following several years, while continuing to produce a market crop, they did so without borrowing by following the dictum of agrarian hero Jack Sprat, "Better to bed supperless, than to rise in debt." In addition, the depression slackened, Lucy's father died, leaving them a further sub-



sidy and Littleton benefited from the estate litigation that led him to trouble with his church. For the last decade of their lives, despite the unfavorable cotton prices, the Crankfields remained debt free.¹⁶ They engaged in animal husbandry and **subsistent** production.

subsistence?

Like most of their neighbors, the Crankfields wove homespun cloth made from their cotton and wool. As a protest against the free market and by necessity, homespun was worn in the 1820s and 1840s by laboring people not only at home but to political meetings, church, school and to market and court days, while mass-produced textiles were boycotted (McCurry 1995, 78). Among Lucy's weaving tools was the warping swift, temple and loom that were in her estate when she died in 1847 (Anonymous 1846; 1847). During rainy weather and in the winter months the adults and older children carded and spun thread from cotton or wool, then wove it into bolts of "jean cloth" on the loom. This they stitched into clothes, bonnets, stockings, curtains, mattress covers, diapers, and cotton-picking bags.

Historian Sam Hilliard (1972, 241–242) remarks that that "the wisdom of concentrating on cash-crop production and buying provisions was challenged frequently and vociferously by writers of the day." In 1844 John Belton O'Neal, a South Carolina judge who presided over foreclosure cases, advised that labor be used as a defense against the tariff system, "Raise my countrymen your own hogs, sheep, cattle, horses, and mules, clothe your own household by domestic wheel and loom... Supply your own tables with flour, potatoes, butter, and cheese of your own crops... and you can bid defiance to all tariffs in the world" (Ford 1988, 53).

Distancing from the market was easier for the Crankfields than distancing from their slaves. In a market downturn, employers laid off workers and slave owners sold off slaves or faced bankruptcy. In the 1830s and 1840s when their slaves were of little profit and when they nearly went bankrupt, it would have made sense for the Crankfields to have sold them off for shipment to the more profitable Southwest. From a market perspective they should have at least manumitted those that were too old, lame, insane or otherwise unable to carry their own weight in subsistence production. This practice was widespread enough that the South Carolina legislature attempted to outlaw it because the

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freedmen ended up in the county poorhouse and a public expense (Genovese 1965,16; Tushnet 1981, 193, 208, 227). Littleton, when faced with bankruptcy and Lucy when faced with adultery, echoed the complaint of another evangelical agrarian, “Lord, brother, I wish I never owned, or was the master of Negroes! They are a hell to us in this world. And I fear they will be so in the next. What to do is the question” (Budros 2005, 941; see also Stewart 1973, 330).

For the Crankfields, who never bought or sold a slave in their lives, the slave system was like original sin, something into which they were born. Had they been open to it, their religion would have redeemed them from slavery just as from original sin. Working people, if not the gentlemen, understood that slavery violated egalitarian values and even in the 1830s and 1840s some southern Baptists were banning slave owners from the ministry and from fellowship (Matthews 1977, 35, 142, 152; Chesebrough 1996, 31; Loveland 1980, 113–115, 189, 195). To solve the problem, some agrarians moved North or aided their slaves to do so or bequeathed them to the Colonization Society, which sent them to Liberia. Some manumitted the able-bodied and gave them land for subsistence farming. But the Crankfields went unredeemed and paid a price for it.

Liberation Theology

Religion as seen in the lives of the Crankfields taught family values about God, family and labor. While having similarities to the values of those like James Dobson, there were also differences. These differences have traditionally been characterized by historians such as Charles Sellers (1996, 323; see also Bratt 2006, 69) as antinomian. The term “antinomian,” which dates to the sixteenth century, means literally “against the law.” In the antebellum period the word was used as an epithet along with “primitive,” “iron-sided” and “hard-shell.” Those against whom these words were used protested but as one scholar points out (Carwardine 1993, 126), they also took pride in words that “acknowledged their ‘hard heads and sound hearts.’” Historians continue to use the term “antinomian” because it captures “the spiritual core of cultural resistance to capitalist transformation” (Sellers 1996, 323).

In more recent times the term “liberation theology” has also been

used to describe religious-based resistance to capitalism. For the antebellum period, the term has been used mainly for the study of slavery, black power and black enterprise (Cone 1969). From the backcountry perspective, as noted at the outset, this is too narrow, especially to the extent it supports enterprises such as BET (Black Entertainment Television) and its profitable programming of sex, drugs and violence. One historian has commented that such beliefs are less in the liberation tradition than in the “First Families of South Carolina” tradition which venerates its ancestors according to the number of slaves they owned (Aptheker 1979, 142).

As seen at Twenty-Five-Mile Creek Baptist, liberating family values dealing with religion, family and labor had a class as well as a race and gender dimension. For example, family values about religion were liberating in drawing upon the Holy Spirit for the foundation of their egalitarian, including slave, resistance to professional clergy. Richard Carwardine (1993, 14) observes that the nineteenth century farmers viewed politics and religion from a New Testament perspective which magnified the rule of the Holy Spirit, stressed freedom from the law and drew on Christ’s passive endurance of Roman oppression, which led to an essentially negative view of government and litigation.

This liberation theology contrasts with Dobson’s focus on obedience. In prohibiting resort to the state court system and excommunicating Littleton for such activity, his parish family was a law unto itself. A similar lack of deference existed at Twenty-Five-Mile Creek to the centralizing merchants and planters who were the benefactors of and dominated the large urban churches and the Charleston Association. During the establishment of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 under the leadership of “governors, judges and congressmen,” rebellion came from self-sufficient congregations and their objection to profit-oriented seminaries, revivals, Sunday schools and temperance, ladies aid and children’s societies (Wyatt-Brown 1970, 528; Barnes 1954, 35; Howard 1990, 42).

Likewise liberating were family values about the family itself. Family self-sufficiency confronted the consumerist culture of the Charleston and local merchants. Parents raised children not for profit but because it was the right thing to do. The corporal works of mercy were performed

freely. Agrarians farmed not for profit but because it fed the family. They turned the planter culture on its head. Grace, not legalism, ruled the marriage relationship. Victory at the expense of love was defeat. Because the legal system was unjust, both white and black workers, but especially women, avoided and disobeyed the law. As historian Gillian Brown (1984, 513) puts it, nineteenth century religious women were “antinomian” in breaking slave, capitalist and democratic laws. Out of self-defense they rejected the culture of adultery. This culture subjected them to depression, betrayal, shame, resentment, anxiety and feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and diminished capacity to control events around them (Hartog 1997, 78–79, 82, 85, 92). The resentment, not deference, of mulatto offspring toward their neglect reflected egalitarian family values. The hymns at Twenty-Five-Mile Creek lamenting the family break-ups, because of forced migration, were a condemnation of the established order.

Finally, family values about labor as reflected in the small producer creed were liberating in resisting the profit system and electoral politics. Some were more successful than others in obtaining “endless riches without money” and in freeing themselves from the “world” with its “envy, fame and wealth.” Despite various compromises, the Crankfields did not go bankrupt. They raised their family and were active in their church for many years. Only in their last decade, with their greatest hand in it, did the market “hedonism” hit home. They became divided by adultery, a number of their children were squeezed out of their homes and Littleton was alienated from his church.

Conclusion

James Dobson maintains that he is popularizing traditional family values. But if one follows Frank Owsley’s methodology, it is evident that traditional family values were not deferential. It was the values of John Calhoun and of slavery that were deferential. The traditional family values of working people have been manifested in recent times in societies that have duplicated the economic security of the self-sufficient farm by modifying or eliminating the market and establishing government-guaranteed jobs, housing, health care and other blessings. In the antinomian tradition, egalitarian family values have required the

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rising up as a class at the expense of the gentlemen. Obedience to the established order has not been a family value.

Notes

1. The authors are indebted to Jennifer Enfinger, Virginia Bowen, Emma Boyle (1886–1972), Elizabeth “Eliza” Crankfield Bush (1818–1906), Nancy Crenshaw, Arlene Hampton, Kittie Brookshire Hardman (1877–1940), Hudnell and Mitt McLean, Linda Malone, Joye Mullis, Glynis Patterson, Randall Stephens, Kenneth Thomas, Gene Wilson and Euna McCullers Woodruff.
2. Studies of antebellum religious family values include Mintz and Kellogg (1988), McDannell (1986), and Giggie and Winston (2002).
3. The names and other information about each slave owned by the Crankfields is contained in Crankfield (1836, 1846) and Wilson (1799).
4. Loehr (1952, 37, 41) notes that even farmers who produced for the market also produced for their own consumption.
5. Wyatt-Brown (1970, 523) points out that many failed to join a church not because they were disbelievers but because they could not afford it. Belonging to a church cost money.
6. In 1846 the total value of the Crankfields’ “goods and chattel,” which included twenty-one slaves, was \$7379. Their land was worth several thousand more (Anonymous 1846).
7. The estate dispute was regularly brought up at church meetings, as on June 4, August 4 and September 1, 1837 (Vance 1938, 25-26, Anonymous 1831).
8. George Bush copied the quoted passage from the English journalist, Joseph Addison (1672–1719).
9. The cemetery is now called the Crankfield-Lawhorn Cemetery.
10. In the 1840s Allan and Jemima Crankfield were worth \$5,400 (United States Census Office. 1965e, 240).
11. In the 1820s Taylor’s and Craig’s were the two stores in the Crankfields’ neighborhood (Mills 1980 [1825]; Heller 1998, 52).
12. See also, Edgar (1998, 339), who shows how commerce dominated the state legislature, which controlled local political offices.
13. John Calhoun, who split temporarily from the Democratic party and from Andrew Jackson, supported Nicholas Biddle’s attempt to re-charter the Bank of the United States in 1832. Calhoun was labeled along with Daniel Webster,

Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams as one of “King Biddle’s henchmen.” See Foner (1975, 24).

14. Dobson’s biographer points up that while he wanted to go to medical school and enforce 20 years of sterility on his wife, she refused. He advocates the male being the family leader, but on the important issues, such as his not attending medical school and rather on his focusing on the family, his wife led (Buss 2005, 35–36).
15. The average wealth of free adult males in the United States in 1860 was \$2580 (Holifield 1990, 17; Smith 1958; United States Census Office 1965c, 26, 1965d, 191).
16. Gray (1933, 2/699) summarizes cotton prices in the 1830s.

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